

INSPIRED TEACHING:

**An Exploration of Enacting the Curriculum, Deepening Social Justice Consciousness, and
Creating an Ethos of Caring in Saskatoon Secondary Classrooms**

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For a Master of Education Degree

In the Department of Educational Foundations

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Canada

By

Leanne R. Kadyschuk, B.Ed., B.A.

Leanne Kadyschuk, December 2017. All rights reserved

Permissions

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for review. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying of publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of Educational Foundations
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0X1
Canada

OR

Dean
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0X1
Canada

Abstract

This thesis is an open-hearted exploration of inspired teaching through the lived and shared experiences of secondary urban public school teachers. This exploration includes appreciations of the deeper purposes of education, understandings of critical pedagogy in action as well as stories of inclusiveness embodied in classrooms. The vision for this research pursuit has been followed through an inquiry of one key critical question that has guided the investigation, namely, how does the process of enacting curriculum create an ethos of caring, a deepened consciousness for social justice and enhanced student engagement?

This thesis will explore six main areas as follows: First, an introduction that will explore the imperative for this research exploration. Second, a literature review that will explore a deepened understanding of the landscape of pathways of thinking that support this journey. Third, a consideration of method and logic that will explore the how and who of the positive momentum that has propelled this inquiry forward towards new learning. Fourth, accounts of what constitutes the purpose of education including what the essence of education is, core characteristics of teaching practices, understandings of social justice education, and characterizations of the enacted curriculum. Fifth, analysis of teaching pedagogy including descriptions of best practices, impacts of deliberate pedagogy on student engagement, examples of social justice education in action, as well as emergent themes from my study. Sixth, this thesis will conclude with acknowledgements of the limitations of my research as well as considerations for further study.

Keywords: *Enacted curriculum, social justice, best practices, pedagogy, teacher engagement, student success, and care.*

Gratefulness

I am grateful for my sweet daughter Olive Daisy. It is you who inspired this path into teaching in the first place. You have caused me to rethink education and to always appreciate that learning takes place in each and every moment of life as we live it. You continue to be my greatest teacher.

I am grateful for my beautiful partner Casey Murray. Your gentleness grounds me and makes everything possible. Without your presence in this life I would not be who I am at this present wonderful moment.

I am grateful for my parents Barb and Ron Kadyschuk who raised me to work hard and dream big.

I am grateful for my mother-in-love Bonnie Logan and father-in-love John Murray who encountered me with open arms and have taught me to trust my intuition.

I am grateful for my supervisor Dr. Paul Orłowski and committee member Dr. Geraldine Balzer. Since my arrival into the College of Education, you have been my adopted parents in the field of teaching. Your generous belief that the investment of my authentic self into this practice would be a valuable endeavor has ceaselessly caused me to keep digging deeper into this work. I am grateful for your patience in reading my sometimes long-winded drafts and your commitment to reeling in my constant inspirations to expand my plans further. I am humbled by your brilliance as you have endlessly challenge me to new levels in this inspired learning journey.

I am grateful for my participants. The generosity of your stories has given rise to this work.

I am grateful for the opportunity in this life to be a teacher. It is the most inspiring and humbling path of practice that I could imagine.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all students. To each and every being willing to self-examine and dig deeper to accomplish something greater. We are all interconnected.

Epigraph

“Smile, breathe, and go slowly” – Thich Nhat Hanh

Table of Contents

Permissions	i
Abstract	ii
Gratefulness	iii
Dedication	iii
Epigraph	iii
Chapter 1. Introduction: The Imperative for this Exploration	1
1.1 Backstory of a Lifelong Learner	1
1.2 An Inspiration for Teaching	3
1.3 Research Questions	6
1.3.1 Overarching Line of Inquiry: Main Research Question	6
1.3.2 Fleshing Out the Pursuit: Interview Questions	8
1.4 Aim of Study	8
Chapter 2. Literature Review	9
2.1 The Enacted Curriculum	10
2.2 Best Pedagogical Practices	16
2.3 Caring Schools	18
2.4 Teacher Engagement	20
Chapter 3. Research Design and Methodology	24
3.1 Qualitative Approach	25
3.2 Interviews	26
3.3 Interview Question Construction	28
3.4 Data Analysis	28
3.5 Recruitment	29
3.6 Account of Participants	31
Chapter 4. Purpose of Education	32
4.1 Essential Qualities of Inspired Teaching Practices	32
4.2 Essence of Education	38
4.3 Purpose of Schooling	41
4.4 Greater Purpose of Class Time	45
4.5 Understandings of Social Justice	49

4.6 Characterizations of Enacting the Curriculum	54
4.7 Summative Thoughts on this Chapter	57
Chapter 5. Authenticity and Student Engagement	59
5.1 Best Practices for Inspired Teaching	59
5.2 Impact of Best Practices on Student Engagement & Attendance	63
5.2.1 Impact on Engagement	63
5.2.2 Impact on Attendance	69
5.3 Social Justice Education in Action	72
5.4 Considerations of Student Success	78
5.5 Exploring Relationships between Student Success and Teacher Engagement	81
5.6 Connecting Research Findings to Literature Review	83
5.7 Implications for Teacher Education	86
5.8 Emergent Themes from this Study	87
5.8.1 The Concept of Care in Teaching	88
5.8.2 Critical Professional Discretion	90
Chapter 6. Conclusion: Wrapping up the Journey	92
6.1 Limitations to my Research	98
6.2 Possible Areas for Further Study	99
6.3 Summative Reflections	100
Appendices	103
Appendix 1 Letter of Invitation to Participants	103
Appendix 2 Pre-Interview Document for Participants	104
Appendix 3 Consent Form	105
References	107

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPERATIVE FOR THIS EXPLORATION

1.1 Backstory of a Lifelong Learner

The imperative for this study emerges directly from my personal journey into the teaching profession. A journey that took me far from my home in prairie Saskatchewan. To places that taught me to stand on my head as the hot Kerala sun rose up over Dhanwantari ashram in Southern India. While living at the yoga ashram, I had grown to value getting up before sunrise, to start the day with meditation, to engage in my yoga practice with diligence, and to encounter others with peaceful reverence. My journey had taught me to breathe in air and breathe out love. That one chooses what to do with their life force and can take the lemons that arrive to them in life and make what they want with them.

Once Thich Nhat Hanh was to speak at a temple in Northern Vietnam for the first time since he was exiled in the 1960s. I made my way from rural Thailand, where I was at the time, and decided I would be try to be there for it. I had retreated with Thich Nhat Hanh (*Thay*) in Colorado years prior and his mindfulness practice and become part of my being. The morning of the talk I got up early in Hanoi and, using my crumpled, well-studied map, I set out walking. As I walked I saw a woman selling fruit. *A gift for my teacher*, I thought to myself. I bought several mangosteens and a large bag of lychees. As I walked I breathed steadily an intention of presentness. I appreciated the heat of the early morning and beauty of the Vietnamese countryside that surrounded me. The weight of the fruit in my hands. My small backpack's straps pulling on my slightly sweated shoulders through my brown floral top. Moments later I saw a woman and two children walking across the dry road a ways ahead of me. As I approached them, the woman and my eyes locked, both pausing as we looked into each other's being. I felt a sense of reflection.

We each were navigating our journey with attention to the encounters experienced along the way. We exchanged a small smile and then shared the fruit I was holding together, along with her children. Soon, walking again, I took a breath enjoying the feeling of some of the fruit making its way to my stomach while my hands light again with the fruit vanished from them. I shortly encountered a woman selling flowers and seized the chance to restore my arms with a gift for *Thay*. The journey continued to unfold. Each moment leading to the next moment of possible responsiveness and learning. Being gifted and then having the opportunity to give. Fruit became flowers that became wild medicinal roots and, finally, handmade incense. After some time I started to wonder how far away this temple would in fact be, along with whether I would arrive to it before *Thay* would speak, when I looked ahead and saw the sun emerge over the top of a temple just a few hundred metres ahead on the horizon. Aha!

As these years unfolded I felt an increasing sense of conviction to strive to invest the deepest possible capacity to listen to each moment in life. That each moment had the possibility for rich learning in it and that I could be enriched if I moved slowly and took in as much as I could. I longed to be a practitioner of the paths of study I had the privilege to encounter. I sought to move with and through each new opportunity as a chance to deepen my understanding of interconnectedness. One such moment involved an extraordinarily beautiful spirit colliding paths with me. A gentle human who would profoundly impact the road of learning. A significant moment of irreversible change. Our merge of energy sent signals of love out into the universe. A radiance of energy that would catch the attention of a sweet floating spirit in the process of choosing her next incarnation. This little flower force would pick us to be her parents. Her budding being would grow quickly and her transition from water to air would arrive far too fast. As the blissful path of motherhood became imminent I decided to step into a new topographical

area on the landscape of this planet: Classroom teaching in prairie Canada. I vowed to take all that I had learned on the road and try to honour it through my new life as a humble facilitator of learning in a public education context.

1.2 An Inspiration for Teaching

Teaching can be appreciated to be a dynamic process in which teachers plan activities for students that support a journey of enrichment towards curricular outcomes within a framework of division mandates, school objectives, departmental goals – and other features – that hopefully inspire both student engagement and student success. Teaching, in its ideal sense, is an empowering collaborative circumstance through which everyone involved achieves something greater as a result of coming together. Whether it be through sharing, listening, exploring, reflecting, collaborating, etc. This circumstance – and process - is vastly complex. If a teacher arrives to class with a plan and expects it to unfold with static precision - and without dynamic divergence from that plan - then they are likely to be surprised by the reality of education as highly dynamic, sometimes unpredictable and certainly active with possibility. One of the many exciting features of a classroom context is that it contains living beings each of whom arrives with prior knowledge, life experience, and other facets that directly impact what takes place on any given day – or in any given hour – of learning. A moment of learning has the potential to affect everything from the individuals present to the world that surrounds.

Part of my axiology includes an appreciation of how education has the capacity to support a student realizing the possibility that exists in themselves and moving forward on a journey of development in a safe place. To support my students to move as beings that understand they are part of something bigger than themselves. To embrace the diversity of each context towards

heightened levels of social justice consciousness and a furthering of the enriching partnership that awaits when teachers and students collide. This notable appreciation can help support a practice of teaching that holistically and deeply moves the practice of learning forward so that it can inspire authentic engagement in students and in teachers.

I have had the honour of being a teacher for five years in a public school context as well as two years of teaching yoga and two years of teaching English overseas. My insider perspective on teaching is one that values the choices a teacher makes in terms of facilitating learning in the classroom. Whether the content being explored is relevant, whether power is being shared between all members of the learning community and whether engagement ensues as a result. A significant motivation for this graduate studies inquiry is to study sideways. By this I mean that I will be looking into the experiences of other teachers that hold similar occupations as myself in secondary public school contexts in the urban setting of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Authentic engagement on the part of the student takes place as a direct result of the choices made by the teacher in terms of how power is shared. Whether they are interested and if they feel empowered and cared for. A teacher chooses the premise upon which the day's activities will be explored. The *enacted curriculum*, a concept presented in the 1990s by Catherine Cornbleth (1990) is understood to be: The state through which the teacher and student's interests converge thus motivating authentic learning. When classroom activities are relevant to both the student and the teacher then learning is stimulated and engagement and success can follow. Further, when said enacted curriculum is implemented with authenticity and responsiveness on the part of the teacher – and the result is student engagement and success – then the teacher is also affected and their engagement deepened also as a result. These relevant moments of authentic learning will be connected to life – and to/through social justice content – because people are being affected by the

application and exploration of these concepts in a way that sparks participation and engagement. In these situations the whole student is honoured in the learning process and, thus, the teacher is re-engaged in the process also to continue to navigate enacted curriculum with fresh inspiration. This is a sacred circle of education: A cycle of inspired learning. The effective implementation of enacting curriculum through deliberate teaching practices that embody care and engagement towards enhanced political progressiveness.

I am curious how this cycle plays out in actual living classrooms. I am curious how these factors relate to each other. Does it unfold like a cycle where these three primary factors interconnect? Do they flow in repetition and with increased intensity towards authentic inspired learning? Perhaps the enacted curriculum, first, has the capacity to lead to student success because what is being explored in the classroom is both relevant to the student and connected to an area of authentic interest for the teacher also. Student success, second, perhaps has the capacity to lead to renewed teacher engagement because what results from the student engagement piece, as a result of the enacted curriculum, affects the teacher in terms of their commitment to their role as a learning facilitator. Renewed teacher engagement, third, perhaps has the capacity to lead directly to enhanced enacted curriculum, that might lead to deepened student success that has the capacity to lead to renewed teacher engagement. This circle is valuable because it gives rise to inspiration for learning as well deepened appreciations for the interconnectedness between people and the world beyond the classroom. At the core of the Saskatchewan curriculum lay the “Broad Areas of Learning” that include, “Self and Community, Lifelong Learning and Engaged Citizenship”. However this cycle of inspired learning unfolds in living classrooms, I believe that students are invited to move towards these deeper goals that are at the core, beyond specific course curricular outcomes and indicators. The enacted curriculum supports an effective mobilization of education

towards these goals and has the potential to foster critical consciousness for social justice. When a teacher effectively enacts curriculum then what is being explored becomes relevant and something inspired can begin to take place in terms of learning. Students empowered towards success and teachers empowered with renewed engagement for their practice of teaching is a bright, and promising, circumstance. It is exciting to ponder what this process looks like and how it is experienced by practicing teachers in their lived experiences teaching.

1.3 Research Questions.

Numerous lines of inquiry have informed this exploration. The imperative for young people to be met with enacted curricula that, through best pedagogical practices, inspires their authentic engagement and success as well as a curiosity for how student engagement and success impacts teachers in terms of engagement in their practice of teaching. This study was carried out qualitatively through a series of interviews with ten teachers who were willing to share their opinions and experiences in terms of best pedagogical practices and their individual application of enacting curriculum. Further, I sought to explore teacher observations in terms of the relationship between classroom practices and student engagement as well as how these two factors impacted engagement in the practice of teaching, as experienced by the teacher.

1.3.1 Overarching Line of Inquiry: Main Research Question

How does the process of enacting curriculum create an ethos of care, a deepened consciousness for social justice and enhanced student engagement?

1.3.2 Fleshing Out the Pursuit: My Interview Questions

These interview questions are the basis by which I explored my main research question with my ten teacher participants. (These are included in Appendix 2, but I have also placed them here to make it easier for the reader.)

1. Describe what you feel is the essence, or the heart, of education? To put it another way, what is the purpose of schooling?
2. Ponder the choices you make as a teacher when seeking student success. Describe what you would say are the “best” practices or best classroom strategies – in your specific context and experience.
 - What impact do these best pedagogical practices have on student engagement in your experience as a teacher?
 - Describe the relationship between best pedagogical practices and student attendance.
3. The “enacted curriculum” can be understood to be that special intersection when teacher’s and student’s passions/interests converge towards authentic learning. How would you characterize this process of enacting the curriculum in terms of your experience as a teacher?
 - Please describe one specific experience teaching where the enacted curriculum positively affected student success.
4. What is the relationship between student success and teacher engagement in education?
 - Describe one specific experience where student success positively affected your own engagement with teaching.
5. In a typical 65-minute-class, what would you say is the purpose of purposes?
6. What does the term “social justice” mean to you?
 - How do you incorporate social justice into your teaching, if you do? (Such as gender, race, poverty, etc.)
 - Describe a situation where you facilitated a lesson focused towards social justice consciousness, if you can.
7. What would you say is the most essential quality of your practice as a teacher?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share that you feel is relevant to this research exploration?

9. Lastly, how many years have you been teaching? What subject areas do you teach primarily?

1.4 Aim of Study

This exploration has been inspired by an imperative to honour the teacher experience of the actual effects of best pedagogical practices, the enacted curriculum, and the possibility for growing social justice and ecological consciousness in terms of their impact on teacher and student engagement. Although I have personal experience observing the relationships between said factors, I was unstoppably curious about the insights that other teachers experiences would glean. Further, I wondered whether this exploration of the enacted curriculum and best pedagogical practices and their prospectively profound impact on engagement could be valuable to others involved in this field of study. I do intend for this work to result in a published article that will hopefully inspire a colleague to offer a peer review. This way the learning journey on my part can continue following the completion of this Master's degree.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have contributed to the imperative for an exploration of the impact of the enacted curriculum, when executed in pursuit of the embodiment of best pedagogical practices, with social justice and ecological consciousness at the core, on student and teacher engagement in the process of education as it unfolds (Dewey, 1938; Barthes, 1981; Goulet, 1995; Greene, 1995; King & Hicks, 2007; King, 2010; Kohl, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Orłowski, 2011; Palmer, 1998; Ritchhart, 2011; Sontag, 1977; Wilhelm, 2013; Noddings, 1992; Whitehead, 1957). While these thinkers have contributed widely to the field of education, this literature review will focus on four main themes as they help frame the present study: 1) The enacted curriculum: what teachers actually teach to make learning relevant to students. In education there is a high level of accountability to implement the formal curriculum yet, when seeking student engagement, teachers are tasked with a heightened level of expectation from the perspective of student engagement and that is to make course content – in terms of the activities and expectations – relevant and inspiring. 2) Best pedagogical practices: how the happenings of the classroom are actually considered, planned and facilitated. In this study the practice of preparing, implementing and reflecting upon strategies is being explored in terms of how these strategies and priorities specifically impact student engagement and success, and further, how student success affects teacher engagement. How are social justice considerations infused through these practices to deepen consciousness? 3) Caring schools: if a student feels safe and a sense of belonging so that they can pursue authentic engagement then they will be empowered towards heightened levels of success. Further, a student that is engaged can meaningfully participate in the process of collaboration, co-construction and other characteristics of a cycle of inspired learning. 4) Teacher engagement: how the journey of

teaching is partnered equally with also being a learner. As a teacher's years of their profession unfold there will be significant moments that refresh or reengage the teacher in terms of their practice of teaching. I am curious about how teachers experience this phenomenon in terms of their individual embodiment of enacting the curriculum. When a cycle of inspired learning is effectively embodied then the student is successful, the teacher is engaged, and social justice consciousness is deepened through the pedagogical practices and the process of enacting the curriculum.

2.1 The Enacted Curriculum

A teacher is moved by the inspiration of supporting a student's journey towards curricula goals. Teachers, ideally, have background knowledge and experience in their teaching area(s) and they seek to create a context in which students can more deeply understand, appreciate, navigate, and succeed in demonstrating their understanding relative to curricular outcomes. This said, a teacher does much more than strictly present the curriculum document's outcomes and indicators through a static dispensation of its tenets. A teacher teaches! A teacher teaches through their individual lived experiences, reflections, and interpretations of, and with, the world that surrounds the classroom. Through the teacher's choices of supplementary texts, videos, examples, anecdotes – and so much more – a teacher enacts the curriculum. They bring the curriculum to life in a way that is intended to be relevant for the student so that the student will become engaged towards the learning goal and, further, successful in their journey as a student. The teacher enacts the curriculum through the choice of topics they are passionate about while also applying significant consideration for what the students are interested in and passionate about.

Catherine Cornbleth (1990) explores constructive schooling in a chapter regarding curriculum practice. She acknowledges the spectrum of how schooling values the process of authentic learning to varying degrees including what the actual activities in the learning context might look like. She says:

Comprehension rather than memorization was valued, with curriculum knowledge often being integrated across subject boundaries and related to students' experiences. It was assumed that knowledge is tentative, that there are multiple ways of learning and knowing, and that different perspectives ought to be considered. For example, along with government structures and processes, students in a constructive school might examine various meanings of democracy and possibilities of economic and social as well as political democracy. (Cornbleth, 1990, p. 77).

Schooling has the capacity to be part of the landscape of social change in the sense that what takes place in the classroom - when a teacher is enacting the curriculum - can have an impact on a student's understanding of the world around them and empower them to engage as citizens. Individuals who engage as present citizens of their present world and future citizens of their future world including continuous engagement on the journey.

In a single moment of teaching the teacher can operate with an appreciation of the potential that moment holds. Cornbleth discusses the "occupational context" (p. 78) as referring to:

'the teaching occupation as a social community which maintains ideologies and mechanisms of legitimacy', for example beliefs about how young people develop and learn, about how best to teach various skills and subjects, and about how to adapt teaching to the perceived needs of different student groups. (p. 78)

She further discusses the teachers she researched as having asserted that, “as professionals, they know what is best for their students’ learning. Occupational context, which shapes pedagogical context, is shaped in turn by social/cultural contexts as well as by teacher associations and collective experience.” (p. 78). For what takes place in the classroom, a teacher enacts the curriculum by bringing it to life for, and with, the particular students they share that learning context with. For it to be inspiring – and thus engaging and success-inducing – it must be relevant for all. It must be an authentic convergence of interests and passions. It must honour the lived experiences of all members involved. Further, it must deepen the connection between learning community members through care of each other and care of the greater societal and global context. I believe that often the process of enacting the curriculum does involve challenging the status quo in the classroom, thinking critically about negative forces in society, and empowering students to be active human beings who are passionate. Young people who are passionate not only manifest success in their journey through school but also participate in society with deepened social consciousness.

Whom education is centred around is of vital importance. John Dewey (1938) posited a notion of progressive education. In so doing he creates a distinction between such and traditional education: “The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly towards maturity” (Dewey, 1938, p. 18). Dewey acknowledges that there is a troublesome gap between those with experience and those without it: “But the gulf between the mature or adult products and the experience and abilities of the young is so wide that the very situation forbids much active participation by pupils in the development of what is taught” (p. 19). It is clear that, in the case of traditional education, learning is a transaction in which the teacher teaches and the

learner learns. Dewey clarifies, “that which is taught is thought of as essentially static” (p. 19). He is discussing the traditional model further. Education as a static process in which the student is an empty receptacle waiting for the teacher to pass knowledge into is quite a grim reality. The value of the student is unacknowledged in this interpretation. Dewey is getting at a more profound possibility in his conceptions of what education, particularly progressive education, can be.

If the student is unacknowledged then they almost certainly will not be engaged in their path of learning and, thus, not ignited on a path of success. Further, the teacher is likely underwhelmed by the static reality as they must in this case embody the sole knower in the classroom, the teacher ought to be the giver of information. When I pause to consider this unseized landscape of disengagement I think of a failed potluck. A reality of a single person showing up to the group with a sole set static pot of soup to share rather than a member of a community and a passionate participant in an exciting dynamic potluck gathering where a multitude of lives can come together and enhance the collective learning experience – through each bringing a dish. The result offers each participant a special opportunity. Would I rather share in one way of being and through a single exemplification of what to think or would I rather have the opportunity to learn from multiple ways of being and multiple possible exemplifications?

Dewey (1938) says:

To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal; to preparation for a more or less remote future is opposed making the most of the

opportunities of present life; to static aims and materials is opposed acquaintance with a changing world. (Dewey, 1938, p. 19)

For students to be equipped to participate in their future adult life they need to be empowered to participate in their present young person life at school. If a student believes that they have voice as an active participant and valued member of their learning community they will go forward into the rest of their life believing that their voice matters.

Every teacher moves with a mandate to fulfil their responsibilities. Each teacher individually determines what they are most accountable to, and they honour that priority in the way they conduct their class. Paul Orlowski (2011) acknowledges, “The unexamined question, however, is: Who exactly should teachers be held accountable to? Should it be the captains of industry? Should it be society itself? Should it be to the dominant groups in society? Or should it be the students themselves?” (Orlowski, 2011, p. 55) I am curious who teachers do feel accountable to in terms of what motivates their choices for the classroom. Do my colleagues feel accountable to their students? Or, do they feel accountable strictly to the curriculum document? Or to some other dimension of society, Orlowski inquires? Herbert Kliebard (1986) explores how the curriculum fits into this landscape in terms of Dewey’s view and an inspiration for education: “For Dewey, then, a curriculum built around fundamental social occupations would provide the bridge that would harmonize individual and social ends – what for him was the central problem to be resolved in any educational theory.” (Kliebard, 1986, p. 61)

Kliebard deepens this exploration, “A curriculum developed along these parameters would respect the needs and interests of the child, a position favored by the developmentalists, with the liberal educational aims of the humanists. This complex arrangement would lead to each child becoming part of ‘a miniature community, an embryonic society’” (Kliebard cited in Orlowski,

2011, p. 59). An education that sought to harmonize the individual young person with the greater social surrounding would certainly be something valuable and worth working towards. School communities that, in adolescence, genuinely seek to empower citizens to engage and succeed would lead to deepened engagement and success in the greater social context beyond secondary schooling. I am curious about how teachers view the purpose of school in this regard.

Teachers have the capacity to be lifelong learners. Teachers can occupy their role as a teacher while also fully being a student in their life as it unfolds. Many individuals embody this approach and, thus, bring an openness to learning from their students, they bring a concept, a seed, and to present it to a body of students – using deliberate empowering processes - and see what may become. King and Hicks (2007) address this process of reflection and goal-setting in adulthood in terms of the impact it stands to have. Their chapter, “Lost and Found Possible Selves” explores the process of setting goals, working towards them, deepening effort towards attaining goals and also the letting go of goals in some instances. They determine that “A hallmark of successful self-regulation may be the flexible pursuit of goals – disengaging from life goals that no longer include the possibility of fulfillment (King, 1996, 1998). Yet when previously cherished goals are no longer possible, some people are likely to redouble their efforts rather than disengage (Emmons, Colby, and Kaiser, 1998). These results speak to the power of goals in our lives and also point to the challenge of letting go. (King & Hicks, 2007, p. 3). The various moments of this process require the person, the learner, the adult in this case, to be a critical reflective practitioner who is engaged in their path. This process would have a unique embodiment for each individual when the teacher becomes a participant in the process of learning with students. I am curious about how teachers experience this process.

2.2 Best Pedagogical Practices

Prior to diving into the pursuit of best pedagogical practices I must first define the term. To qualify anything as “best” will come with it an assumption of said something being superior to something else. In teaching I am certain that all teachers do not agree on what constitutes best practices nor would they entertain the possibility that such an agreement could possibly be arrived at. Further, I think most would endorse a path of pursuing “best pedagogical practices” as being a worthy endeavour and that the journey of conscientiously seeking to embody such will support the best possible situation for both teacher and student. Best pedagogical practices are one of the threads of inquiry that lay at the heart of this exploration. I am curious what teachers will proclaim to be their individual best practices as well as how those manifest the enacting of the curriculum as it embodies social justice and seeks to integrate teacher passions towards student engagement and success.

Catherine Cornbleth (1990) suggests, “Pedagogical context consists of ‘the daily practices and discourse of classroom life and the patterns of this activity which produce conceptions of school work and knowledge’” (Cornbleth, 1990, p. 77). Her words speak to the openness that is the enacted curriculum. That there is no single one way to facilitate learning in the classroom. In my conversations with colleagues and in my journey of professional learning as a teacher I am certain that each teacher approaches their work uniquely and I am curious about what that landscape looks like, through the experiences of other teachers. As a starting point, there are numerous initiatives in school divisions that ask teachers to look deeply at their practice in this regard in terms of being deliberate about their practice that includes how much traditional instruction, discursive, co-constructive, visual, and so much more occurs.

To seize the visual example, at least initially, I want to acknowledge the work of Ron Ritchhart (2011) and Jeffrey Wilhelm (2013) who have contributed publications that contain significant strategies for the classroom that embrace multiple literacies for student empowerment towards success in their studies. The strategies they promote move with particular attention to the visual mode through which students are activated towards engagement in learning. For example, Wilhelm (2013) presents a strategy called “reading pictures” in which the teacher would use a deliberate image to evoke engagement on the part of the student. Sometimes in schooling contexts a large textual document is used to mobilize students towards a learning goal. If a student lacks the language skills to decode the parts towards interpreting the meaning from the whole then the intention for the activity will be lost. Wilhelm suggests that a teacher can empower students if the opportunity for learning is approached somewhat differently. In the reading pictures strategy the teacher firstly, “has students list everything that they see” (p. 38). Then, they must “find a detail that is most powerful for [them]” (p. 41). This process leads into a series of phases or stages in the learning journey that draw on prior knowledge, have the capacity to honour culture, can organically connect to social justice insights, and so much more that gives rise to an experience of learning that is authentic and empowering.

Roland Barthes (1981) and Susan Sontag (1977) both provide important insights for the power of photography specifically to deepen the journey. Photography is an access point for drawing on prior knowledge and experiences as well as the evocative nature of images in the human experience. These two thinkers will help me understand more deeply some of the pedagogical practices implemented by teachers in terms of their enacted curriculum. Herb Kohl (1967) contributed to this discussion regarding the imperative for a responsive nature to be embodied by the teacher. He says, “Once teachers can forget how a class should be they can

discover each year what it must be like with that specific class at that particular moment in their lives.” (Kohl, 1967, p. 76). Strategies that seek to embody best pedagogical practices can shift education from the traditional model of teacher as expert and student as empty vessel to a more inclusive model that empowers and honours the journey of learning as being dynamic for all involved, dynamic and profoundly infused with the greater reality that surrounds the moment of learning. Content that matters to both the student and the teacher resulting in a process of learning that inspires engagement and success.

2.3 Caring Schools

Nel Noddings (1992), in a book exploring the challenge to care in schools, discusses her concerns relating to the response of education to larger social issues. She discusses the changing world following World War II and how just about every facet of life evolved including “work patterns, in residential stability, style of housing, sexual habits, dress, manners, language, music, entertainment, and ... family arrangements” (p. 1). She acknowledges that, “schools have responded, albeit sluggishly, to technological changes with various additions to curriculum and narrowly prescribed methods of instruction, but they have largely ignored massive social change” (p. 1). This is a tragic reality that directly impacts the landscape of educational opportunities young people have access to. Further, and perhaps even more pertinently, Noddings shines light on a more personal aspect of the educational scenario: the relationship between the student and the teacher in terms of to the extent it embodies care. She explores student perceptions of how much they believe teachers really care for them when she says: “They just don’t care!” (p. 2). This characterization is connected to what is explored in their classrooms in the learning journey. It seems that the impact of a lack of care will have on a student’s journey of engagement and success

will be profound. I am curious how teacher's experiences in their practice perceive this element unfolding in their classrooms.

Alfred Whitehead (1957) enhances this exploration by addressing the rhythmic nature of education: "The interior spiritual life of many is a web of many strands. They do not all grow together by uniform extension" (p. 44). Human beings are not only dynamic but they are also individual and require a unique set of factors to be inspired. In the educational context, as teachers, we work with this very premise at the core of our practice. Whitehead offers something greater in terms of what is possible when a student and a teacher converge in an instance of learning, "the truly important order is the order of quality which the educational procedure should assume." (p. 44). I am curious how this element resonates with my colleague's way of being in their practice of teaching. Do teachers seek to do something great with the opportunity of time spent with students? Do they strive to respond to the student in the present moment learning as it unfolds? To truly care for the students interests and to support their passions as the journey takes place? Parker Palmer (2007) says, "The claim that good teaching comes from identity and integrity of the teacher might sound like truism, and a pious one at that: good teaching comes from good people." (p. 13). Palmer explores the connections that lay below the surface in the experience of education. He contends:

The culture of disconnection that undermines teaching and learning is driven partly by fear. But it is also driven by our Western commitment to thinking in polarities, a thought form that elevates disconnection into an intellectual virtue. This way of thinking is so embedded in our culture that we rarely escape it, even when we try – and my own words will prove the point. (Palmer, 2007, p. 64)

Parker is critically questioning the model for education where students are not cared for and are put into a position of powerlessness in their journey of learning. This is deeply troubling because a student is at the core of their own life and, to be able navigate life beyond schooling with power and care, they must be conscious of the relationship between things. Parker's acknowledgement of how our society has elevated disconnection to the status of being a virtue is deeply saddening. That said, I am curious about what the experiences of my colleagues – that I will explore in my research - will reveal of a different picture of education that embodies care.

2.4 Teacher Engagement

A teacher's level of engagement directly impacts how learning takes place in their classroom community. If a teacher believes in their students, values their prior knowledge, encourages the sharing of experiences and insights in an inclusive, interconnected manner that embodies a vision for something greater, infuses social justice, mobilizes deliberate pedagogical strategies that student will feel safe, cared for, and seize the opportunity to also engage. I am curious what other teacher's experience of this dynamic is. I want to know how invested they are in the process of enacting the curriculum. I am curious what this enacted curriculum looks like in the classrooms I have the privilege to hear about through my research and the open sharing of my colleagues through the interviews I conduct. I wonder how extensively social justice issues are woven into the classroom activities. I am inspired to learn to what level teachers feel their one hour, in our secondary context, contributes to something greater and a heightened investment of self in community, engaged citizenship, and lifelong learning. I am curious to what extent teachers are inspired to seek the authentic integration or – and embrace the capacity to facilitate the sharing of – culture through their pedagogical choices.

Maxine Greene (1995) provides a helpful guide for appreciating the importance of teachers being engaged in the actual process of learning. She says:

What I am describing is a mode of utopian thinking: thinking that refuses mere compliance, that looks down roads not yet taken to the shapes of a more fulfilling social order, to more vibrant ways of being in the world. This kind of reshaping imagination may be released through many sorts of dialogue; dialogue among the young who come from different cultures and different modes of life, dialogue among people who have come together to solve problems that seem worth solving to all of them, dialogue among people who have come together to solve problems that seem worth solving to all of them, dialogue among people undertaking shared tasks, protecting injustices, avoiding or overcoming dependencies or illnesses. When such dialogue is activated in classrooms, even the young are stirred to reach out in their own initiatives. Apathy and indifference are likely to give way as images of what might be arise. (Greene, 1995, p.5).

Greene, in this important publication, acknowledges some of the issues in teaching contexts including mandates for standardized testing and measurements for success including such limited characteristics as “time on task” (p. 11). She complements the inspiration for this research exploration when she supports a perspective that classrooms can give rise to young people who are actively engaged in their greater social world as empowered compassionate young people.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) extends this line of thinking by appreciating the characteristics of teachers and of learning contexts that enhance success for all the learners in their classroom. In one example, she explores a situation where a teacher embodied “culturally relevant pedagogy” and “by permitting students to use talk-story, a language interaction style common among Native Hawaiian children, teachers were able to help students achieve higher than predicted

on standardized reading tests.” (p. 466). The imperative to empower students to draw on their own individual prior knowledge and lived experiences stands to have a monumental impact on the authenticity of the learning journey. Linda Goulet (1995) deepens this exploration in an article that explores the experiences of two teachers – one First Nations and one non-First Nations – that teach with a similar way of being to the example Ladson-Billings discusses. A core premise of Goulet’s article regards how to make schooling relevant to First Nations students. This is important because the teachers who will be interviewed in my study are working with First Nations students in an urban Saskatchewan context. Goulet says, “The students in their classrooms experience autonomy and success while using their own languages, learning their own histories, and retaining their own cultures with pride.” (Goulet, 1995, p. 68). In my experience as a teacher I have found it to be significantly impactful to empower young people to explore success through the process of drawing on individual ways of understanding the world and to be challenged – in a safe, caring manner – to invest culture, language, and history into their journey of learning, with pride. I am curious about other teachers’ experience of enacting the curriculum in this regard.

In another article, Ladson-Billings discusses what sometimes takes place when she encounters people who care to offer opinions on the subject. Particularly regarding some of the topics explored in her critically acclaimed book, *Dreamkeepers* (2009). This book explores the stories of teachers with similar lived experiences working with marginalized groups. She says that individuals would approach her and say, “But, that’s just good teaching!” (Ladson-Billings, “But That’s Just Good Teaching: The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, 1995, p. 1). Ladson-Billings would respond to them by saying, “My response is to affirm that, indeed, I am describing good teaching, and to question why so little of it seems to be occurring in the classrooms populated by African American students.” (p. 1). Ladson-Billings proclaims an essential point to this

discussion when she responds to these concerns. As I headed into my research I was curious about the engagement of teachers in the journey of enacting the curriculum with care and their use of deliberative pedagogical practices.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research seeks to better understand the relationship between enacted curriculum, best pedagogical practices, student success, and teacher engagement in the context of social justice and ecological consciousness learning pursuits in the classroom. Even more specifically I am interested in the lived experiences of teachers who engaged in the practice of teaching that embodies these characteristics. What pedagogical practices are considered best, on the part of the teacher? What relationship between the enacted curriculum and student success do teachers observe in their practice of teaching? How do teachers invest social justice and ecological consciousness deepening thinking into their teaching? What is the impact of these characteristics on teacher engagement? The methodology for this research pursuit will be approached qualitatively. Research findings will be encountered through an interview process with ~10 active teachers. The interviews were one-on-one that lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. The interviews themselves were open-ended semi-structured. Participants were provided the interview questions prior to the interview. Further, in some cases the flow of questioning was more organic where what I inquired into next followed the response given prior. In other cases the questions were explored more sequentially as they appeared on the pre-interview document. Research data itself will be analyzed using critical discourse analysis. My research journey will be explored holistically so as to honour the parts that work together, with interconnectedness, into a meaningful whole.

3.1 Qualitative Approach

In pursuit of deepened understanding regarding the essential questions being explored in this research, it is appropriate to apply a qualitative approach. Although other methods could be utilized to effectively understand certain aspects of the characteristics of interest, I want to learn from the lived experiences of teachers. The qualitative approach offers, “Privileged access to our basic experiences of the lived world” (Kvale, 1996, p. 54). Since this study is focused on teaching and teachers my hope is that through the sharing of experiences teachers will shine light, through their individual stories and shared examples, on the topics that form this inquiry. John Creswell (2012) offers a helpful process through which this qualitative research process of data analysis might unfold. First, the researcher will collect the data through the process of personally conducting interviews with ten teachers. Second, the researcher will prepare the data for analysis by transcribing the actual interview recordings. Third, the researcher will read through the data and highlight significant passages for further consideration. Fourth, the researcher will code the data by determining categories for deeper analysis. Or, as Creswell describes, the researcher will code the data by either description or for themes that will be used in the research report. (Creswell, 2012, p. 237). This process provides a succinct parameter for navigating the path of qualitative research towards my points of interest. That said, there is certainly a possibility that unexpected insights will occur causing this research to evolve in its focus. As Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) suggest, “at the heart of visiting and revisiting data and connecting them with emerging insights, [the researcher] progressively lead[s] to refined focus and understandings.” (p. 77). Each stage of the process inspires excitement for what my participants will say, how those interviews will unfold, and, as a result, what passages will be coded for deepened understandings going forward.

3.2 Interviews

Interviews are an appropriate methodology for this exploration because it will create space for teachers to share openly their honest responses to the questions presented. Steinar Kvale (1996) appreciates the opportunity that interviews offer in an exploration of caring interviews.

In qualitative interviews, social scientists investigate varieties of human experience. They attempt to understand the world from the subjects' points of view and to unfold the meaning of their lived world. The interviews give voice to common people, allowing them to freely present their life situations in their own words, and open for a close personal interaction between the researchers and their subjects. (Kvale, 1996, p. 3)

This imperative is inspiring because it acknowledges that through sharing a learning process can take place. As a researcher I hope to more deeply understand the landscape of aforementioned aspects of teaching through the open dialogue of my research with my interviewees. Trust is an essential element to the process and, as my interviewees are all present colleagues that I have worked with for some time, I am optimistic that my interviews will involve a climate of trust. As Gleshne and Peshkin (1992) suggest, in the context of discussing trust, that, "In an effective interview, both researcher and respondent feel good, rewarded and satisfied by the process and the outcomes. The warm and caring researcher is on the way to achieving such effectiveness." (p. 87). The process is hopefully mutually beneficial in the sense that it leads to professional learning and collaborations towards deepened engagement in the opportunity of teaching towards critically conscious enacting of the curriculum.

In a podcast the University of Derby (2013) explores the topic of what makes a good interview. The speaker says, "We need to listen ... When you're interviewing somebody the skill is to let the interviewee talk. To feel comfortable telling you about their experience." She adds:

“It should feel natural. That you’re listening like you would in a conversation and being able to move through the questions and the probes without it feeling mechanical.” “The interviewee needs to feel like you’re interested in their process. Good body language, eye contact, nodding heads ... all part and parceled with it. A conversation with a purpose.”

In my interviews I hope to embody these strategies and create a climate – through trust and the fact that my interviewees are employed in a similar role as I am, namely, full-time regular secondary classroom teachers, that my interviewees will feel comfortable to share and be honest. Further, the University of Derby podcast speaker suggests, “It’s about the interaction with the participant. Showing respect for the participant. Protecting them in some way. They are making themselves a little bit vulnerable quite often. Recognizing that they are making themselves quite vulnerable. Giving them the space and the opportunity to give you some good data for analysis.” I am inspired by these words.

I will approach each interview with the utmost respect and also, in moments, making myself vulnerable so that the conversation can give rise to the greatest possible openness of sharing. “The power of the pause sometimes gets overlooked. Time to reflect and pause.” Certainly I will strive to move slowly and create space for the interviewee to think and share without feeling rushed to move on to the next question or that their response time is being overtaken with my insights. I believe that, “the participant is at the centre of it. The participant is particularly special in qualitative research.” And I hope to learn as much as possible through the interview process towards deepened understanding.

3.3 Interview Question Construction

The process of actually constructing one's interview questions for their research is essential to the path going forward towards actually conducting the research. As the inspiration for this thesis has emerged I have engaged in casual conversations with colleagues who shared my reverence for the profession of teaching. The overarching themes outlined in my literature review – including enacted curriculum, best pedagogical practices, caring schools and teacher engagement – emerged directly from this casual discourse. My main research question, additional questions and interview questions have manifested as a direct result of a process of translating my inquiry into a tangible process through which I will hopefully create space for teachers to share from their practice of teaching in relation to my curiosities.

The interview questions themselves are “standardized open-ended” and certainly honour the “informal conversation” components of McMillan & Schumacher (2010) concepts of interviewing. Further, since I intend to interview more than ten active teachers, I will seek to empower interviewees to clarify their intended meaning in terms of concepts and ideas shared for a more consistent interpretation of data (Conrad & Schober, 2008). As the process of interpreting data will be exciting and daunting and riddled with the imperative to understand and deepen this ever-growing appreciative perspective on what is possible in the field of teaching, it is essential that teacher's perspectives are heard with openness but interpreted with consistency.

3.4 Data Analysis

Critical discourse analysis offers the possibility of looking closely at what the experience of teachers in their practice of teaching show in terms of the relationship between school and greater social issues and how those issues are being encountered in their particular classroom

contexts. As Wodak and Meyer (2001) suggest, “Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a programme of social analysis that critically analyses discourse – that is to say language in use – as a means of addressing problems of social change” (p. 140). It is a pathway that stands to aid in the navigation of effective interpretation that is specifically geared towards understanding findings in relation to its responsiveness to and its impact on social problems and social actions.

I am curious how the experiences of teachers relate to the imperative for social justice content to be at the core of enacting the curriculum. Further I am interested in teacher’s perceptions of how the rich process of enacting the curriculum is enhanced through the implementation of best pedagogical practices, the landscape of care in schooling contexts as well as how it impacts teacher engagement. At this point I believe that CDA stands to have a positive impact on navigating my data analysis.

3.5 Recruitment

My participants include ten active teachers ranging from 4 to twenty four years of experience. Their teaching areas are diverse ranging across departments and courses. These ten individuals include men, women, Cree, Métis, non-First Nations, and other diverse demographics and backgrounds. All ten are secondary school teachers in urban public school contexts. In terms of how each participant became part of my research there were numerous avenues of engagement. Avenues of engagement that would eventually become the inspired process of actually getting to sit down with living breathing teachers and talk about the exciting practice of teaching. One pathway of recruitment included a professional development group that I had the honour of being part of where we were passionate about applying visual literacy strategies in the classroom and then studying how the increase in these strategies would impact student and teacher engagement.

Another was a division-wide common department group where as teachers who teach the same courses, but in different buildings, get together and engage in professional learning in the spirit of supportiveness and inquiry. In my case this was a group of teachers who all teach photography courses. Also I recruited a group of practical and applied arts teachers from which many of my elective (Home economics, music, visual art, etc.) participants were gathered.

The actual process of having these individuals agree to be part of my study was quite enchanting. At one point, there were more than 40 teachers in tentative agreement to participate as a research participant. It was during the months leading up to the actual recruitment that I had a series of organic conversations with colleagues in numerous contexts (including those listed above) where I would excitedly tell of my most recent idea for what I thought I might pursue in my thesis when the time came. These earlier conceptions were brought about as I was engaged in the coursework phase of my graduate studies journey. Each course challenged me to dig into an aspect of teaching and to reflect on some dimension of the opportunity that is teaching. I knew very early on that I wanted to conduct interviews because of the rare opportunity to have deep, protected conversations with other teachers about their experience in our inspired profession. These various teachers, 40 in total, said that they thought my thesis planning sounded really interesting and would happily be interviewed when the time came. When I arrived to the formal proposal phase of this process I sat down with my supervisor and we discussed how many interviews would be appropriate. Since it was evident from the interview questions I had drafted that each interview would be an in-depth exploration, likely lasting about an hour (or more as it turned out), that 8-12 would be appropriate. I went back to my list of more-than-forty and thoughtfully selected 10 that would provide diversity in terms of years of experience teaching, diversity in terms of personal demographics (gender, age, cultural background, etc.) as well as

diversity in terms of teaching areas. Since sometimes it is difficult to align schedules and the various other complexities of life I was able to come to a coordinated plan to meet with ten that were happily in agreement to participate in my research. Please see below for account of participants.

3.6 Account of Participants

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Years Teaching</u>	<u>Teaching Areas</u>
Catherine	6	English Language Arts, Physical Education
Charlie	10	Math, Physics, Chemistry, Computer Science
Lynne	13	Home Economics
Sebastian	10	French, Theory of Knowledge, Urban Planning
David	10	English Language Arts
Truman	12	Visual Art, Photography
Margo	4	Mental Health & Addictions, English Language Arts
Sophia	13	Drama, Theatre Arts, Visual Art
Macy	24	Choral, Concert Bands, Guitar, Drama, Life Transitions
Virginia	19	Indigenous Studies, Social Studies

CHAPTER 4

THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

This section will explore, through the representation and analysis of data collected through ten interviews with ten secondary teachers, six main sections. These sections have been conceived of in direct response to the data collected in my interview process. They were the threads that ran from my interview questions through the conversations that followed. They include: Appreciations of the essential qualities of inspired teaching practices, pursuits of deepened understanding of the essence of education, explorations of the purpose of schooling, considerations for the greater purpose(s) of class time, a closer look at diverse understandings of the concept of social justice, as well as teacher's characterizations of the process of enacting the curriculum.

4.1 Essential Qualities of Inspired Teaching Practices

The path of inspired teaching is deepened when participants in the profession are conscious of their individually manifested essence, or the essential quality/ies, of their teaching practice. As I explored earlier in my literature review, specifically in the “teacher engagement” section, it is important to appreciate the relationship between positive, deliberate inspirations for what teaching and learning can be in terms of the impact on what actually takes place in classrooms for both the teacher and the student. To reiterate Palmer (2007) he suggests that “The claim that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher might sound like truism, and a pious one at that: good teaching comes from good people.” (p. 13). When I asked my participants what the essential quality of their teaching practice was such inspired words as “open” and “adaptable” for Physical Education teacher Catherine abounded. She expanded to discuss the significance of seeing learning in a wider sense in terms of her commitment to also being a learner along with her

students. Catherine says, “There’s something you can take away from every experience and from every teacher and every student that you work with.” Or “being approachable and relatable” for Charlie who teaches Math and Science. He added to this characterization in saying, “There’s a lot of students who lack confidence. I think they need a math teacher to be someone that they trust has their best interests at heart and actually wants them to be successful.” Other appreciations of inspired essential qualities of teaching were mentioned in my research interviews such as “authenticity” and “rigor” says Theory of Knowledge teacher Sebastian. He contextualized his initial comments by acknowledging “rigor is a beautiful thing but it has to start with authenticity.” Further,

Authenticity is hard to do because it’s painful to be genuinely authentic. I don’t think of [pain] as a negative thing. I think joy/pain. Sweet/sour. It’s painful in the sense that authenticity is going to require that you hold up various mirrors and let others hold up various mirrors. But to not be imprisoned by that. Learn from that. Once you have authenticity then you can have genuine attendance. And by attendance I mean engagement.”

Sebastian explained what he means when he uses the word “attendance” to embody a wider appreciation of engagement. His passion for teaching in this manner is quite apparent in our interview as he proceeds to define words, draw on other theorists, and connect to experiences in his active art of teaching all of which will be expanded upon in later sections.

In terms of understanding what these shared experiences mean in the bigger picture I would like to draw on the insights of Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (2001) when they appreciate that “Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is that programme of social analysis that critically analyses discourse – that is to say language in use – as a means of addressing problems of social change.”

(p. 140). They provide a way of understanding that the exchanges that take place between people – such as teachers and students in instances of education are by their very nature part of a bigger framework of understanding society as well as addressing issues in society. The insights of my research participants provided me with wonderful volumes of data in terms of how their teaching experiences reveal much about the relationship between the happenings of an active critical classroom and social change beyond that classroom. In terms of how I moved from the interview conversations themselves to, months later, having succinct themes that I would structure this thesis around, involved numerous steps. I recorded the interviews (each lasting between 60 – 120 minutes), transcribed the interviews, printed these transcripts, highlighted notable passages, made notes on the essential topics being discussed, created bristle boards with categories that were derived from my actual interview questions (i.e., “essences of education” or “examples of enacting the curriculum”), transferred notable passages into categories, and then composed my various chapter sections drawing on the passages from each section. The wall of my office became a wonderland of physically represented data with large bristle boards taped to the wall and then longer strips attached to columns where I had run out of space. Each one positioned relevantly near the next, taking over my whole wall. In addition to this wall installation of categorized data I also had the stacks of transcripts, on a comfy chair nearby, the books that were part of the landscape of my literature review open and laid about in various states of deliberateness as well as clipboards, post-its, and various other forms that related to aspects of my process of arriving at a summative representation of the vast richness that made up my research journey.

Specifically this process was guided by how the content of our interview conversations – and the way each participant was highly committed to the happenings of their classroom being part of something that supports positive social change. CDA was key to my data analysis because I

investigated my transcripts with this lens. I selected passages that spoke to the essence of education being something more important than an insular meaningless rote hour of the day. I believe that education holds the potential to be profoundly inspiring and relevant to all involved. For example, through the insights of Sebastian, Catherine, and Charlie in the above section it is clear that in the process of teaching, or perhaps more succinctly in the dynamic process of education, this social analysis is taking place. In the choices made by all involved as well as by the deeper understandings that lay in the teacher's sense of what their most essential quality is in their practice of teaching. I found this realization to be quite exciting and the other interviews I engaged in expanded on this concept.

Lynne, who teaches Home Economics, proclaimed that the essential quality to her teaching was "not settling for the status quo". She furthered this by adding, "I never want to become complacent". This connects back to my literature review where I discussed Maxine Greene (1995) in terms of what is possible in instances and contexts of effective education with engaged teachers. Greene says, "Apathy and indifference are likely to give way as images of what might be arise" (p. 5). This is a core facet to my research exploration. A facet that embodies education as being that which is essentially infused with ecological justice, social justice and political progressiveness. Lynne deepened her response to this question during our interview by adding, "No semester has ever run the same and I never ever want to run as semester the same because no set of kids is ever the same. If I ever do get to that point then I need to not be in education anymore." Her commitment to keeping the happenings of her classroom relevant and poignant for students - as well as the impact that process has on her engagement in the practice of teaching - is clear as we discuss examples of how she embodies social justice in her teaching as well as stories of success that will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis. Lynne's comments affirm an approach to

teaching that is inherently politically progressive through the appreciation of the imperative to apply best pedagogical practices and understandings of students as having diverse literacies. Her embodiment of the process of teaching as inspired is noteworthy.

Building relationships with students was also acknowledged as a core essential quality to the teaching practices of David, Margo, and Sophia. David noted that, “hopefully my students understand that I value all of them.” Sophia expanded her initial response by adding that high expectations, care and believing in our students were also of high importance. She said succinctly, “Challenging myself to foster both relationships and expectations. When students know that you care for and believe in them that’s when the best education happens.” Relationships were an omnipresent thread through my research interviews. In many of my questions the interviewee’s response included some element of how cultivating relationships with students is at the forefront of a positive journey through any course or any educational context. To the extent that everything else we do as teachers follows that. Further, that if we hope to accomplish anything in terms of the enacted curriculum - and to support student success, be professionally engaged, and so much more - we must firstly respect and value our students and seek to foster authentic relationships.

Another description of the essential quality of his teaching practice, for Visual Art teacher Truman, extends quite organically from the previous section on relationships being vitally important. He said, “Flexibility. Student choice and student voice. I think it allows for a lot of student ownership of learning as well which hopefully is what prompts them to develop lifelong learning that you hope carries over into the real world beyond high school.” It was quite apparent in our interview that this particular teacher very deeply believes in empowering students to seize the reigns of their learning journey with the support of their teacher. His perspective throughout our interview embodied a teacher who cared greatly and sought most of all to empower his students

to be self-sufficient people in their lives beyond school. This concept of lifelong learning – both being fostered as well as modeled on the parts of the student and the teacher - as being integral to the journey of teaching is a thread that runs throughout this research and thesis. It connects to the curriculum in terms of the broad areas of learning mentioned in chapter two as well as the process of enacting the curriculum – where teachers deliberately move towards their specific course learning goals with authenticity – that was fleshed out more thoroughly in theory also in chapter three and will be explored through the data analysis in chapter five.

In addition to the aforementioned qualities, my participants’ responses expanded the frame of reference further. The most essential quality to music teacher Macy’s teaching practice was, “Curiosity. I want to know how you feel about what I am saying right now. Perhaps, rather, passionate curiosity. Also attentiveness and growth. I’m committed to my own growth and I believe that I have to grow.” Virginia acknowledged “Patience and trust. Trusting that they are going to do the right thing. Honestly I’m always ready for a disaster I’m ready to be stolen from or somehow wrong done by the kids and it never happens.” She then affectionately told a story of a garden gnome of hers being “borrowed” from her classroom by some students, taken on an adventure around town – captured on film – and then the wonderful photographs along with a ransom note agreeing to surrender the gnome back to its rightful owner at a pizzeria greeted her on her desk some days after her property had gone missing. This was her one story of theft and it was obvious that the premise for the tale was one of deep relationships and mutual respect in actuality.

It is clear that each teacher interviewed holds dearly an individual appreciation for the positive qualities that make them who they are in their classroom. Each response was firmly grounded in a commitment to two overarching qualities that all ten of my interviewees passionately

acknowledged: Student growth and personal professional growth. In terms of the applicability of these qualities through a framework of understanding critical discourse analysis (CDA) one can even yet more deeply understand how a teacher's essential qualities or characteristics directly impact whether the happenings of the classroom embody also a commitment to a deeper imperative for social change. In the case of these teachers, and their openness to meet students where they are at partnered with their conviction to ensure that learning is useful to them the stage is quite handily set for teaching that is much more likely to be politically progressive because it is going to relate to students in the world that they are navigating. The next section explores this.

4.2 Essence of Education

When a teacher considers what they deem to be the essence, or the heart, of education the listener stands to learn a great deal about that teacher's stance on the potential that the learning situation holds for all involved. When asked, my participants provided me with a wealth of adjectives, stories, and insights regarding the topic. Before I launch into the richness of their more positive and optimistic inspirations regarding the essence of education, I must begin with the responses of Indigenous Studies teacher, Virginia, who said, "With what's going on in Saskatchewan with education I have a feeling that the essence or heart of education is being lost with all the budget cuts. I find it deeply upsetting." I must acknowledge that at the time of my research the education sector experienced a series of very devastating blows in terms of our provincial government. There has been much discussion in and around the teaching profession in terms of the significant cuts that have been rolled out in the spring of 2017. At this point in the interview Virginia paused. She took a breath and added, "The essence is the relationship between the learner and the teacher. That constant back-and-forth." Our exchange epitomizes the

juxtaposition of what a teacher does and the impacts of the governing forces that directly impact to what extent a teacher can be effective at doing what they do. When students do not have the educational assistant support they need or people in school buildings that play vital roles in successful transitions between programs then the essence or the heart of education can be compromised. At the same time, I appreciate Virginia's insights when she says that it still comes back to what takes place between a teacher and a learner and that, in a way, no one can take away the possibility that a single moment can hold.

It is part of our job as teachers to equip our students to be engaged citizens. At the core of our curriculum, in the broad areas of learning, lies this tenet that we are employed to support. For students to be "engaged citizens" and to have a sense of "self and community". As art teacher Truman said, the essence of education is to "foster engaged caring citizens that should be working tax paying contributing voting citizens. School should be a practice community for the real world." Eight of my ten interviewees said explicitly that school is a place to participate in community and that by the time students depart our secondary contexts they should be prepared to engage in the communities that await them beyond. Charlie endorsed this notion when he said, "preparing kids to be contributing members of society through learning skills or just being able to work with people in a variety of situations." Charlie, who teaches mostly math courses, went on to talk about how life will involve them having to work with people they maybe do not completely see eye to eye with, to do things on a timeline that perhaps would not happen organically otherwise, to finish things just for the sake of being tasked with the challenge, and other qualities of being rigorous and responsible. Sebastian, who spoke about rigor in his response to the question regarding what his essential quality of his teaching is, brings in a cosmopolitan dimension for consideration. He stated:

We might be evolving past a good democratic society where we're becoming more plural. The challenge of progressing our organization as a political body. As a community. As a global community. That lies at the heart of education. We are educating citizens of the cosmos. Cosmopolitan citizens require educators who are humble enough to understand that they don't have all the answers. And who want to embark on that journey together.

This insight gives rise to a deeper imperative for what the essence of education may be. We hold the responsibility to support our students in their journey of self-discovery and self-responsibility in the context of belonging to a community that they are an integral part of. Catherine suggested that we as teachers ought to "support students seeing themselves as members of a community" in addition to our role where we "inspire involved citizens in our communities and build competencies." Towards the end of inspiring citizens who feel a sense of belonging to/with their community it is important, as teachers, to listen - and be guided by - the voices of our students. Sebastian called on the words of Paulo Freire (1968) - from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* - when he discusses whose voices should guide the process: "Those folks whose voices are most likely to be left out of the conversation need to be at the centre of the discussion. We need to start with their voices." For Sebastian it is essential that "schools need to be places of action." This speaks to the need for the happenings of classrooms to go beyond the theoretical or the insular. School needs to be a place where real things happen, where young people are supported to realize themselves in a way that will serve them in life.

Mental Health and Addictions teacher Margo acknowledged where the source of what is being learned comes from. She said that we "all must learn from each other." Throughout my interview conversations it was apparent that teachers, or at least all the teachers I had the honour to speak to, value the essence of education as being something profoundly important. A part of

the journey of life where young people are empowered to participate, to belong, to engage, and so much more. As music teacher Macy put it, “the essence of education should be that it is a safe place for development and growth.” With inspired teaching professionals - such as the ten individuals I have had the opportunity to interview - the landscape of education is quite compelling. Further, it is exciting to think of the generation of young people it is supporting to rise up. This generation is being supported through what teachers appreciate to be the purpose of schooling.

4.3 Purpose of Schooling

I asked my participants what the purpose of schooling was, and their response tied closely to the previous question regarding the essence of education. It was interesting to me that these two questions ended up being so very linked, woven together in terms of the purpose of school being to support the realization of what the essence of education is. To begin representing this part of my research exploration, I draw on the words of Sebastian. He said, “[the purpose of schooling] is to create a public institution that invites the individual to become part of the collective vision.” These words cause my arms to goose bump as I reflect on how an inspiration for education, that is extended into the classroom through a complexity of factors and “the [essential core] relationship between the learner and the teacher” that supports a student to do what Sebastian said is something deeply special. If the purpose of schooling helps give rise to sense of community where individuals appreciate the imperative to invest their authentic selves into the collective then the process of education is thoroughly valuable. As one ponders the value of a person being able to invest themselves in something greater than and vision along with other human beings the possibilities become highly inspiring and endless. At this point in our conversation, Sebastian said, “real education is going to be painful because you’re going to grow.” (p. 2). He talks about being a

child and feeling the physical pains of growing as his legs got longer. That you can feel yourself growing. That it does hurt but it is important in life to grow. Also that it happens slowly. Never so fast that you break. He ended this part of our conversation by saying, “It is an exciting process. Scary as hell but exciting.” This characterization of the purpose of school struck me. Sebastian and I went on to discuss how important it is to belong to something beyond yourself in life and how some of our own individual experiences earlier in our journeys through school held poignant moments that supported this quality as being essential to the purpose of schooling. It is also relevant to point out that moments where this was not being pursued resulted in a less-than-inspired situation.

Catherine endorsed this characterization of the purpose of schooling when he said “We are trying to develop a community where everyone learns from each other. To learn what it’s like to be part of something larger than yourself.” This concept of community directly connects to senses of belonging. Margo expanded on this line of thinking when she said that, in her mind, the purpose of schooling is “to empower students to feel that they’re capable.” She said:

To educate students in a more worldly way. To open their eyes. To open their mind to an educated Indigenous person. A lot of [students] have not had an Indigenous teacher before. So, sharing my own stories and hearing my student’s stories is essential. Also, to talk about what it’s like to be on a reserve. What it’s like to be an Indigenous person in Saskatoon.

Our conversation from here was enlightening for me. Margo spoke from a position of understanding that as an Indigenous teacher she is immediately a role model for young Indigenous students in a very important way. Certainly I have noticed that much of our leadership in education is non-Indigenous yet as Margo spoke about how important it is for her to openly share with students from a perspective of having lived on a reserve, having had close family members who

survived the residential school system, and even her comment about speaking with students about being an Indigenous person in Saskatoon as a starting point not just for anti-racist or anti-oppressive education but as part of the very core purpose of schooling. If education is to empower all students then this is certainly a significant core piece. As David said, “[the purpose of schooling] is to give all students an equal playing field. To send them out into the world with a set of skills that allow them to explore whatever areas they’re interested in after high school.” He stated: “School should be the great equalizer.” For school to be this equalizer, as David refers to it, it is essential that we do work towards something deeply meaningful in time spent at school.

Virginia offered an important insight on the topic in saying that some individuals in society uphold that the purpose of schooling is, “to maintain power.” In our conversation, she pointed out that what we are supposed to do in our classrooms is ensure that the status quo continue in terms of who is empowered and who is disempowered. We talked about how we apply our professional discretion and make choices in our classrooms to invert power dynamics and to empower young people who have been kept powerless. Power is an integral political element in educational contexts. As teachers we have much influence over how this social issue is embodied, deconstructed, questioned, and even recreated or inverted. How teachers understand the purpose of schooling directly impacts to what extent they seek social justice in their classrooms, a dimension that will be picked up on in later sections of data representation and analysis.

Other understandings of the purpose of schooling included the mandate for students to learn skills, as Charlie says, “[teachers should be] teaching interpersonal skills. Challenging them to work with different classmates, different teachers. And to be successful in a variety of subject areas. You need to be able to change how you behave in a variety of contexts. You need to be able to adapt if you’re going to be successful.” Also, as Lynne said, a goal of education is: “To

train a child to be a functioning adult in terms of curricular studies leading to them being a productive human being.” Other appreciations included “A safe place for children and youth to discover and develop skills and interests and to ensure a shared context in society” said Macy. “To provide students with an opportunity to learn how they learn. A space to determine their strengths and struggles as a person and have interactions with peers and other adults that fosters them to grow and change. As citizens and as people.” said Sophia. The premise that classrooms are places where students ought to be supported to understand the relationship between themselves and the world around them, along with the imperative to engage their role with an inclusive compass, is a core tenet of social justice education.

As one ponders the purpose of schooling as it is understood and embodied by practicing teachers it becomes increasingly clear that a teacher’s job includes a great many dimensions that have a profound impact on the lives of young people – both in their present situation in school as well as the greater purpose beyond. My participants’ willingness to share from their experiences shines light on how teaching requires an acute critical lens for interpreting what priority is most relevant in any given instance of education. At the same time education requires teachers to invest a heightened level of belief in the value that the schooling journey holds potential to accomplish something very important in the lives of everyone involved. A prerequisite understanding that schooling can empower and equip people. That the process of engaging in it has value during the years of school and beyond. That education is something that protects safe spaces, positive risk taking, and challenges students to invest in the collective. A progressive purpose of schooling truly can be inspiring.

4.4 Greater Purpose of Class Time

Education at times goes unappreciated. At this present moment in Saskatchewan a great many teachers feel that their profession – and what they do each day in the classroom – is being undervalued. Are teachers merely glorified babysitters? Or, does what happens in each hour of the day connect to a greater purpose? I asked my interview participants this very question and, to set the tone for this section of data representation, I will begin with the words of David: “There better be a bigger purpose of that hour!” He quickly responded and then looked at me with wide eyes as though the very core of who we were as two people who share a profession in teaching might be absolutely called into question if there was not a bigger purpose to our class time. He continued: “You should come out of that hour with something bigger than school” Maybe the “something bigger” is just the fact of being challenged. Maybe it is deeply transformational in that an individual is challenged to think differently or to change their perception. It could also be a more traditional understanding of the bigger purpose in the sense that you “maybe cultivate a skill you’ll use in the future.” David and I, in our discussion, explored some of the moments that come up while teaching. For example, how a student can say something rude to a classmate or even disagree in a way that is less conducive to positive growth and that the situation of those events happening can in themselves lead organically to positive learning for all involved. David relayed a story of someone calling a classmate an idiot and how he took that opportunity to talk about more constructive ways to acknowledge differences of opinion. Over this part of our conversation David’s passion for the many ways that class time is useful for a multitude of applications – both in terms of achieving the curricular outcomes but also, and perhaps even more importantly – beyond the curriculum.

Margo appreciated that the greater purpose of class time is to “honour who each student is.” She added, “it needs to be a balance of that and the academic.” For Sophia the greater purpose of class time is “to provide challenging multiple learning opportunities for students to demonstrate outcomes in a way that is affirming, engaging, and in a safe space that’s open for mistakes and open for being inquisitive and a shared learning journey.” That is a tall order. When one considers the great many factors that contribute to Sophia’s vision for the purpose of class time both the student and the teacher need to be invested in the journey for it to be successful. Lynne’s comments on the greater purpose of education included, “I’m supposed to say content but honestly I want all my peeps there. For them to be safe and accounted for.” For Lynne who teaches Home Economics it is most important that her students feel safe in the space while also connecting with a strong sense of belonging to her classroom community. She openly shared that if they come and participate they will pass and so success is less of a worry in her classes. Yet, Lynne’s role in knowing where her students are at in their other classes - and supporting them to do what they need to do to also be successful there - is something that inspires her in terms of the relationship dimension with her students as well as them feeling that it will be noticed if they are not there. Students knowing that they will be missed if they cannot – or choose not to – attend. The greater purpose is a holistic embodiment of community, where others are counting on you to show up and invest yourself in the collective realizing that what will take place as a collective would not be the same if members of the community are in absence. The organic nature of being responsive, as a teacher, to one’s students was a pertinent theme in the discussions about the greater purpose of class time that I had with my participants. This included the balance of relationships and academic pursuits as well as appreciations of safety and belonging. Catherine embraced that:

The greater purpose of class time connects to the purpose of schooling. If you're trying to have students become engaged citizens in their communities and to build skills well sometimes it veers off the course that was planned and they learn something new or question something. Sometimes a conflict will come up and we'll explore how to resolve the conflict or how to problem solve. To build skills for life.

Charlie affirmed this line of thinking in terms of responding to students and using the authentic moments of class to seize teachable moments. "The actual learning is sort of a self-discovery of what they're good at. Figuring out what supports they need to be able to work through any problem." As Sophia said in an earlier passage, Charlie confirms from another point-of-view that it is important that school be a place where they learn how they learn best. That this journey must be accomplished in a manner that affirms them as whole people. The usefulness of class time further extends to engaged citizenship, the heart of education and the essential qualities of teaching practices. Truman agreed that the greater purpose of class time is "for students to be citizens. To understand the sense of community. The benefits of being engaged and involved and serving and caring. Also being responsible. It's got to extend beyond the classroom."

Sebastian deepened the exploration of what the greater purpose of class time might be by drawing in Aristotle. He said:

Aristotle's truism excellence is a virtue. It is a habit. A daily habit. We are being guided by daimon. Our truest spirit. We walk every step of our journey as an exercise of growth towards a destination that is not likely to be reached. For Aristotle that virtue was integrity. That was the ideal make up of a human. I guess I try to say that in every class. You would want every class to have that feel.

He extrapolated by explaining how not every single moment in a class will be the perfect manifestation of the picture of virtue that Aristotle paints and yet Sebastian is inspired to seek that level of greatness with all his classes, the pursuit of a journey guided by our truest spirit is inherently valuable. One may never fully realize their virtue but the process of working on it is worth time and has a significant application certainly beyond a single class hour. Sebastian continued: “I always want to make sure my students understand two things: Firstly that I’m working my butt off and secondly that this is what I love doing. But I only love doing it because I’m working my ass off. The moment I stop working hard I don’t love it as much. I tell them the same thing. You’ll love it if you give yourself over to it. Because when you try for real you’re going to be proud of what you do.” Sebastian’s voice was infused with conviction at this point in our conversation. His willingness to share from such a deep part of his awareness of what it is about teaching and about education and about the greater purpose of what he is trying to accomplish with his students is quite compelling. Sebastian’s love of teaching radiated in the room as we engaged in this part of our exchange.

In extension of what really matters about what happens in class time, I will draw on the enchanting insights of Virginia once again. She claimed that the content in the formal curriculum is most likely to be forgotten within some time frame of learning it. Whether it is content memorized for a test or the subject of an essay, students are unlikely to retain much of what they “learn from us.” She refocused our conversation back to the topic of relationships. The greater purpose of time spent in class is solely relationships. She refined her appreciation of relationships in a way that for her clearly ends, for the most part, when students depart our building at the end of grade twelve. By then they will have what they need from us, and they will not likely come back and visit because they will have moved on with their lives. Just to be perfectly clear, Virginia

reinforced the importance of the relationships we build with students over their journey through high school stating that “literally the rest doesn’t fricking matter.”

In conclusion of this sub section, I must acknowledge that all ten interviewees declared explicitly in our conversation that there was an imperative for class time to have a greater purpose. There was little point to class if it did not have an extensive value beyond. If what we, as teachers and learners, are doing during class time does not have a greater purpose then what my research interview participants made very clear is that what they are committed to in their practice of the art of teaching would be lost.

4.5 Understandings of Social Justice

The concept of social justice may have a generally understood definition, at least in terms of educational contexts, such as how Cochran-Smith summarizes:

[A social justice framework] actively address[es] the dynamics of oppression, privilege, and isms, [and recognizes] that society is the product of historically rooted, institutionally sanctioned stratification along socially constructed group lines that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability [among others]. Working for social justice in education means guiding students [and often being guided by students] in critical self-reflection of their socialization into this matrix of unequal relationships and its implications, analysis of the mechanisms of oppression, and the ability to challenge these hierarchies. (As cited in Sensoy, O., 2009, p. 350)

Teachers, however, as do any other individuals working actively in a field where theory is applied in a multitude of micro instances, have their own working definition. Before I could get into real

life classroom examples of social justice applied with students I asked my interview participants to define the term social justice.

Virginia proclaimed confidently that social justice is, “anti-racism and anti-oppressive ways of learning and ways of acting [with students].” She succinctly acknowledges that it is the moments that take place between teachers and learners that must embody anti-racist and anti-oppressive tenets. Macy said that “social justice is about addressing inequalities in the system.” Although she does not say specifically that her embodiment of social justice is deliberately anti-racist or anti-oppressive explicitly she does go on to talk about how she moves with social justice consciousness in her music and drama courses with students. In the next chapter I will expand on Macy’s experiences applying social justice teaching including a poignant example involving Buffy Sainte-Marie. Margo contended, “I feel like I live social justice. Literally as an Indigenous person I walk with the tendrils of social justice floating around me. There’s so many Indigenous issues and being one of the few Indigenous teachers ...” Margo shared about how in many contexts she finds herself in, in the teaching profession, she is the only Indigenous person. With that she feels an urgency to do as much as she can to be a positive role model and to be as deliberate as she can to support deepened awareness of Indigenous issues with her students and her colleagues.

All ten of my research participants made mention of a strong imperative that social justice in education involves addressing inequalities with students and doing something about those inequalities. As Catherine said, “Looking at society through a lens of not everyone having equal access to the same opportunities and being able to have an orientation where you recognize that and that you take some sort of action to try to combat that.” Or, as Lynne said,

A consideration for all individuals as being equal ... a permeating thread that would be extended to ecological consciousness. Running things through a filter of, ‘how does this

affect the earth?’ ‘What choice will be least harmful?’ ... Social justice is doing the right thing. Understanding that everyone is equal so it doesn’t matter your race, gender, background, religious beliefs. We are all equal. No one is better or worse than anyone else. I’m not better than my students. They’re not better than me. We’re all equal. We all meet each other where we are at.

It is clear in Lynne’s description of what social justice means to her that she is committed to a landscape of equality existing in her classroom with her students. She went on to talk about how she tries to facilitate a learning community where individual students feel that they belong to the collective. She refers to it as a “a herd” where everyone is in it together. For Lynne this herd concept is appreciative of a supportive mentality where each individual is a valuable part of the group. A herd that notices if one is missing on any given day. She describes the herd as though it is a sort of temporary family. A learning community that shares one hour each day in an exploration of the particular course, or courses, she facilitates.

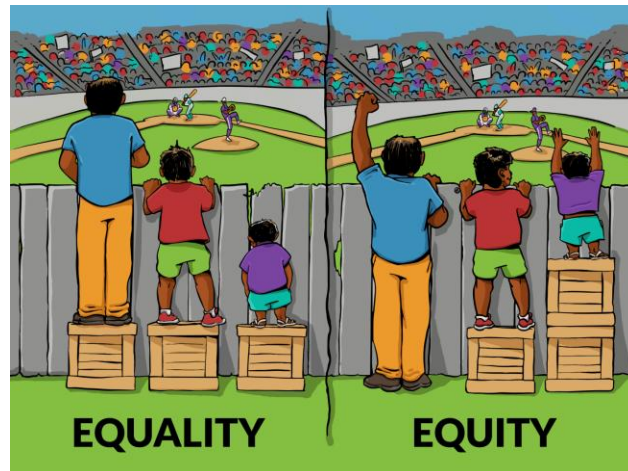
Sebastian offered a helpful line of consideration when he says, “There’s the individual and there’s the collective and the tension between the flourishing of the individual within the collective. For me, that’s social justice.” He refined how that balance can be navigated, “to become the best I can be without negatively impacting others on their same journey.” For Sebastian it is essential that everyone be investing their authentic self in the journey of self-realization. He views his role as a teacher as being supportive of each individual student to be guided, as he said earlier in the greater purpose of class time section, by their *daimon*. The *daimon* can be understood to be an individual’s truest inner spirit or, in the context of seeking social justice embodied, it is the *daimon* that will be necessary for individuals to move towards a more inspired education. He is very optimistic of what social justice can look like in the classroom. Optimistic to the extent that he

critiques Nietzsche's notion of the imperative for a human being to move to the mountains. By moving to the mountains, they would be deliberately seeking to depart society in pursuit of the more ultimate realization of what one could possibly be if they existed apart from the constant navigation of relating to others. Sebastian's criticism originates from the point of saying that the trouble with Nietzsche is that we do not live on a mountain alone. We do live in a society where we have the reality – and the opportunity – to seek, as he says, “the flourishing or the individual” within a collective context of an also-flourishing collective.

My other interviewees contributed additional insights on the topic of defining social justice in teaching. David suggested, “[Social justice is] recognizing inequalities within society and working towards solutions that would balance those inequalities.” For David it is essential for the classroom to be a place where real social inequalities be acknowledged, explored, discussed, and solutions be considered and even actions engaged towards more inclusive ends. Some of the societal issues he made mention of included access to housing and support with addictions. Others I interviewed also discussed the classroom as a place to talk about poverty and access to food, as was the case for Lynne. David added that “it is about deconstructing what is fair and what is equal [with students].” Or as Sophia endorsed, “Every person [should have] equal rights and opportunities but I don't think that necessarily everything that's equal is fair or everything that's fair is equal.” She referred to a comic that represents the distinction between equity and equality by Maguire (2016) where three people are watching a baseball game looking over a fence. Equality is each person having a crate to enhance their height. The trouble is that the three people are of diverse heights; one a small child, one a taller adult and then a third one in the middle. The tallest individual in the image does not require a crate to see over the fence whereas the littlest one, to see, would require two. Therefore, equity would be distributing the crates so the littlest one has

two, the medium-sized one has one and the tallest one has none. Please see figure 1 below for reference.

Figure 1.



Truman added to this line of consideration when he said, “Equality. Equity. Holding people accountable to a standard of fairness.” He expanded to make mention of the way this fairness might be embodied. For instance, who would be held accountable? In the context Truman teaches he sees significant disparity in terms of the students he works with and feels that it is important for school to do a better job of empowering all young people, particularly First Nations and Metis students, to be successful. The accountability dimension is key, in my mind, in considerations of how social justice is understood and pathways of deepened consideration facilitated in educational contexts. It has to go beyond tokenism. It must dig deep into oppression and seek to invert oppressive power dynamics. David confirmed, “Every person has equal rights and opportunities but I don’t think that necessarily everything that’s equal is fair or everything that’s fair is equal.” Also, “Making an individual’s education more successful based on their voice is critical to our work.” Similarly to what Sebastian said in the earlier section on the essence of education where he drew on the insights of Paulo Freire, it is the individual’s voice – particularly those voices who have been left out and disempowered – that must direct the path going forward. Through the

contributions of my research participants it is clear that the definition of social justice in education is complex and requires teachers who are highly committed to their role in the work.

4.6 Characterizations of Enacting the Curriculum

The process of enacting the curriculum can be understood as that special intersection when teacher's and student's interests converge towards authentic learning. In my literature review I made reference to Cornbleth (1990) in saying, "as professionals, [teachers] know what is best for their students' learning. Occupational context, which shapes pedagogical context, is shaped in turn by social/cultural contexts as well as by teacher associations and collective experience." (p. 78). This aspect of teaching is paramount in terms of how engaging an experience in a classroom might be for a student as well as how engaged the teacher will be. As teachers we make choices all the time in terms of the enacted curriculum, and so, I extended my curiosity for how teachers embody this process in their classrooms when I engaged in my research interviews.

Catherine shared that in her classroom the enacted curriculum is "where true learning takes place." Further that the process of enacting the curriculum "creates a valuable learning experience for everyone that's involved. People become willing to step outside their comfort zones." (p. 8). It was interesting to me what came up in my conversations with teachers regarding this concept and process of the enacting the curriculum. A disposition of teachers as lifelong learners abounded. All ten of my participants shared from a position of transparent vulnerability regarding their own commitment to also being a learner. For instance, Sebastian said, "teaching ends when the teacher stops learning." Lynne added, "If the teacher actually engages then the chances of the kid succeeding increase greatly." Our conversation went on to discuss how students know right away if their teacher actually is interested in the day's activity or even in the course content

generally. In her context the focus is cooking and so she outright proclaims that the buy in is easier for her as, “kids eat. This is a pretty universal common ground. I connect instantly on the first day I ask what they want to make this semester and it goes from there.” She described examples of finding common ground with students where both her and their interests and passions were being honoured. One example involved a student early in a semester expressing interest in making a Thai noodle bowl. Her passion for finding recipes and trying new things collided with that student’s keenness to be able to manifest something that they like to eat but previously had not made from scratch. The result was an inspired semester of learning and deepened relationship where the teacher and the student were engaged in the learning journey, working towards learning goals, together.

Similarly, at this point in my interview with Charlie, he said “I try to get my passion for math to them. Showing them my love of the subject goes a long way to make the student buy in.” He also shares that he draws on other classes that he has taught so as to reinforce cross-curricular dimensions that deepen the relevance of what is being explored or learned to the world beyond school. Charlie said, “I use real world examples.” He continued to share how this enacting curriculum aspect certainly is challenging at times as not everyone shares his level of passion for mathematics. His approach to inspiring student success is partially to be transparent about his own passion for math but also to be honest with them about the usefulness of math to them. Towards this end he said: “In my discipline this may be the hardest part. We are exercising our brains like going to the gym.” He is brutally honest with students that calculus is unlikely to have an application in life beyond calculus class unless you are planning for post-secondary education or a career where high level math courses are pre-requisites such as engineering. Yet, the process of doing calculus is good for one’s brain similarly to how playing chess is. It works it out just like

lifting weights is good for your biceps. Charlie shared several examples that will be expanded on in the next chapter.

Margo talked about her embodiment of enacting the curriculum to extend directly from having built authentic relationships with her students. She says that authentic relationships lead to trust and trust leads to healthy risk-taking. For her it is essential that her students are present with her in the learning journey and investing their authentic selves in the process equally. She honours them in her choices of text, videos, poems, exemplars, etc. For Margo it is integral that the relationship be cultivated first because that is where an understanding of what can then be part of the enacting curriculum parts can be derived from. Macy, on the other hand, believed in being transparent about the learning outcomes themselves and strove to be “constantly aware of how the students are feeling about what [she is] doing.” She explained a 10 percent principle where if she sees that more than 10 percent are either bored or frustrated then she is the one that needs to change. Macy is highly committed to this principle to the extent that she will ask her students directly about their level of interest and engagement to help inform her choices for facilitation of the learning journey. She spoke about inviting her students to come up with their own alternative assignments. Macy explained that this sharing of power leads to student ownership and an investment of self into the learning journey that leads to a collision of passions.

Virginia, in her articulations regarding enacting the curriculum, said “I found voice to be able to describe anti-racism to the kids.” As a person who is evidently committed to a teaching practice that embodies anti-oppressiveness it is clear that this comment represents a significant moment in her own journey as a teacher, something that she has been working on and seeking. She referred to a particular student who had a complex journey through last semester and how she shared with him that they were going to be talking about missing and murdered Aboriginal women

in the next few days. He shared with Virginia some excerpts from his own life that connected directly to the course content being explored. Immediately their relationship was deepened and the course going forward was changed. This student was connecting with Virginia through her choices for the upcoming class content. He worked hard and had some ups and downs over the semester. In June, one day Virginia was sitting at her desk during lunch. This student came in and said, “I picked my yearbook quote: ‘One in three’”. He was referring to something they had explored in class. The statistic that only one in three Indigenous young people will graduate. Virginia paused in our conversation. She took a breath. It was abundantly clear that this series of events had meant a lot to her. She had positively impacted a young person’s course of success through the investment of her passions – anti-oppressive education – along with her student’s interests – missing and murdered Aboriginal women – towards a deepened buy into the learning journey that resulted in significant success.

4.7 Summative Thoughts on this Chapter

This chapter provided representation and analysis of my interview data regarding six sections including: appreciations of the essential qualities of inspired teaching practices, pursuits of deepened understanding of the essence of education, explorations of the purpose of schooling, considerations for the greater purpose(s) of class time, a closer look at diverse understandings of the concept of social justice, as well as teacher’s characterizations of the process of enacting the curriculum. The experiences shared and the insights spoken provide a distinct picture of inspiration for education that is deeply valuable in terms of its impact on young people as well as how it exudes profound engagement on the part of the teachers. The embodiments of care for their students, vast applications of providing students with multiple opportunities to engage in the

learning journey, explicit manifestations of political progressiveness, as well as countless evidences in support of teachers who are intensely engaged in their practice of teaching permeate through the interviews I was honoured to share in.

CHAPTER 5

AUTHENTICITY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Ladson-Billings (1995) in a discussion about the importance of pedagogy being critically conceived said, “But, that’s just good teaching!” (p. 1). This chapter will explore what active practicing teachers characterize as best practices for inspired teaching, how they view the impact of those practices on student engagement, examples of manifestations of social justice education in action, considerations of student success in inspired educational contexts including examples of enacting the curriculum, explorations of the relationship between student success and teacher engagement, and finally, considerations of other emergent themes from this research.

5.1 Best Practices for Inspired Teaching

Although the teachers I interviewed had a vast diversity of insights when it came to what they consider to be their best practices one specific characterization of best practice resonated through all ten interviews: Build relationships with students! Margo said, “Relationship building before anything else.” “A disposition towards making relationships” said Virginia. Lynne appreciated that you need to “make a relationship with a kid.” Charlie joined the consensus when he said, “The biggest thing for me in terms of classroom strategies is just building relationships with the students.” Or, as Catherine put it, “Before you can do anything else in a classroom you’ve got to build that relationship.” “Building relationships” said both Sophia and David. All ten of my interviewees declared loudly that building relationships with students is a significant facet to what they consider best practices for teaching.

The discussion around best practices continued. “I think they need to feel that their teacher understands part or parts of who they are. That their voices are heard and valued” said Catherine

in expanse of her initial comment. Our discussion included taking time to get to know one's students, having time set aside for individual conversations, as well as finding those points of common interest. In Catherine's case, as a Physical Education teacher she is able to connect in many ways that will be expanded upon in follow-up sections of this chapter.

Charlie was passionate in his stance on how important it is for students to see their teachers as human beings. For him that meant, "Having conversations that aren't just math. Hopefully by the time they're in grade 11 or 12 in some of those heavier classes you've already built those relationships." "I try to have my door open and to be approachable." Charlie expounded about how important the relationship piece is in his experience. "I reach the kids most successfully and get them to buy into whatever I happen to be teaching if I have a good relationship with them. The education can start after that." Another best practice that is essential to Charlie's teaching is his self-declared love of being highly organized. This is something that he feels strongly supports students to be successful in his class but also has a significant application for their journey of success in high school generally as well as their lives beyond. It is something that fits into the enacted curriculum for him because it is an arena where students are compelled to invest their authentic selves into a practice that has tangible results in terms of their path of success.

Reciprocity in terms of respect and trust are essential to Margo's appreciation of best practices and that it goes "both ways." Virginia suggests that one-on-one time where students can engage in "sharing and listening" is an important feature of best practices. She also acknowledged that she tries to "make the best effort possible to connect with Indigenous kids because they know that I'm an Indigenous person. By the simple fact of my own brown skin they see themselves in some sort of leadership in the building. That's important for their success." This relates to what Margo claimed in an earlier section in terms of the importance of young people having Indigenous

teachers because it provides strong Indigenous role models in positions of power. The visible fact of First Nations and Metis teachers in positions of leadership – as is the case for Margo and Virginia – supports a shift in the power dynamic for young Indigenous students.

Sophia explained that there must be a “sharing of power.” In her practice of teaching she clarifies that she values the “student as expert” or, as David confirmed, “Our students come with a world of experience and a world of knowledge. They are certainly not empty vessels. We must use what they know. We must listen to them.” This connects back to what was explored in my literature review where Dewey (1938) discussed the gap of maturity between the teacher and the student and the efforts that need to be made for the education process to not be static. Lynne clarified, “I want them to feel that school is a safe place.” The imperative to share power and to be willing to learn from students shines through the conversations with my research participants. Macy opened up, “I try to be intentionally transparent about my own learning journey. If we model what we are asking they’re going to see it as authentic.” Macy described the meaningfulness of embodying the path of being a lifelong learner personally. She felt strongly that students need to see their teachers as learners to buy into the learning journey with their teacher.

Sebastian presented a distinction between what an individual needs to survive in life and what they need to thrive in life. He values best practices as being the path where students – through the process of their journey through education with us – depart with what they need to thrive. He spoke about the skills required to get a job, etc. as being part of what we need to equip young people with to survive but that there is more to it than just that. He referred to a situation where he was teaching poetry to adolescents and what an appreciation of best practices might look like in this instance. If Sebastian, over the course of facilitating a poetry lesson/unit, can equip a student with an inner narrative that says, “I don’t hate poetry” then he will have done something quite

profound, particularly if that student started the journey using words like hate to describe their relationship to poetry. Further, Sebastian added that it could be that this inner narrative actually leads them to one day read poetry or write poetry. Or perhaps even have an opinion in a conversation about a poem. Sebastian appeared to be quite inspired at this moment in our conversation. He looked at me deeply and spoke from a seemingly convicted position of genuine inspiration for what becomes possible when a teacher gives themselves over to the work of education. In this part of our discussion he also said that we want “these young adults to emerge as capable and self-directed.” This way they can leave with a deepened sense of understanding themselves that will serve them well in their lives.

Sebastian also acknowledged that other features of best practices included: “visually aesthetically driven assignments.” It was clear that this was an essential guiding principal to his work as an inspired teacher. For Macy she stated that she likes to “creat[e] individually co-constructed versions of assignments.” Or as Truman said, “Giving lots and lots of student choice in what they’re doing. To float out multiple assignments at the same time.” As I explored in my literature review, Cornbleth (1990) suggests, “the teaching occupation as a social community which maintains ideologies and mechanisms of legitimacy’, for example beliefs about how young people develop and learn, about how best to teach various skills and subjects, and about how to adapt teaching to the perceived needs of different student groups.” (p. 78). It is important that a teacher be invested to the extent that they can seek the embodiment of Cornbleth’s words. In addition, “Genuineness. Trying to be genuinely engaged, excited, enthusiastic. Teacher demeanor is huge,” added David. Or, “changing what I’m doing based on their interests” was another insight from Macy. These characterizations of best practices shared by my participants paint a picture of inspired teaching. An education that seeks to realize, in the classroom, what was described in

chapter four in terms of essence – or heart – of the whole thing. If instances of education can embody the characteristics described in this section – resulting in student and teacher engagement in the journey of learning – then the landscape of teaching becomes quite inspiring. Based on the sampling of teachers included in this research I am quite optimistic.

5.2 Impact of Best Practices on Student Engagement and Attendance

Best practices are all fine and good if they result in teachers being invested in their art of teaching. That said, best practices could remain highly theoretical if they stay solely in the realm of the teacher and do not extend into the lives of students in a notable way that gives rise to inspiration on the part of the student. The focus of my research included looking at how teacher's perceived the impact of said best practices on student engagement and attendance.

5.2.1 Impact on Engagement

Truman contended that without the students buying in they will lack pride in their work. For him best practices included giving students options and really empowering them to guide their learning process. He shared that “If there's more choice then there'll be ownership of their work and as a result they will be more proud.” Sophia said that when best practices are applied that she “sees students being so excited about what they're creating. And they can't wait to keep going.” Pride exuded from Sophia as she said that “they see themselves as artists not just inside that one hour. Or one genre of art. They're starting to understand how to be an artist in a wider realm.” Sophia's passion for seeing her students arrive at positions of believing in themselves as talented artists is apparent. It was evident that she believed in their abilities and works hard with them to navigate an inspired journey in class. When students are excited it is because they have decided

that what they are pursuing in class – or with their teacher and classmates - is valuable and/or useful. Even if it is subconscious awareness that is taking place as a result of an effectively implemented enacted curriculum. The fact of their excitement authenticates the situation as being one of genuine engagement on the learning journey. Sophia’s second comment speaks to the cross-curricular application of best practice teaching which is that what takes place in a given hour holds value beyond that single class hour. When her students move through the many hours of their school day “as artists” then she knows that she has achieved something very special with her students.

“An atmosphere of mutual respect supports student success. You don’t have to like everyone but we have to be able to respect each other as individuals in the group.” As a veteran teacher of 10 years, Charlie spoke from a position of knowing, when he says students operate in a climate of mutual respect – as a best practice – and the impact is direct on student success. He spoke about their heightened levels of achievement as well as how their engagement with him in the learning journey deepens. Catherine acknowledged that engagement exists on a continuum where it will look different for different individuals. In her physical education courses she understands that not everyone arrives with the same background or the same confidence. Also, that in Phys Ed – and other classes – the learning goal will be quite individual. For example, one student may have accomplished a challenging learning goal when they wait a minute to let a classmate (or team mate in a game sport context) participate first. Or it could be a student choosing a partner for an activity that is new. Or even showing up and getting changed into gym clothing right at the start of class. Each person is on a path of success, embraces Catherine, and their engagement will equally look uniquely theirs.

Sebastian spoke from a position of conviction that there is a strong relationships between teachers being authentically engaged and students being authentically engaged. He said, “you are authentically embodying an active learning state that will hopefully connect and inspire active engagement in learning as an authentic process.” Sebastian’s best practices includes authenticity at the heart. For him he felt a strong sense that he must personally embody a path of engagement in learning if he expects his students to be engaged in a path of learning. He shared examples of semesters where he embodied the authentic engagement piece on his part and that his students came to expect his excitement, his arrival with new materials, his responsiveness in terms of what happens next emerging directly from what happened last, and more. Further, he talked about the impact of that commitment on student engagement. That they would arrive poised and ready to jump into the next phase of the journey with him, investing their authentic selves in the journey. A specific example involving a young man and a moment of applying professional discretion in terms of a text being explored with said young man towards a path of engagement will be discussed later in this thesis.

The “trust” piece is significant in terms of student buy in and engagement. Sebastian spoke about his motivation to empower young Indigenous learners on a path of success. He contextualized this part of our discussion by saying that he is committed to improving his effectiveness with his Indigenous students because it is an area that he feels he has much more to learn. He talks about questioning some of the mandates in the curriculum with students: for example, the requirement to look at Hamlet in grade twelve English. He personally believed that there may be a more relevant choice in terms of a major publication that warrants exploring yet understands that he must challenge his students to the task. He said that this deconstruction has a positive impact because, “they trust you because they know that you don’t represent the institution.

They know that you question all of those things as well.” He spoke about how, with his First Nations, Inuit, and Metis students particularly that he wants to “show them that I trust their judgement about education.” Each individual student’s insights are valued in terms of the critical deconstruction element as well as how what should be explored and how unfold in the classroom. Sebastian teaches regular, gifted as well as International Baccalaureate (IB) courses at his school. Regarding the gifted context specifically, he spoke about his the process of best pedagogical practices – meaning responsiveness in terms of learning being more than survival and learning being about thriving in a state of authentic growth, growth as painful in a positive way – he said:

This process works beautifully with my gifted students because of the onus it puts on metacognitive processes being at the center of our work. That there is always this meta level where you’re thinking meta-curricularly you’re thinking meta-pedagogically. And you’re students get into that with you when they’re these profoundly gifted kids.

The concept of “care” begins to emerge in this phase of my research. Each individual teacher knows their particular students and my conversations with each teacher suddenly becomes much more deeply personal as they describe what precipitates engagement in response to their conception of best practices. Care is expanded upon later in this chapter as an emergent theme.

Keeping one’s classroom door open might seem like an insignificant point in terms of the teaching practices that go on in a learning community. For Virginia, however, it is a core characteristic of what seemed to be part of the landscape of supporting success in the lives of her students. She said, “There’s no locking of the doors. They are always able to come in. That has a high impact on the atmosphere in the room. Also I always welcome kids and say, ‘I’m glad you’re here.’” Our conversation continued to evolve. This led to Virginia making reference to the importance of students being able to walk in late if they need to. The concept of lateness and

absences will be picked up more directly in the next section but it is noteworthy that four of my ten teachers declared that being late or missing classes is not such a big deal and how this perspective is essential to their conception of best practices. Macy shared a story of spending a weekend on two students' reserve and coming to a deeper position of awareness for what students need from teachers in terms of supportiveness in this regard. For Macy it is important that what goes on in the classroom honours the intuition of the student. She described instances where a student wonders if they have in fact demonstrated the learning outcome because the way that they did so was by personally declaring an interest and then following that up with action. Macy affirmed that it is exciting to see students engaged and being successful without even, at least initially, knowing that it is a formal learning outcome they are demonstrating (p. 4). This is a wonderful example of true empowerment. It is about putting the reins of the learning wagon in the hands of the student and then playing a supportive role in helping them achieve what they set out to, ensuring that, "they are validated and their learning journey is validated in this process." Macy confirmed the value of this approach when she said, "We want our grade 12 students to be able to direct their own learning by the time they leave high school." How could a teacher feel that they had done a good job if students remained completely reliant on teachers to direct their learning? For Macy it is essential that the content being pursued be authentic for the young person individually. She even said that creating individual assignments with individual students that align with their passions and goals "really isn't that difficult if you're open to it." She was highly committed to the path holding value for each student.

Margo shared from another perspective of how best practices impact student engagement. She drew on an example of a particular semester where – because of text book sharing or other logistical considerations – she began a semester with a study of Shakespeare's Macbeth. She said

that usually the early days/weeks of the semester are highly relationship focused but in the case of this particular English class she had to jump basically straight into a study of the play. She said that there was a palpable lack of closeness in this learning community and she tried numerous things to invite everyone back to a common place but nothing was working. Then, she decided to take the whole class to her school's culture room. This is a room where smudges take place, where the drumming group gathers, and where sage dries pinned to the walls. A place connected to Margo's personal cultural background as a Cree woman. Her English class was made up of diverse backgrounds but felt strongly that this was what the group would do. At the start of class she told everyone to grab their Macbeth book and to come with her. As they arrived to the room some of the non-Indigenous students hesitated. They said that they did not think they were welcome in the room. That the room was for Indigenous students. She assured them they were more than welcome. Margo proceeded to read some Macbeth to them as they sat on the giant medicine wheel rug. They settled in. A discussion – inspired by what had been read – emerged and soon everyone was actively engaged in the process of exploring the text. The next day, they met back in their usual classroom. Margo reminded them what scene and act they had left off at yesterday but before she could even inquire about lingering insights from last day she was met with the suggestion that they resume their reading back in the culture room. They were keen and interested in a continuation of what had obviously had an impact on them the day before. This process went on for most of the duration of the exploration of Macbeth. Margo said that mutual respect and mutual trust are essential to her constitution of best practices. She affirmed that these go both ways and, “that if we are missing those parts then it affects both of us. Them in their learning and me in my teaching.” Margo shared about how it is important for her to share from her experience and knowledge and then to invite her students to invest similarly in the process. She described how

that had been lacking in this particular group where Macbeth was proving uninspiring. The way she described it, that choice to move to the culture room resulted in her students seeing her in a more holistic way, and then, them being able to become engaged in the learning journey where success quickly followed.

5.2.2 Impact on Attendance

The attendance conversation with my participants had many moments of significant clarity regarding to what extent best practices and attendance relate. Some of the key aspects of the relationship between best practices and attendance, at least as far as the participants characterized, inspire from pausing to appreciate why students may miss classes in the first place. Also, it is relevant to acknowledge the additional dimension of a discussion exploring attendance and that is that different teachers have different reactions to student absences.

Macy had a profound experience this past semester where she visited a reserve with two of her students. She stayed with the great grandparents and participated in three days of healing ceremonies. She said that she learned about how “grandparents and other family members value school.” In Macy’s experience in the city often students who go and visit the reserve are met with a negative assumption that grandparents and other family members do not think school is important. Through conversations with family members, she learned that actually they will ask the young people if they are away from school on the reserve on a school day. “Get your butt there and get your stuff done” said one kokum on the topic. Macy expanded that when a student comes back to the city and back to our schools that this is “when they need us to be really really ready for them because they are really really ready for us. That [experience] changed how I look at absences.” She passionately presented to me how the contrary situation can have a detrimental

impact because if we meet a student who has been away at their reserve with anything other than openness and, as she says in the passage mentioned, “readiness” then we may have missed the opportunity to be effective in our work with them in the classroom. Macy encouraged a “discovery of our biases.” Part of this is, as Macy described it, is seeing attendance as a cycle rather than a straight line. We need to understand where a student is coming from and listen to what is going on for them and think about what we can do to be as supportive as possible in our role in that cycle. Macy’s experiences shine light on the positive impact of a teacher making themselves vulnerable enough to learn how to better respond to students in a particular moment. In Macy’s school it is a usual event for a student to miss class because they are visiting their reserve and now Macy feels she can more effectively navigate the opportunity that lies in that interaction when they return.

For Margo it is her positive role-modeling as a caring Indigenous teacher. She believed that the message she shares, “If I can do it you can do it” has a monumental impact on her specific students. She reflected on a semester where she had the opportunity to work with a particularly high risk high needs group of high school students. She spoke about how their attendance rate was 30 percent coming into the program. And how, over the course of her deliberately applied best practices, she “brought their 30 percent up to 80 percent.” Margo expanded on this when she said that it is essential that “[teachers] not judge on why they miss but just be happy that they’re there.” She affirmed what Macy spoke about in the past paragraph in terms of what actually happens when young Indigenous students visit their reserve. Margo said that Kokum will ask them why they are not in school. “[Kokum will say] ‘You’re going to graduate; You’ve got to be in school!’” It is clear that the relationship between best practices and attendance is such that one must understand what is going on with attendance as an extension of what can be considered best practices.

Relationships have an impact on whether students want to be in class. Sophia said, “Pedagogy has a huge impact on attendance. A positive relationship affects positive risk taking in learning.” And Truman affirmed that they “aren’t likely skipping mine, because it’s a nice environment and they want to be there.” Virginia added, “[a student] said ‘even when you’re mad you don’t seem mad. You’re just so calm.’ They don’t need to have an angry adult. They can have a sense of security in that.” For Virginia the impact of her open door, warmth, and friendly demeanor extends to students who acknowledge that she is calm and present in her role. She believes that they are more likely to attend due to this fact. Sebastian spoke about attendance in a different light. He referred to “in the seat versus a more than physically present.” He spoke about how engagement increases with the latter and how on certain days where engagement on his part, and along with that, engagement for the students is lacking that you can “feel the humanity shrinking.” Alternatively when he arrives with his preferred investment of engagement to the process that you can “feel the humanity rising.” For David, he proclaimed that on certain days he finds himself saying, “that class had some energy!” at the end of the day or as he makes his way down the hallway after a particular period.

Part of the landscape of appreciations for the relationship between engagement and attendance for my teacher participants included factors that go beyond student control. Truman said plainly, “I don’t think it [engagement] would affect attendance. I think attendance is very very much out of my control.” Or as Catherine shared, “They might be very engaged in your class and still not be able to attend because of life circumstances. If they’re engaged, however, they will attend more.” Catherine shared about students of hers that have significant responsibilities beyond school including the care of younger siblings. For her there is still a high level of commitment to providing opportunities that give rise to engagement so that students will come to class as much

as they possibly can. Charlie confirmed, “In Saskatoon there’s a lot more students with external circumstances that make it difficult for them to attend. No matter how much they want to be in the classroom.” Charlie expressed happily that, he is confident, they do want to be there but that, at times, cannot be. Lynne spoke about a particular group of young people that shared her love of coffee. She created, with them, a morning coffee club in the spirit of motivating this group of students to show up to the building early for school. For Lynne it is evident that building relationships is key to both the teacher and the student being engaged and that there is a direct impact on attendance but she added to this premise when she said, “That relationship helps a lot with attendance until, my theory is, until a relationship closer to them gets destroyed. Then it doesn’t work so well.” At this point she shared a story of a student who woke up one morning and her one parent – her mother – had left. She came to learn of this information and, over time, was able to provide some support but initially this young woman was not able to continue coming to school because she was holistically affected by this event. Lynne extended from this story to share even more about other cases where through a strong relationship – that is part of her characterization of best practices – partnered with engagement for both the teacher and the student will result in them attending more.

5.3 Social Justice Education in Action

In the last chapter I explored how my teacher participants defined the concept of social justice. In this section I will expand on those characterizations by providing examples of how social justice is applied in diverse learning contexts as well how it is applied actively as part of a process of enacting the curriculum – through a deepened understanding of diverse learners – for a more politically progressive education.

To begin this part of the representation and analysis of my data I will draw on the succinct insights of Virginia. She helped clarify what is meant by the term social justice by saying: “I think they are all mixed together because environmental justice are Indigenous issues. Indigenous issues are anti-racist. Anti-racism, anti-oppressive, and pro-LGBT. They are all mixed together.” This is helpful in understanding what we are actually talking about when we say, “Social justice.” That social justice is a complex term that has many understandings and implications. She said: “we talk about inequality in the world and in our province in terms of health, justice, housing, education, etc. in all my classes.” Virginia said that it goes without saying that she would talk about social justice in her Indigenous Studies courses but that she also explores social justice education equally in her English classes. For example, “Each curricular context is a facet of the human experience that is an opportunity to think about anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices and eco-consciousness and Indigenous issues.” Our discussion blossomed into a discourse exploring how we as teachers often feel that our classroom is a separate sort of compartment away from what takes place in other classes and classrooms. This feeling is unfortunate because, especially when it comes to social justice, it is more important than ever that students understand the connections between curricular areas. When Virginia said that each area of study is “a facet of the human experience” it very much helps one appreciate how the various parts of the journey of school speak to different parts of the whole human being that is on the journey. Social justice needs to be understood in terms of the imperative to support its permeation through all the parts of our landscape of education.

In our discussion about what form social justice teaching takes on, my participants endorsed the concept of transparency both in terms of understanding and sharing from a point of awareness of their individual social position regarding bias and advantage as well as transparency

about their own learning journey in general. That teachers must personally and individually embody the imperative to be/become lifelong learners. Sebastian, for example, said:

I'm pretty upfront and awkward about my privilege. I'm a white guy. I'm tall. I was born into a lower middle class family so I was never without the essentials: love, education, clothes ... but we did struggle. My dad's job didn't pay much so we weren't wealthy and my dad was gone all the time because he was a long distance truck driver. There are substance abuse issues in my family related to residential schools.

He shared about how he makes it very clear to students that he does not have all the answers. As he said in his initial comments about the essence of education as being related to supporting students to be citizens of the cosmos where they need teachers who are willing – and humble enough - to embark on an important journey with them. He said: “If I don't have much experience then I acknowledge my ignorance. I will say, ‘be honest with me and help me learn.’” Sebastian's vulnerability, in his comments, shone through the layers of our discourse. As he was willing to share these excerpts from his teaching journey with me it is clear that he treats his students with profound respect that he is there to learn with them and that he, along with each of them, arrives with a complexity of identity. It is evident that he arrives to teaching with a reverence for what teaching can be. As well it was evident in our conversation that he arrives with an openness to move through the moment-to-moment happenings of the semester with inquiry and an inspiration to be an active participant along with his students. This path, it appeared through my discussion with Sebastian, leaves each person empowered and enhanced as a result. Sebastian's embodiment of social justice education is quite progressive and clearly embodies a profound care for his students.

The commitment to one's own learning journey certainly deepens student's connection to the authenticity dimension. Macy shared the following:

I'm open with my own journey. If I set a goal for myself then I'm open with my students about that. This is what I'm trying to do. If you catch me doing this call me on it because I'm making an effort to change this. And then I encourage them to be open about their journey as well."

It is clear that Catherine appreciates that "sometimes it's just in your daily interactions. Using gender inclusive language, for example." She discussed how her students arrive at a particular juncture on their path in schooling and in life. As teachers we have a special opportunity to meet them where they are and embrace that they are valuable. Affirming identity is part of this, in the mind of Catherine. She added, "I think we need to look more at what happens between the content in our interactions with students. Also, what resources are we using in our classrooms and whose voice is heard and whose voice is omitted." Truman agreed with this line of thinking when he said:

Look at the resources for an English class for example. Mostly white, male, privileged. As I look around my classroom that represents one of the twenty making up the class. So I aim to draw attention to the lack of diversity in the curriculum. To take those resources and pose questions and reimagine them in a different role in society, for example. That's actually something that sparks from an outdated curriculum.

Similarly to some other teachers, Truman uses his curriculum document to teach critical thinking. To talk about power and deconstruct negative power structures in society. He talks about how important it is for a young person to see themselves in their school or learning community. This connects back to best practice for Truman in terms of how best practices support social justice

education. He said, “One of the reasons I give student choice, I think, is so the students have an opportunity to do some sort of expression and to see themselves represented in the classroom - in the artwork that is on the walls - because they don’t see themselves in the resources.” He works hard with students to collaboratively create learning opportunities that are authentic and relevant. His example of deconstructing the curriculum is a wonderful example of professional discretion applied for social justice.

Any issue that comes up when teachers in diverse teaching areas try to embody social justice is the concern about tokenism. For example, if a teacher is mandated to increase the First Nations and Metis content in their course, how they accomplish that goal needs to be authentic for it to translate into authentic engagement, etc. Charlie said, “As a math teacher it just doesn’t fit without being tokenism like change the circle in the question to being a tipi base ... that’s not authentic. So for me social justice doesn’t really come into my instruction or into my curriculum. To me it’s more about that whole atmosphere of my classrooms. The values of my classroom. The whole idea of inclusiveness and having a safe place.” As Charlie described his relationships with students, his commitment to having his classroom door open from before 8:00 until at least 4:00 every day so that students can come get extra help, his belief that deficit thinking does a profound disservice to students inherent ability to be successful in math. His passion for supporting all his students to become confident and capable young people is quite apparent and yet he shared with me that social justice happens in the moments between everything in his learning community. In the little conversations and moments of affirmation with students. Charlie’s contributions to this deepened understanding of how social justice can be applied – and in a math class – is inspiring. Lynne added, “I don’t ever want a kid to walk into my space and feel that they were judged or that they weren’t safe.” David appreciated that “It comes down to our relationships

with them and students understanding why I'm sitting down one-on-one and having this conversation. This is why I believe that you can be successful. This is why I care about you. This is my expectation of you." Further he talks about how he values that students are experts on things that are of significant value in terms of the collective learning journey where social justice is being critically pursued. Margo offered a critical understanding of how students are "really comfortable with residential school topics in general" but how they "didn't even know about sixties scoop. They don't know that there was slavery in the beet farms and that wasn't too long ago. Like my dad was in Alberta with that. When it comes to Indigenous social justice you're able to bring in recent content." This approach to an embodiment of social justice in Margo's classroom exemplifies both pertinent and relevant content as well as invites everyone involved to look deeply at their own personal biases.

My participants provided wonderful specific classroom examples of how they explore social justice education with students in their classrooms. Macy spoke about how she relies on Buffy Sainte-Marie to guide her exploration of social justice in music including how influential significant First Nations women changed the landscape of her discipline. David talked about drawing on present day events and using them for critical essay writing in a novel study such as the Colten Boushie case and Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lynne referred to a moment in a re-entry course where two students were working on an activity exploring oppression and colonialism and with her commitment to draw on all student insights she quickly had a class of twenty working together on the assignment in support of the individuals that actually needed to do it. As another example, Sophia shared an experience where she collaboratively created – with students – an activism project where they went out into the community and sought positive social change regarding an issue they felt strongly about. These, and others, provide real life examples

of how passionate teachers work with students to give rise to activities in educational contexts that are both engaging for all involved as well as motivate the movement towards learning outcomes. Social justice is essential to enacting the curriculum to the extent that students will understand that their journey through school is not insular and, rather, is integral to their life – and the life of their teacher – beyond the classroom.

5.4 Considerations of Student Success

When teachers enact the curriculum they have the opportunity to invest their authentic selves into the learning journey with their particular students in mind. Part of this is derived from one of the previously deemed “essences” of education which is for students and teachers to have deliberately cultivated positive relationships that give rise to deepened understanding of common ground. When a teacher understands, as Catherine said earlier, that a teacher must come to know part or parts of the student’s identity and with that, to some extent, their passions and interests. Then, as they conceive of activities, assignments, goals, etc. with their students the process is activated and this enacting dimension brings the curriculum to life as learning goals are interpreted through the lens of the individuals involved. Some specific examples of enacting the curriculum sprung from my research interviews.

In one instance, math teacher Charlie acknowledged a way that he enacts the curriculum by being open about his passion for math, science, engineering, etc. Further, in the case of one particular student he remembered, he took a student to a spend-a-day event at a university where the student was able to learn more about a passion he and his teacher had in common regarding the work of engineers. Charlie was able to facilitate that student having conversations with professional engineers and to tour the engineering building and learn about what is required to

become an engineer at this spend-a-day opportunity. That student, as a result of this investment, ended up navigating a path of success with all their math classes – with the support of Charlie – and actually pursuing post-secondary education in the field of engineering.

In another case, Margo appreciated that “If there’s no engagement for my own self then I know student success isn’t going to be as high as it would have been” She continued to talk about the importance of being authentic in one’s engagement in the practice of teaching. Since students know when their teacher is not engaged. Catherine extended this line of thought when she makes mention of her passion for taking a stand on issues that one thinks are important. To stand up for what one believes in and for the community that surrounds them to support that journey of thinking critically and collectively imaging and reimagining enhanced realities as the path unfolds. She discussed a community activism project where students were challenged to think about a society issue such as obesity or housing. Students had to make some type of contact with extended community members that would contribute to their knowledge of that issue. Then, they had to decide on – and implement – some form of action that was intended to positively impact that issue in society. She told the story of one student who thought that his community lacked events where neighbours got together and did something active such as biking. He thought that his neighbourhood community would be enhanced by coordinating a bike ride where they could get to know each other and engage in a positive activity that was in the spirit of good health. This student who was normally very shy and quiet created posters, promoted the event, and then on the day of the community bike ride actually told the people who came out about his inspiration for the event as well as that he valued being part of a community and that everyone stands to benefit from engaging in an active lifestyle as well as getting to know their neighbours.

This story is quite powerful because of the shift this collaboratively created assignment caused in this particular student. This student embraced the opportunity to employ agency and not be passive in his journey through education. Catherine and I discussed how this particular student had previously only felt comfortable representing his understanding of course material in one way – creating musical compositions - and was unwilling to go beyond this comfort zone. Through Catherine’s evident passion for individuals engaging in their power as citizens of community – and the buying in of individual students through their individual investments of particular focus – the class engaged in their activism projects with excitement. She added that in the end they even presented to the class how their projects had gone and this one student even shared how much the project had meant to him and how it challenged his comfort zone but also that it was an immensely valuable process.

Sometimes teachers encounter students who do not have confidence in particular areas. Charlie mentioned in the previous chapter how this is something that he often encounters in math contexts but it certainly does happen in every subject area at times. Sebastian shared an experience of working with a student:

A particular student who didn’t have an identity as a reader. The novel study was going to kill him in the class. We selected a book that was technically breaking the rules, curriculum-wise. I think he read it twice. He kept talking about it. About hockey. That’s kind of the root of our trust. For the final he presented a book talk. Nailed it. It was beautiful. A huge success.

The distinct success of being able to share a moment of literary inspiration with a student who, as Sebastian appreciated initially, did not have an identity as a reader. Yet, through a process of

colliding passions this teacher and student were able to navigate a journey of engagement, in terms of him being excited about the book, and success, in the sense that he passed the class.

Sometimes the impact of enacting the curriculum is to do what Macy suggested and “validate their journey” by honouring how it relates to, or enhances, the collective understanding of what is being studied. Virginia suggested, “In conversations you see kids who have lived a life time in 15 years. Things you’ve never experienced. You have lots of kids who act as the adults in their lives.” Virginia spoke about how accepting student’s prior knowledge and inquiring about student’s insights can provide profound guidance in terms of the learning journey the class may go on as a whole.

The process of enacting the curriculum has monumental applications because it is the place where student and teacher interest collide. When one considers the multitude of facets of teaching and learning that take place in instances of education as is experienced in the classroom it is essential to consider what the aspects are that give rise to genuine engagement and success for the individuals involved. The instances shared in this section provide some exemplification of how enacting the curriculum takes forms in living realities for teachers. Below I will expand in terms of teacher’s characterizations of the relationship between student success and teacher engagement.

5.5 Exploring Relationships between Student Success and Teacher Engagement

To begin a discussion exploring the relationship between student success and teacher engagement, I will draw on the initial response of Sophia when I asked her this question. She said, “I don’t think we can expect students to be engaged if we aren’t.” Sophia focused on how engagement is inextricably linked to success. Further, that student engagement also impacts teacher engagement and teacher engagement impacts student engagement. She said:

I am trying to show them that I'm engaged and excited about what we're doing and it is my passion. So, I think it just kind of boils down to pride in your work and you can't have expectations of humans younger than you that are still growing if you're not having the same expectations of yourself to learn and grow.

Sophia spoke about how as a school we need to affirm identity and self-worth for the individuals that are part of our community. That it is inspiring as a teacher to have the opportunity to play a role in identity being affirmed. For Sophia it is essential to her engagement in her practice as a teacher to see that her students are committed to a path of growth. It motivates her to also grow.

Sebastian reflected on how the more inspired path of teaching is significantly more work but in a highly positive way because it results in students being engaged and being successful in the learning process. He made reference to moments where he has been more rote and used old materials and how detrimental that was to the student success piece as well as the impact on his engagement. On the flip side, he said "it becomes a labour of love in the sense that its labour intensive because you know you're reinventing the wheel but it's a beautiful thing because no group is going to be the same." He and I had an extensive conversation about how the experience of teaching is so profoundly affected by this piece. When students are engaged in the process – and being successful – engagement as a teacher is instantaneous. Sebastian also added a softer side to our discussion, "You get critiqued and that hurts as a human because you're working hard ... but I think you have to do it." When you put yourself into something then you are in it and if that does not work perfectly it can be difficult to navigate that position of vulnerability with a positive perspective. In the conclusion of this part of our conversation, Sebastian says, "Student engagement is probably number 1 on my list of what drives me. If it's no there then I'm

floundering.” It was evident throughout my conversation with Sebastian that he cares very deeply for potential that moments of education hold – for both the student and the teacher.

Catherine said, “Those experiences of student success are what engage you in your work as a teacher.” Lynne agreed: “Student success builds you as a teacher.” Charlie also agreed, as he describes a situation where a student invested significant effort into a success story in math class, “When you have that kind of success it fuels you.” Margo added, “When they are successful you feel empowered. I feel that I am doing a good job.” Eight of my ten participants said that student success was imperative to their engagement as a teacher. Macy has a different view, “Passionate teachers are passionate about best practices, not success.” She shared from her experiences teaching band at 7:30 in the morning and how she sees her students quite possibly at their worst and they see her at her best. She said that her commitment to best practices takes precedent over how successful students are and, in fact, sometimes a lack of success on the part of the student will motivate her to work harder and, thus, become more engaged. She added, “Student attitude affects my engagement though!” It is abundantly clear that teaching is not a one-way street where teachers fill empty student vessels with information and understandings. Throughout my conversations with teachers there was a clear consensus that teaching is dynamic and that in instances where engagement and success are relevant adjectives there is a high level of responsiveness that what will happen tomorrow will extend as a direct result of what happened today.

5.6 Connecting Research Findings to Literature Review

The rich process of conducting one’s own research, which in my case included engaging in interviews with my research participants, results in an exciting return to the content of the literature review. A researcher must ask certain questions: Did I confirm what I thought originally?

Did I disrupt my original thinking? Did I expand from what I discovered in my literature review and, as a result, create something that meaningfully adds to the field? In my case, having embraced each and every moment along the journey to learn as much as I possibly could, I would say that I have expanded upon my earlier literature review appreciations through this investigation.

This began with the exploration of Catherine Cornbleth (1990) where I initially encountered the concept of *enacting* the curriculum. Cornbleth suggests an approach to teaching that honours the individual students involved in the process. This was key to my own exploration of what I would inquire into with my participants regarding their experiences in teaching. I wanted to know how teachers manifest this important commitment. Herb Kohl (1967), I realized, is another thinker in this line of inquiry. It became clear as I read Kohl that he was effectively also talking about the important priority of going beyond the formal curriculum. The imperative for teachers to care enough about their role as a teacher to invest authentically in the shared experience with renewed freshness as each opportunity arises. That it is a constant series of new discoveries. Throughout my interview conversations it became very clear that at least for the ten teachers I had the chance to speak with that enacting the curriculum is their heartfelt priority when it comes to facilitating engaging learning opportunities that inspire student success.

Parker Palmer (2007) deepened this exploration by appreciating that the characteristics a good teacher includes a requirement for the teacher to also be a good person. This characterization for teachers to be good people is exemplified in a story that Nel Noddings (1992) shares in which she talks about the tragedy of teachers who do not care. In the case of all of my participants it was impressively clear that they were highly committed to their practice of teachers being highly responsive, deliberate, and profoundly steeped in qualities of care. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) took my literature review into a social justice arena of important considerations. She talks about

how pedagogy must speak to the individuals it is intended to impact. Specifically, the call for pedagogy to be culturally relevant and the direct connection between this deliberate pedagogy and a strong sense of what constitutes good teaching. In terms of my research findings I was able to extend this line of thinking to meaningful levels. For instance, through my conversations with other teachers I learned to what extent Ladson-Billings' insights were pertinent. It is evident that teachers operate with a heightened level of commitment that the learning journey be compelling for their specific students. Further, this commitment is social justice in essence. For example, when a teacher acknowledges a young person who identifies outside of a binary conception of gender and proceeds to use an openly transgendered author as part of the collective exploration that student is going to feel represented, honoured, and engaged as a result. As another example, when a teacher saw that their class was composed of primarily First Nations and Metis students and they decided to share Indigenous examples or to speak from the perspective of Indigenous leadership then those youth are going to be acknowledged and empowered as a result of that teacher's choice. This example demonstrates the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy that Ladson-Billings theorized.

In my literature review I discussed Maxine Greene's (1995) contention that the potential of young people to become more empowered is often the result of a teacher's choices in terms of best practices, social justice education, enacting the curriculum, and embodiments of care. I certainly anticipated that teachers would seek to explore meaningful-beyond-the-regular-context interactions. I also thought that social justice topics would be taken up in the classroom. as part of this dynamic. I had hoped that the status quo was being challenged in diverse curricular contexts and that students were being challenged to think critically about their world. That said, I was poignantly surprised to learn to *what extent* teachers were seizing the opportunities to apply critical

professional discretion in doing so. In this sense teachers really are embodying Greene's description of young people being stirred to learn and refusing to comply with the status quo. As my research unfolded and I analyzed and summarized my findings I certainly have extended my original conceptions regarding the topics I set out in pursuit of. This thesis offers the reader a glance into a handful of experiences shared by diverse teachers that embody these scholars' work in a way that goes beyond.

5.7 Implications for Teacher Education

This investigation holds a valuable implication for teacher education because the premises I explored with my research participants are extensively woven through the art of inspired teaching. These include all the topics I explored with my research participants and the wonderful stories and insights that they shared that has resulted in my analysis and findings. How teachers with a variety of experiences describe best practices, how teachers in a diversity of disciplines appreciate the essence of education, how social justice priorities manifest in living classrooms, what embodying the curriculum looks like in application, how care is embodied, and all the other more subtle topics that were part of, and became part of, this research exploration. I think it would be valuable for individuals heading into the profession to encounter the written work – and perhaps be guided through an inquiry through many of the readings and thinkers shared in my literature review – before they become teachers because it offers unique perspectives and appreciation for so many of the characteristics that make up inspired teaching.

Perhaps the findings of this study could be adapted to deepen the learning goals of an undergraduate course in teacher education programs. Indeed, I contend that the findings in this

thesis could become the foundation for a course offered to aspiring preservice teachers on how to infuse teaching with an ethos of caring. Exploring the essential aspects of teaching-as-caring addressed in this thesis could open up wonderful possibilities as they make their way into the world of becoming a teacher. I would be honoured to perhaps be part of the process in the design of such a course and possibly have the opportunity to instruct it. With my background experience conducting this research and myself being a person who values the very special capacity that teaching holds, it would truly be a privilege to have the chance to extend the journey in this way. Further, I think it would be highly valuable for teacher candidates. From my own experience going through a Bachelor of Education degree program I did not have the opportunity to take a course that explored these topics and would have excitedly seized the opportunity to have done so. Also, through conversations with various colleagues over the course of this process I have come to a position of feeling comfortable saying that no teacher I know was given the opportunity to take a course that spoke to characteristics and dimensions that make of an appreciation of inspired teaching and that they also would have found a course such as what I am suggesting invaluable.

5.8 Emergent Themes from this Study

As the learning journey of this thesis has unfolded it is important to pause and appreciate what emerged organically as my data collection took place. Two primary facets emerged that I did not set out explicitly to explore in my interview questions. First, the concept of care in terms of its role in teaching and, second, the ways in which teachers apply and embody critical professional discretion in their role as teachers. These two concepts, as the hours of my research actually took place, quickly occupied a central place in the explorations that followed. Although I had reflected on care as a background dimension to my inspiration for this thesis journey I had

presented explicit lines of questioning to my interview participants. That said, in all ten of my interviews it became apparent that some form of asking how said teacher would characterize the concept of care in their practice as a teacher was an organic next phase in the interview process. Further, in terms of my second emergent theme, that in the actual process of enacting the curriculum, while exploring an ethos of care as well as seeking to support student engagement teachers apply professional discretion constantly. These two themes enhanced my research discoveries as follows.

5.8.1 The Concept of Care in Teaching

As I explored earlier in my literature review chapter, the concept of care is part of a school's infrastructure. As Noddings acknowledged, in her exploration of the landscape of education, a context where teachers were pinned with the characterization of not caring. In my experience as a teacher, and as a student, I certainly intuit that care is paramount in schooling that is effective and compelling – for both the student and the teacher. Although my interview questions were geared towards how teachers teach in terms of their process of enacting the curriculum as well as qualities that they identify as being essential to their practice, it should be no surprise that care emerged authentically as my actual interview conversations took place.

In the case of Sebastian, for example, he drew on the contributions of Martha Nussbaum (2002) in her work, "Education for Citizenship in an Era of Global Connection" where she draws on the emotional dimension as being essential to learning. He said, "Good care provides a form of learning that is almost embedded in our DNA." For Sebastian it is the distinction between surviving versus thriving or the ability to do something greater with our time together whatever form that might take. "We care for aesthetic reasons. We care to flourish. We care about each

other when we don't need to." He went on to apply his appreciations of care generally to his sense of the relevance of care in teaching. "Care is the thing that drives it. It is like momentum. Like gravity." This connects to Cornbleth (1990) in her appreciation of what teachers do in their teaching practice: "As professionals, they know what is best for their students' learning. Occupational context, which shapes pedagogical context, is shaped in turn by social/cultural contexts as well as by teacher associations and collective experience" (p. 78). My discussion with Sebastian inspired me to explore Nussbaum (2008) more deeply. She says:

We need to cultivate our students' "inner eyes," and this means carefully crafted instruction in the arts and humanities, which will bring students into contact with issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and cross-cultural experience and understanding. This artistic instruction can and should be linked to the "citizen of the world" instruction, since works of art are frequently an invaluable way of beginning to understand the achievements and sufferings of a culture different from one's own. (p. 20)

The role of a teacher in the multitude of contexts they share with students holds a firmly multi-faceted connection to applications beyond that moment. In this passage from Nussbaum it is clear that the process of education must be mobilized with a profound commitment to the whole student in the regards mentioned. Hopefully our students will feel supported to be and become "citizens of the world." As Nussbaum and Sebastian validate we as teachers must understand the possibilities that exist to approach race, gender, and class issues while embodying care in our classroom contexts and in our interactions with students.

David enhanced this aspect of investigation when he added, "[As teachers] we care for the whole person much more than we care what's happening in your class with regard to hitting curricular objectives." Caring teachers support the specific needs of the particular students they

have the opportunity to work with. Sebastian summarizes this insight succinctly when he says, “If you don’t care and I don’t care then we are not really getting anywhere important.” The premise for care in instances of development and learning is essential because we want students to take healthy risks and feel comfortable to seize the challenge of both learning as well as investing in peers’ learning journey through their own authentic participation.

5.8.2 Critical Professional Discretion

The process of enacting the curriculum towards deepened awareness requires teachers to believe that their role goes far beyond just evaluating the performance of a student’s abilities in relation to static learning outcomes stated in curriculum documents. Throughout the representations and analysis of my data I have included numerous examples of teachers applying critical professional discretion in terms of the actual journey they go on with students in a particular curricular context. Although this was evident in several examples in the previous sections of this thesis - including experiences relating to the greater purpose of class time, the essence of education, and more - it is also important to acknowledge it as an emergent theme as I did not explicitly have an interview question oriented towards the professional critical discretion topic. For example, Truman who deconstructed the curriculum with students to identify what individuals in society are included and what individuals are not included. Or, in the case of Margo who referred to using her own experiences as an Indigenous woman to enhance the learning journey for everyone involved. Or, Sophia who deliberately spoke of sharing power with students, draws on the prior knowledge and lived experiences and also proclaims openly that she values her student as experts. So many examples already shared in this thesis prove that teachers constantly interpret and adapt while playing their role in the learning journey.

Virginia said: “We have to be critical of the things we are told to say. Whether we tell the powers that be or we just don’t implement the oppression in our own contexts.” In my conversation with Virginia it was clear that the opportunity to have a positive impact on the lives of young people must be manifested with a holistic critical lens of anti-racist and anti-oppressive education. The imperative to embody critical professional discretion permeates the moment-to-moment life of teaching. It was very clear in all ten of my conversations that there is a deeper commitment to the student over and above the formal curriculum. In the process of enacting the curriculum including appreciations of the essence and purpose of education as well as how care is embodied, and it is paramount that the guiding compass for what leads all the teachers I had the honour to speak to is the critical question of what would empower the student. Clearly those teachers have a high level of conviction that to make what takes place in their learning contexts valuable and useful, they must apply their own professional discretion in the process towards a more inspired and important end.

To conclude this section on emergent themes it is essential to accredit the participants in my research process for their role in the data collection. Had each of them not been willing to share freely and let our conversations move organically then these emergent themes would not have had the space to develop that they did have. In the case of Sebastian, I may not have become inspired to read into the works of Nussbaum. Or, in my conversation with Virginia I might not have been challenged to think so starkly about the significant critical imperative of the role of teaching. The opportunity to participate in these conversations and learn through them has enriched this process and I am grateful for the chance to honour their additional insights in this section on emergent themes.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: WRAPPING UP THE JOURNEY

As the final considerations of this process are quickly flying onto the page it is essential to zoom out and gaze back at the rich process that led to this final chapter. Beginning with the backstory of myself as a lifelong learner, moving through my own inspirations for teaching to the realization of what it was I actually wanted to do with this graduate studies process which was spend time talking with other teachers about aspects of our profession that are inspiring. With this I slowly gained focus for the scholarly inquiry I would engage in. The birth of my research question: How does the process of enacting curriculum create an ethos of care, a deepened consciousness for social justice and enhanced student engagement? This is a question that inspired a pursuit of conceiving of a framework for explorations into the inner workings of teaching and the inspired working lives of teachers. My initial proposal came to fruition because I wanted to have conversations with other teachers about what it was that enhanced their practice in the field of teaching as well as how they perceived those choices, in terms of best pedagogical practices, the process of enacting curriculum as well as how care and engagement affect the teaching and learning process.

I embraced the recruitment process, fine-tuned my interview questions and, then, found myself engaged in ten inspiring interview conversations with living breathing teachers. These conversations explored what teachers expressed to be the essential qualities of their inspired practice, appreciations for the essence of education, interpretations of the purpose of schooling, conceptions for what the greater purpose of class time may be, understandings of social justice and descriptions of enacting the curriculum. Further, these ten conversations offered the opportunity to discuss best practices for inspired teaching, impacts of best practices on student engagement

and attendance, examples of social justice education in action, as well as explorations of the relationships between student success and teacher engagement. Finally, this thesis resulted in some emergent themes including the concept of care in my participant teachers' practices and the considerations for the notion of critical professional discretion in learning contexts. Certainly the more extensive details from my compelling conversations are expounded upon in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. Here I will included summative details in the form of final reflections.

As my interview conversations explored the topic of the essential qualities of inspired teaching it was apparent that all ten of my participants were highly committed to their students in terms of seeking that the experience shared in their classroom be something valuable for all involved. Further, this commitment went far beyond merely implementing static curricula or embodying traditional methods for providing youth with knowledge and thinking of them as empty vessels that need filling. Or, as Dewey (1938) refers to it, the traditional model is something of "imposition from above and from outside" (p. 18). The teachers I interviewed certainly all possessed qualities essential to their practice that beautifully embody the contrary of this with such appreciations as "open and adaptable" (Catherine), "approachable and relatable" (Charlie) "flexible" (Truman), "patient and trusting" (Virginia), or "attentive" (Macy). Further, that some of the essential qualities of my participants practice were such characteristics as "authenticity" (Macy) and "not settling for the status quo" (Lynne). One response that echoed throughout my interviews can be summarized by the words of David when he said: "Relationship building! Hopefully my students understand that I value all of them." Although the more extensive parts of our conversations can be found in chapter 4 of this thesis it is noteworthy that the essential qualities of the teaching practices of my participants included appreciations for what positively impacts the process of education as it unfolds in the classroom. Each teacher had their own way of explaining

that they primarily are interested in supporting their students to be successful both in the course at hand as well as in their greater journey of life at the moments that the paths of the teacher and the student are crossing.

The conversations I had with my participants extended from essential qualities of the teaching practice personally into appreciations for the essence of education more generally. This dimension of each of my interview conversations included exciting explanations for what the deeper hope may be for instances shared with students. Some of the themes explored included inspirations for schools to be “places of action.” (Sebastian) and places where we: “Inspire involved citizens in our communities. Where we build competence and support our students to see themselves as members of a community” (Sophia). As well, there was some concern for the essence of education “being lost” as a direct result of budget cuts taking place in our province around the time of my interviews. Virginia expands from this position of concern to another angle on the essence of education which is, as she says “the relationship between the learner and the teacher. The constant back and forth.” The “relationship” piece permeated through the conversations I had the opportunity to be part of. As teachers we foster a sense of belonging as well as support students to see the school as a community that they can be a meaningful part of. Nine of my ten interview conversations with participant teachers included explicit reference to the essence of education being related to community. This means that part of our goal as teachers is to facilitate young people investing themselves into the dimensions of society that are shared. Teachers facilitated the individual learning journey as well as the collective experience that takes place for each person on their journey through high school.

How a teacher appreciates the greater purpose of schooling is something that directly impacts what takes place in the classroom. In the cases of all ten of my interview participants it

became wonderfully clear that the purpose is to support young people to the best of their ability. “To provide students with the opportunity to learn how they learn” said Sophia. “To empower students to feel that they’re capable” shared Margo. “To develop a community where everyone learns from each other” proclaimed Catherine. “A safe place” said Macy. The responses of my participants varied from focusing on student empowerment and fostering skills to become equipped and engaged as human beings after graduation. It was vibrantly clear throughout my interviews that the purpose of schooling is an inspired “something.” An inspired something in this scenario supports and protects while giving rise to young people who are empowered to be and become what they choose to be.

An extension of what the purpose of schooling may be was part of the exploration I engaged in with my interview participants that led to discussions around what the greater purpose of class time is. The teachers I spoke with made reference to this purpose including the opportunity to be supportive of student success in the course. They want to provide opportunities for students to work through real life situations such as instances of conflict, buying into the imperative to invest one’s authentic self in the process, to seize the opportunity to be an active citizen, and to grow. Further, teacher participants expressed that the purpose also included providing multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities and their understanding and that there should be a balance between the academic and an honouring of who the student is. Finally, the purpose of class time is to develop relationships over and above all else. Not that these relationships specifically will last a life time but because the process of investing in relationships is valuable and will empower the young person in life beyond the classroom. Schooling should be relational because life is relational.

For a thesis that includes several aspects relating to social justice it was essential that I ask my participants how they perceive the term. Many definitions included such phrases as “equal opportunity” and “consideration for all” as was the case for Charlie and Lynne. Other responses went a bit more deeply into the bedrock of social justice education by acknowledging that it is about “anti-racist and anti-oppressive ways of learning and ways of acting” as shared Virginia. To another extent teachers, such as Margo and Catherine, shared experiences relating to the imperative that social justice needs to address these issues. It is significant that an *understanding* of social justice inform the implementation of social justice education in action. Such examples included giving students choice in their learning journey as was the case for Truman. Other examples included teachers sharing from their own life’s challenges such as Margo described. David offered the importance of deconstructing inequalities in society. Other teachers I interviewed shared their own pathway for exploring social justice actively in their classrooms. It became clear as I analyzed my data that all ten of my participants were both passionate and highly committed to social justice education.

How the enacted curriculum is presented has a monumental impact on what the actual enacting of the curriculum looks like. Further, how best practices are understood also has a significant impact on student engagement. There is a profound connection between these understandings and the impending success and engagement that follow. The teachers I spoke with shared characterizations about how the enacted curriculum needs to be cross-curricular. They said the process of enacting the curriculum must be built upon a foundational care for the whole student. Best practices, they intimated, involve sharing power and responding to student passion and interest. The whole process must be engaged with genuineness and a disposition of openness to grow as a teacher who is a learner along with the students who are also teachers. These

characteristics extend into the path of engagement and success because teachers who facilitate the learning journey in this manner are highly invested in the present moment of education with their students. The rich process of enacting the curriculum partnered with teachers' commitment to best practices means that they are interested in doing what motivates the investment of authenticity into the learning process for both them and the student. Engagement is a natural by-product of effectively applied best practices as well as the process of enacting curriculum being extended conscientiously.

From this study there were two prominent emergent themes including the concept of care in teachers' practice and the notion of critical professional discretion. The teachers I had the privilege to speak to shared wonderful insights into these themes. For example, David mentioned that he cares "for the whole person much more than caring about what's happening in your class with regard to hitting objectives of the curriculum." What made the care theme so striking was that teachers were so highly committed to care that they would sacrifice moments of curricular focus for the opportunity to deepen a relationship. This piece was also reinforced through the second emergent theme of the study, namely, critical professional discretion. Teachers make choices constantly for what is and is not going to be explored in the learning community's journey. These decisions permeate through the multitude of facets of teaching and learning. It was evident that along with being highly committed to caring that teachers were also highly committed to students being empowered, equipped, and successful. Therefore, the impact of these facets at work in tandem result in caring as being an essential part of a cycle of inspired education. If the student feels cared for then they are also going to invest in the relationship and all the other aspects explored of teaching and learning including enacting the curriculum, engagement, and social justice.

The journey as a whole has been highly enriching. I am grateful to this as it was one of my personal goals for writing this Master's thesis. Further, I am excited to share back this completed thesis with my participants as all ten of them expressed interest in also benefitting from the collective snapshot of our interview pursuits. Not only has this process been engaging and enriching but it has certainly left me personally inspired with a curiosity to see where this path will continue to lead.

6.1 Limitations to my Research

This qualitative research journey has been explored with a heightened level of commitment to depth of understanding within the particulars explored. With this, as is the case sometimes in qualitative research contexts, breadth may be a shortcoming. Although I have asked my ten participants quite extensively about the numerous aspects of teaching and learning that were part of the landscape of my interest it still must be acknowledged that this study is in no way exhaustive. Further, my research findings are quite local in the sense that all ten of my participants work in the secondary public school system in urban Saskatoon. It is also significant to note that no Catholic school division teachers were interviewed as my participants were all teaching in the public school system. An additional limitation of my research certainly would be that my analysis and interpretation of data would come with biases as I am also a secondary public school teacher in urban Saskatoon. Further, I personally conducted all of my interviews and so there would be a level of subjectivity in that I was present for the actual conversations that took place. It seems relevant to also mention that although objectivity may have been affected it is also more likely that my interpretations of data would be more reliable on account of my having been present for actual conversations as they took place.

Further, my interviews were conducted solely with teachers and not with students, parents, administrators, and superintendents. This was certainly deliberate in terms of my interest to study sideways as I am also a teacher. That said, it is still a limitation that my data holds only the experiences and insights of practicing teachers and not that of other people involved in education to other extents or capacities. My interviews were all conducted within the month of June 2017. At this time, the teaching profession had recently been significantly affected by provincial budget cuts. The impact of these new budget choices was at the forefront of teacher's consciousness as they prepared to head into a new school year without the support of roles that had been in place previously. Although I do believe that the teachers I interviewed shared from a more holistic position in terms of their greater sense of education within the parameters outlined there is still a distinct possibility that some of the conversations that took place were impacted by the landscape of this financial reality.

6.2 Possible Areas for Further Study

The limitations of my research hold implication of numerous possible areas for further study. First it would be interesting to hear from other groups regarding these same themes and questions such as I mentioned in my limitations section. It would be curious to hear about the impact of the teaching practices explored from the perspective of administrators, students, parents, educational assistants, and other people who are part of the process of inspired learning. Also, to shine light on my own biases in the analysis of data it would be fascinating if another researcher explored the same line of study, with the same or similar questions and with the same interview participants. It could also prove interesting to pursue this inquiry with non-secondary teachers or in a rural context.

Perhaps the most compelling possible area for future study would be to extend from my exploration of critical professional discretion in the emergent themes part of chapter 5 discussed in section 5.6.2. The stories that my participants shared captured my heart and ignited my further-studies mind. It is in this dimension that students are truly reached. I am most interested in further explorations of when a teacher chooses to be a human being with a student. By this I mean when a teacher above all cares about and strives to honour the student in the learning journey. In other words it is my hope to study what it is that motivates a teacher to create an ethos of caring for students.

6.3 Summative Reflections

As I arrive at the conclusion of this journey of inquiry I must pause and breathe in with gratefulness. The opportunities that have been part of this road have had a significant impact on my understanding of many of the deeper dimensions of the teaching profession. When I think back to when I was preparing my application to Graduate Studies I was moved by a passion for what it might be the facets and dimensions that propel inspiration in this field. It has been an honour to seize the chance to conceive of my inspired area of interest, to produce a formal proposal of intended research, to present and defend that proposal to my supervisor, committee and chair people, to spend time interviewing passionate teachers, and then to immerse myself in the data and immerse myself in the writing process as this major written piece slowly took form over the past months. Each moment has been constituted from an authentic interest in the multitude of facets involved in inspired education.

The chance to have one-on-one interview conversations with ten teachers who live the work of secondary education has given rise to an exploration of appreciations of the deeper purposes of education, understandings of the enacted curriculum in action as well as stories of inclusiveness embodied in classrooms. My research pursuit was guided by a keenness to understand more deeply the responses to one overarching critical question that has guided my investigation, namely, how does the process of enacting curriculum create an ethos of caring, a deepened consciousness for social justice and enhanced student engagement?

The areas of this study have been explored and articulated in my six main chapters: First, an introduction that explored the imperative for this research exploration. Second, a literature review that explored a deepened understanding of the landscape of pathways of thinking that supported this journey. Third, a consideration of method and methodology that explored the how and who of the positive momentum that has propelled this inquiry forward towards new learning. Fourth, accounts of what constitutes the purpose of education including what the essence of education is, core characteristics of teaching practices, understandings of social justice education, and characterizations of the enacted curriculum. Fifth, analysis of teaching pedagogy including descriptions of best practices, impacts of deliberate pedagogy on student engagement, examples of social justice education in action, as well as emergent themes from my study. And, sixth, this conclusion – it is only at this moment that I realize how truly special it is for people to uphold a profession that strives to inspire students, the next generation. It is a profound honour to have shared in this journey and I happily anticipate the uncertainty of the road that lies ahead.

In the final statement of this thesis I would like to offer a possible response to my research question, having embraced each moment of this journey as it has arrived to me. Enacting curriculum creates an authentic situation where both the student and the teacher are engaged in a

meaningful process. This situation, if it is to matter beyond that insular isolate moment, will be thoroughly infused with social justice consciousness because what is being pursued in the learning context is connected with and has relevance to the world beyond. When the student and the teacher are invested in the learning journey, in these capacities, an ethos of caring is created and teaching truly does become inspired.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation to Participants



Letter of Invitation

Dear _____,

Hopefully this letter finds you enjoying a pleasant present moment. As you know, I am working on my Master's thesis in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan. I am happy to have reached the point where I am poised to conduct my research and am honoured to be formally extending this invitation to you.

Through our conversations these past months you have already likely formulated some sense of what I am studying. As teachers we certainly strive to effectively support our student's journey towards success in our classrooms. This role takes many forms and I am interested in learning from your experiences in working with young people towards this. I hope you will share examples and stories of how you make learning relevant for your students, how your interests and passions converge with your students towards heightened inspiration, what strategies you employ in your classroom to evoke engagement, how the concept of care manifests in your teaching practices, as well as what excites you as a teacher to continue being a learner.

The interview itself will take about sixty minutes and will consist of open-ended questions that seek to prompt you to share from your experience as a teacher in the aforementioned regards. I will happily meet at a time/place that is convenient for you, away from school property such as a café.

Please confirm with me that you are willing to participate. You can reply to this email (leanne.kadyschuk@usask.ca), call my supervisor's phone number (306-966-1350), or email my supervisor Dr. Paul Orłowski (paul.orlowski@usask.ca) as soon as possible.

The opportunity to have a conversation with you, and learn from/with you, will be much appreciated on my part. As professional colleagues, I look forward to this next stage in the process, namely, learning from my professional colleagues.

With gratefulness,

Leanne Kadyschuk



The Interview Questions. For your pre-interview pondering, ☺ This way you can anticipate what you might like to share/discuss before we have our conversation ... if you like. Remember that our interview will last between 60-90 minutes. I am grateful for your presence in this rich learning journey.

1. Describe what you feel is the essence, or the heart, of education? To put it another way, what is the purpose of schooling?
2. Ponder the choices you make as a teacher when seeking student success. Describe what you would say are the "best" practices or best classroom strategies – in your specific context and experience.
 - What impact do these best pedagogical practices have on student engagement in your experience as a teacher?
 - Describe the relationship between best pedagogical practices and student attendance.
3. The "enacted curriculum" can be understood to be that special intersection when teacher's and student's passions/interests converge towards authentic learning. How would you characterize this process of enacting the curriculum in terms of your experience as a teacher?
 - Please describe one specific experience teaching where the enacted curriculum positively affected student success.
4. What is the relationship between student success and teacher engagement in education?
 - Describe one specific experience where student success positively affected your own engagement with teaching.
5. In a typical 65-minute-class, what would you say is the purpose of purposes?
6. What does the term "social justice" mean to you?
 - How do you incorporate social justice into your teaching, if you do? (Such as gender, race, poverty, etc.)
 - Describe a situation where you facilitated a lesson focused towards social justice consciousness, if you can.
7. What would you say is the most essential quality of your practice as a teacher?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share that you feel is relevant to this research exploration?
9. Lastly, how many years have you been teaching? What subject areas do you teach primarily?

THANK-YOU AGAIN for participating in my humble thesis research. I am honoured!

NOTE: If any specific teaching materials, examples, exemplars, photographs, etc. would be relevant to share do please bring them along to our interview. ☺

Appendix 3: Consent Form



Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Enacting the Curriculum: Teacher Engagement, Social Justice & Student Success

Researcher: Leanne Kadyschuk, Graduate Student, Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, (306) 966-1350, Leanne.Kadyschuk@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Paul Orłowski, Principal Investigator, Department of Educational Foundations; Director, University of Saskatchewan, 306-966-1350, Paul.Orłowski@usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

This study seeks to:

- Understand how teachers conceptualize the enacted curriculum in their classroom teaching
- Understand how teachers make learning relevant for students
- Understand how teachers committed to student engagement think about and incorporate social justice principles into their teaching.

Procedures:

- This study will utilize face-to-face interviews that will be between 60 and 90 minutes in duration
- Where permission is granted, these interviews will be recorded to ensure accuracy of interpretation. Participant may request that the audio-recorder be turned off at any time.
- Please feel free to ask any questions about the procedures in this study or your role

Potential Risks:

- If participants feel uncomfortable discussing some questions, this will be addressed by the following:
A statement will be read to participants at the beginning of the interview informing them that they can choose to not answer any questions with which they are uncomfortable

Potential Benefits:

- Contribution to an emerging field of research as few studies in Canada have been done that examine how teachers use the enacted curriculum to make learning relevant to students' lives
- Interested participants will be provided with a summary of the final results

Confidentiality:

- Your interviews are confidential
- In the final report, no identifying information will be included
- Storage of data:
 - The data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Any printed documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet
 - The data will be kept for up to five years plus a day and will be destroyed when no longer required
 - Your choice to participate will have no effect on your teaching position or how you will be treated

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary. You can choose to answer only those questions with which you are comfortable or knowledgeable.
- You may withdraw from the research project for any reason at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Should you wish to withdraw, your data will be destroyed
- Your right to withdraw will apply up until the results have been disseminated. After this date, it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow Up:

- To obtain results from this study, please indicate your interest in the interview or by email and these results will be emailed to you.

Questions or Concerns:

- If you have any questions, please contact the researcher, using the information at the top of page 1
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca, (306) 966-2975, or toll free (888) 966-2975.

Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

REFERENCES

- Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera lucida: Reflections on photography*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Cochran-Smith, Marilyn. Published in “Developing social justice literacy: An open letter to our faculty colleagues” by Sensoy, O. & DiAngelo, R (2009). *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(5), p. 350. Accessed from: <http://education.csuci.edu/justice-conference/faq.htm>
- Cornbleth, C. (1990). *Curriculum in context*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education*. New York, NY: Collier Books.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder.
- Goulet, L. (1995). “Two teachers of Aboriginal students: Effective practice in sociohistorical realities.” in *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, Vol. 25, No. 1. College of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change* (pp. 1-16). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- King, L.A. & Hicks, J.A. (2007). *Lost and found possible selves: Goals, development and well-being*. Accessed from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.cyber.usask.ca/doi/10.1002/>
- King, T. (2010). *The truth about stories: A Native narrative*. Toronto, ON: Dead Dog Café Productions Inc. and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
- Kohl, H. (2009). *The Herb Kohl reader: Awakening the heart of teaching*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). “But that’s just good teaching: The case for culturally relevant pedagogy” in *Theory into practice*, Vol. 34, No. 3. (Summer, 1995). College of Education, Ohio State University.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). “Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy.” *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 3. (Autumn, 1995).

- Maguire, A. (2016). Illustrating equality VS equity. Interaction Institute for Social Change. Accessed from: <http://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/>
- Noddings, N. (1992) *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Nussbaum, M. (2008) *Education for profit, education for freedom*. Accessed from: https://auroraforum.stanford.edu/files/essays/Nussbaum_Educ_for_Profit_Freedom.pdf
- Orlowski, P. (2011). *Teaching about hegemony: Race, class, and democracy in the 21st Century*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Parker, P. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ritchhart, R. (2011). *Making thinking visible*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Rossiter, M. (1999). *Understanding adult development as narrative*. Retrieved from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.cyber.usask.ca/doi/10.1002/ace.8409/abstract>
- Saskatchewan Curriculum. Accessed from: <https://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/>
- Sensoy, O. & DiAngelo, R (2009). Developing social justice literacy: An open letter to our faculty colleagues. Accessed from: <http://education.csuci.edu/justice-conference/faq.htm>
- Sontag, S. (1977). *On photography*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Srivastava, P. & Hopwood, N. (2009). *A practical iterative framework for qualitative data analysis*. International Journal of Qualitative Methods 8(1), 76-84.
- University of Derby. (2013). *What makes a good interview?* Accessed from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPwOvOVxD4>
- Wilhelm, J. D. (2013) *Enriching comprehension with visualization strategies*. Toronto, ON: Scholastic.
- Whitehead, A.N. (1957). *The aims of education and other essays*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research (2nd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.