

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TEACH? AN ARTS-BASED EXISTENTIAL
EXPLORATION WITH PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS**

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

April 2022

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What does it mean to teach? An arts-based exploration with pre-service teachers

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Teacher education is a “significant site of adult learning” (Butterwick, 2014). It can also be a place where neo-liberal ideas about how children 'come into presence' in the world are perpetuated. Alternatively, it can be a place where an existential view is adopted with very different outcomes for both teacher candidates and the children in their care. In particular, an existential pedagogy values self-worth and takes into account the individuality of learners as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. Using Gert Biesta’s conceptualization of teaching as existential, this study explored pre-service teachers’ beliefs about what it means to teach and pursued the following questions: 1) What are pre-service teachers’ understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach? 2) How are explorations of existential questions facilitated by an arts-based approach and an art exchange? 3) What possibilities might existentialism offer to pre-service teachers and teacher education programs? The analysis suggests ways in which existentialism might be enacted to the benefit of teacher candidates, teacher education, and the children within our schools. Outcomes of the study include: the importance of exploring and interrogating one’s understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach; the potential of existentialism to create space within teacher education for better understanding the individuality of every person; and the possibilities presented by allowing children to bring their ‘newness into the world.’

Lay Summary

Educating teachers to teach in a complex world that is full of possibilities, requires teacher education programs and teachers themselves, to embrace possibility and to be curious about what it means to *be* in the world. This dissertation explored the beliefs of individuals studying to become teachers. In doing so, it used art-making and an art exchange to better understand what it means to be a teacher and the power of the arts for enhancing their learning about ‘being in the world.’ It uses ideas of what it means to *be* in the world as a human to present suggestions for individuals studying to become teachers and for teacher education programs.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Roselynn Verwoord. The fieldwork reported in Chapter Five was covered by the UBC Research Ethics Board's Certificate of Approval Number H1703403 (approved on February 22, 2018).

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Acknowledgements

Completion of my PhD was only possible with support, guidance, and encouragement from many people. Although I am the individual whose name is written on this dissertation and who will receive the degree, there are many individuals whose contributions led to my completion of this dissertation and degree. Some of them are individuals whom one might expect, as without them, I would not be the person I am, with my inclinations, dispositions, and interests. These include my supervisory committee (Shauna Butterwick, Tony Clarke, and Pierre Walter), family (Mom, Dad, Abhishek, Eshaan, and Amaya) and PhD friends (Isabeau, Hanae, Wendy, Andree, Omer, and Paulina). Others, may be surprised to know of their contributions and impact. I want to mention a few individuals who have had a profound impact at key junctures leading up to and during my PhD journey. Firstly, Dr. Carole Ford, who passed away in September 2020. Carole was a mentor and a dear friend whom I met during my BEd degree at the University of Victoria. She saw my potential and encouraged me to explore my questions about education through a Masters degree. Without her, I simply would not be where I am. Prior to her encouragement, I had never considered undertaking a Masters degree as I didn't have the social capital (i.e. nobody in my family had pursued further education). I am grateful for her encouragement, guidance, and support. I also want to thank Dr. Gert Biesta, whom I had the privilege of learning alongside in the summer of 2013, when he was a visiting scholar at the University of British Columbia (UBC). His ideas about teaching are at the heart of this dissertation. I also want to express my appreciation for Dr. Munir Vellani, whom I met in 2014, and who provided significant inspiration through the concept of 'children in the midst.' Thanks are also due to Dr. Avraham Cohen, whom I met in 2018, and who provided food for thought around the existential possibilities for teaching and learning. I would also like to thank the many academic mentors

within and beyond the UBC community who have nurtured me along my journey – Dr. Gary Poole, Dr. Gail Hammond, Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Dr. Mandakini Pant, and Dr. Budd Hall, to name a few. I am also thankful to the University of British Columbia for the financial support and resources to undertake my PhD.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the children and teachers of the world.

Chapter 1: Birth

“the decisive fact determining man as conscious, remembering being is birth or ‘natality,’ that is, the fact that we have entered the world through birth” (Arendt, 1996, p. 51).

1.1 Overview

This chapter begins with the story of how I came to be interested in pre-service teacher education and existential questions about teaching. I situate myself as an existentialist and introduce the concept of natality (a key concept woven throughout my dissertation) by drawing on the birth of my own son during my PhD. I then describe how I gave birth my dissertation by discussing the questions that I seek to explore, the methodology that I used to explore them, and the structure that I will explore them in.

1.2 My Birth as an Educator

As far back as I can remember, I have always wanted to be a teacher. During high school, much of my volunteer work was with youth (K-7), and some of my fondest memories are centred around the time when I was 10-12 years old (i.e. grades 4-6). These were the years when I felt happy, joyful, free, keen to learn, engaged, excited, etc. I strongly believe that my desire to become an elementary school teacher was because of the positive experience that I had during schooling, particularly elementary schooling.

The first hurdle that I encountered when I wanted to pursue a Bachelor of Education (BEd) program at the University of Victoria, occurred when I realized that the academic grades from the first two years of general university education were the sole admission criteria. I remember

the immense feelings of anxiety that I felt in those first two years of university to excel academically in order to be accepted into the BEd program. I also remember the strong focus on ensuring that each applicant had completed the “acceptable” and “appropriate” pre-requisites, as identified by the admissions committee, in order to even be considered for the program. This was in addition to a grades requirement. Even then I wondered if aspiring teachers should be assessed on something *more* than academic achievement? I had an innate belief that teachers were supposed to be well-rounded individuals with a commitment to community and to working with people, particularly youth (and the requisite experience in this area); with decent academic performance but not necessarily perfect because after all, teachers are not modelling perfection, they are modelling learning; with strong inter-personal and communication skills; and with a passion for lifelong growth and learning. When faced with the BEd program’s purely academic admission criteria, my vision of teaching at that time was significantly impacted.

The second hurdle that I encountered on entry to the BEd program was its full schedule. At times during my BEd degree, I had six or seven concurrent courses within a semester and was literally in class Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 5pm. There was no time to breathe, let alone to think or reflect on what I was learning. My life as a pre-service teacher was hyper-scheduled! On top of the already busy schedule, I was continuing to engage in activities outside of the BEd program that allowed me to live my values – activities like volunteering with various organizations in the community, gaining practical work experience, engaging in relationships with family and others, and engaging in lifelong learning and growth through music, physical activity, and other pursuits. The assumption that I would not engage in these kinds of activities and would focus all of my energy on school, simply wasn’t within my sense of ‘being in the world.’ It’s possible that

the program believed it was fostering ‘well-rounded’ individuals with its emphasis on learning art, science, math, music, interpersonal communication, etc., during on campus coursework; however, being a teacher requires more than simply learning about subject areas in a university classroom. It requires real-life experience.

In addition to the program’s full schedule, the content that I was learning often seemed ‘out of context.’ What I mean by that is that as a pre-service teacher, one often doesn’t have a particular context to think about (other than a generic classroom), when they are learning about how to teach math, how to teach science, etc. It was as if as students, we were supposed to be sponges soaking up abstract theoretical content that could then be unproblematically applied to classroom settings. The BEd program assumption was that learning was achieved through an endless stream of generic assignments. In my three years in the program, I never once created materials/assignments with the intention of using them for a specific context. There were times when I was able to use materials/assignments, particularly during practicums, but much of the theorizing and thinking was about a theoretical classroom that I would enroll ‘someday,’ once I became a teacher and had spent time on the teacher-on-call list. This disjuncture between theory and practice didn’t meet my needs as a pre-service teacher.

Another challenge that I confronted in the program was the sense of competition and rivalry that seemed to pervade the university context. I vividly remember students approaching each other after assignments, tests, etc. were handed back, and asking “What did you get?” as if we were competing with each other. Where did this culture of competition come from and why was it so important to so many pre-service teachers in my program? Is this a behavior that these pre-

service teachers were going to emulate in their classrooms with their students? Perhaps, this competitive, grade-based culture shouldn't have surprised me given that post-secondary institutions are structured to promote this. I remember questioning why the program had grades and proposing to my instructor that perhaps it should be a Pass/Fail program. My question received some resistance from individuals who cited the emphasis on scholarships, recognition, university policy, and admission to graduate school as reasons for the continued use of grades. Although there is some legitimacy to these concerns, it seemed to me that grade-based assessment fueled by an emphasis on schooling rather than education (Coulter & Wiens, 2008) did more damage than good within the context of learning to become a teacher: competition replaced collaboration, collegiality, and an 'ethic of care' (Noddings, 1990) amongst the BEd learners.

One of the most challenging hurdles in the program was what I perceived to be the insular nature of the program. In most of my classes, there seemed to be a predominant focus on preparing pre-service teachers to take up roles as teachers in classrooms in the provincial city of Victoria. Most of the students were born and raised in Victoria and the dominant assumption was that they would teach in Victoria. Although I grew up in Victoria, I am aware that Victoria is not particularly ethnically diverse. Students in schools in greater Victoria are predominantly Caucasian, with some Indigenous students and an even small number of students from other racial backgrounds. Not surprisingly, the majority of teachers in Victoria are also Caucasian, and come from middle-class backgrounds. Thus, preparing teachers for Victorian classrooms (pardon the pun) didn't seem to fit the ideal of 'education for all.'

Although I fall into the categories above (Caucasian, middle-class, born and raised in Victoria), I always felt that it was a mistaken assumption that the world was only as big as the four walls of a school and/or classroom in Victoria. This feeling was emphasized during the fourth year of my BEd program when I had the opportunity to travel to New Delhi, India, to participate in a Canadian-government funded internship with the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and then to complete a self-organized practicum at Bloom Public School, a K-12 school in Delhi. Upon my return from these experiences, I found that there was very little interest and openness among teachers and students in the BEd program to discuss education in global contexts or to consider the importance of local and global contexts through a discussion of systemic and philosophical differences. My desire to explore an enlarged vision of education outside of the local Victorian context met general indifference in the form of ‘who cares’.

Although these challenges represent different moments during my BEd degree, they left me dispirited and unhappy with my teacher preparation by the end of the program. It was as if my desire to become an elementary school teacher had died. Somehow, I came to the understanding that my vision of what teaching was and should be, did not align with others’ visions or what I perceived to be the dominant vision promulgated at the university. Why was my desire for a broader conceptualization of education not welcomed, encouraged, or given space within the program? How was it that somehow I, who had always wanted to be an elementary school teacher, no longer wanted to be one?

Despite my realization, I continued to seek meaningful opportunities to contribute to formal and informal educational settings both in Victoria and in New Delhi, India, during the remainder of

my BEd program. One particularly meaningful experience was facilitating an international art exchange on the theme ‘the world I live in and the world I want to live in’ between students that I had taught at Bloom Public School in New Delhi, India, and children at a local elementary school in Victoria. This experience was foundational to shaping my understanding of the power of the arts for enabling embodied understandings and for affirming my interest in what I would come to realize as existential questions about teaching and learning.

I completed the BEd program in the spring of 2008, and found myself with many questions about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. With the encouragement of Dr. Carole Ford, a mentor from my BEd program, I decided to apply to Masters degree programs to explore some of my questions. In the Fall of 2008, I enrolled in the Master of Arts (MA) in Society, Culture, and Politics in Education through the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. Building on my experience facilitating an international art exchange during my BEd program, my MA degree explored the role of participatory artistic quiltmaking for supporting peacebuilding among grade 4-7 youth (Verwoord, 2011), in an inner-city school in Vancouver.

Upon culmination of my MA degree, I undertook a four-month internship with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Kathmandu, Nepal. Through my work with UNESCO, I visited several government schools and private schools, and noticed significant differences between the two categories of schools. My observations piqued my curiosity about teacher education in Nepal and helped me identify a desire to explore the relationship between pre-service teacher education and what happens in classrooms.

In the Fall of 2012, I began my doctoral studies in the Department of Educational Studies at UBC. Building on my MA research, I was keen to continue my exploration of arts-based approaches, to examine pre-service teacher education, and to focus my research on two contexts of personal significance to me – Canada and Nepal. I wasn't quite clear on how I would weave these three components together into a research study; however, clarity around this came later in my degree program.

1.3 My Coming of Age as an Existentialist

I'll never forget the Spring of 2013. I was in the second term of my PhD program and was enrolled in a compulsory doctoral seminar for first-year students on advanced research methodologies which explored the epistemic and ontological positions of various paradigms (positivist, interpretive, critical, post-modern, etc.) used in educational research. Part way through the course, the instructor asked each student to write a one-page biography. The biography was to include our research interests and how we viewed the world, as a researcher. Below, is the biography that I wrote.

I am an educator, researcher, musician, and learner who has a deep love and affinity for the arts. My relationship to the arts is rooted in my practice as a classical violist. At the age of eight I began a lifelong relationship with classical music which deeply informs my understanding of the power of the arts for opening up hidden worlds and untapped understandings of ourselves, others, and the world in the making. As a researcher, my interests lie in using the arts, particularly quiltmaking and other fabric arts as a vehicle for opening up new and embodied (yet often hidden or buried) understandings. I see myself as a facilitator of research which is collectively defined and conducted by the individuals (myself included) who contribute their understandings (and thus define) to the research process by engaging in reflection and meaning uncovering through arts. I have

a love for relationships and for engaging in community and as a human being and researcher I strive to create spaces where research is about “re-searching” both individually and collectively. Creating opportunities for research participants to be seen as equals in the research process is of utmost importance to me. My research inquiries are motivated by a desire to see a more equal and just (in all aspects – socially, economically, environmentally, etc.) world – a world where all voices are valued and at the table. I believe that youth hold immense capacity for considering and embracing concepts of justice and equality and that the most effective way to foster change is through youth. Having studied, trained, and worked as a formal educator, I also believe that educators have immense power for opening up conversations with the youth that they influence. This belief considerably impacts my research interests and how I select the groups that I want to engage with as a researcher. I am also motivated by a desire to see research learnings “taken up” by individuals who are in positions of power and who can effect change. Sometimes this is individuals who are involved in the research process themselves and sometimes this is administrators and policy makers. Without application, research remains merely a “nice to have” process.

During class, we were asked to share our biographies. After each person had read their biography, the instructor engaged us in a conversation about the various epistemological and ontological positions underlying each biography. Perhaps, not surprisingly to the instructor, but certainly surprisingly to me, I was positioned as an existentialist based on my emphasis on concepts I spoke about in the biography. This was the first time that I had the language, a descriptor, a label that encapsulated my world view.

A few months later, in the summer of 2013, I had the opportunity to experience an existential approach to teaching through Dr. Gert Biesta’s graduate special topics course entitled *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. During his visiting scholar course, students were required to adopt

one of the key concepts discussed in the course – and adoption was meant in the literal sense in that we were required to let the concept live with us for a period, to try to establish a relationship with the concept, to take care of it, and to care for it. His course marked the start of my exploration of existentialism and helped me realize the possibility that my doctoral research would have existentialism as its centre. Existentialism was not a concept that I had engaged with prior to his course, either during my teacher education program or during my teaching.

1.4 Bringing Newness into the World: The Birth of My Son

On September 11th, 2015, I became a mother. My son, Eshaan Shah, was born at 12:21pm, after twelve hours of labour that culminated in an emergency caesarean section. His arrival, as a new human being in the flesh was an act of natality and of newness. While it's fair to say that I was an existentialist prior to his birth, his arrival and the newness solidified my interest in existentialism. Prior to his birth, I had been reading about Hanna Arendt's concept of natality, defined as "the capacity for new beginnings" (Bernauer, 1987, p. viii), and the 'coming of children' which is connected to birth (beginning), freedom (starting something new), and action (doing the unexpected) (Arendt, 1958).

For Arendt (1958), "the fact that we have entered the world through birth" is the reason why humans are able to be "conscious, remembering being[s]" (p. 51). Without birth, we don't exist. In some ways, connecting the idea of birth to existing in the world might seem obvious or simplistic, to Arendt, the act of being born and becoming natal, also bring with it the potential to engage critically in the world. Specifically, Arendt (1958) believes that natality also signifies the potential that humans have for living. Because humans have been born and are aware of their

birth, they have the potential to bring newness into the world through action. As such, they are able to “begin and act in the story of humanity” (Arendt, 1958, p. 55). Without birth, this would not be possible as natality represents a beginning.

Eshaan is now six years old. In addition to witnessing his physical growth and emotional development, I have had the gift of watching him explore the world and “act as an agent in the world” (de Assis Cesar, 2010, p. 2) by initiating new, and what I imagine are unpredictable relationships. I have also welcomed my daughter, Amaya Shah into the world. As I watch my children explore, I often find myself thinking about formal education and the educational system that they will enter, shortly after their fifth birthdays. Will their newness be welcomed? How might the system of schooling (Fenstermacher, 1992; Coulter & Wiens, 2008) impact their ability to bring newness into the world? As a trained teacher, these are questions that I found myself thinking about prior to their birth; however, the act of birthing my children and bearing witness to their natality, have amplified my interest in these questions.

1.5 Institutional, Programmatic, Curricular, & Pedagogical Challenges

My experiences in the pre-service teacher education program highlight challenges with four aspects including: institutional (the politics of knowledge), programmatic (structures for learning), curricular (disciplinary knowledge), and pedagogical (how we teach what we teach) (Ulferts, 2021). Although in many cases there is a relationship between these four aspects, it is also helpful to think of how the hurdles I encountered can be thought of as pertaining to each of these levels in my own BEd program. At an institutional level, the focus on admission criteria that solely emphasized grades was a hurdle. At the programmatic level, hurdles included the full

program schedule and the focus on grades rather than pass/fail. At a curricular level, there were several hurdles including the lack of focus on education in global contexts (or contexts other than Victoria), and the focus on competition and rivalry that was emphasized in the program. At a pedagogical level, one of the hurdles was that the content being taught was ‘out of context’ in the sense that the pre-service teachers were not able to directly apply their learning. Spanning all four is a cultural hurdle where all programs operate within a privileging culture that emphasize certain ways of knowing and being in the world.

In using my experience (in the form of auto-biography) to think about the challenges with pre-service teacher education, it is clear that my pre-service teacher education program did not prepare **all** students to become the kinds of teachers that they might aspire to be. The system (including institutional beliefs/goals/practices, curricular decisions, and pedagogical practices) creates hurdles for pre-service teachers and these hurdles impact how pre-service teachers perceive what is possible as future teachers and for the children in their care. If the systems and practices in pre-service teacher education programs don’t make space for the varied needs and understandings of pre-service teachers (in recognition that teaching looks very different to different people and is directly connected to an individual’s values, beliefs, upbringing, culture, religion, language, etc.), then it is in essence limiting the possibility for change in the world. This existential premise is what I believe was missing in my BEd program.

Without new ways of teaching and conceiving of what it means to teach, the profession perpetuate the status quo. It is possible that aspiring teachers who are persistent and can overcome various barriers or points of disjuncture can make it into the system and effect change;

however, research has shown that between 25 and 40% of teachers in the Western world leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Buchanan, 2006; Ewing & Smith, 2003). During my pre-service teacher education program I experienced an existential impasse that drew a clear line between the “educative” agenda (pursuit of moral and intellectual virtues) and the “system of schooling” (managing children and classrooms) (Fenstermacher, 1992). This impasse is one that many others who leave also experience (Dworkin, 2009); representing a significant loss to both the profession and to those who leave (Smithers & Robinson, 2003).

Drawing on Hannah Arendt’s concept of natality which can be defined as “the capacity for new beginnings” (Bernauer, 1987, p. viii), I am interested in exploring teachers’ responsibility to support the ‘coming of children.’ The ‘coming of children’ is connected to birth (beginning), freedom (starting something new), and action (engaging critically with the world) (Arendt, 1958). If pre-service teacher education and teaching become tools to perpetuate dominant ideas about how to be in the world, then children will stop ‘coming’ (starting new things, taking action, and engaging critically). What kind of world will society be left with? Stasis? This begs the question: to what end and for whom does maintaining the status quo serve?

Beyond the impact on individual teachers, there is also a significant impact on future children, when pre-service teacher education programs do not create spaces for teacher candidates to support the coming of children. When pre-service or in-service teachers choose to leave the profession for one or more reasons (e.g. they become disillusioned with the system, they realize they are not oriented or interested in working with children, etc.) they have lost the potential to educate our children.

Recognizing that it is important that pre-service and in-service teachers always consider the ‘child in their midst’ (Arendt, 1996) as they engage in all of the activities inherent in teaching, how can pre-service teachers be prepared to support such children? If this is the problem, there is an opportunity to understand how pre-service teachers conceive of their role as educators in helping these children ‘come into the world.’

1.6 Birth of my Dissertation

I began my PhD program in September 2012, with a desire to build on the research that I had undertaken in my MA degree. Specifically, I was interested in understanding how arts-based experiences can be used to assist pre-service teachers to critically examine their understandings of teaching for social justice. At the time, I had a clear project in mind and a fairly good sense of the research questions that I hoped to explore along with the methods and methodology for this research.

Like most researchers, and especially doctoral students, as my research proposal unfolded I realized that framing my research within the lens of social justice didn’t fully capture what I hoped to explore. While I acknowledge the importance of social justice research for advancing important societal issues, it wasn’t my calling at this point. But what was? I didn’t have an answer to that question and I wouldn’t have one until the third year of my doctoral program and a course on globalization with Dr. Vanessa Andreotti, where I spent a significant amount of time reflecting on my own experiences of ‘being in the world.’ I realized what I really wanted to explore for my PhD was grounded in my passion for formal teaching and teacher education.

Specifically, I wanted to better understand the arts as a form of knowing and being in the world. Furthermore, my own cross-cultural relationships have been the bedrock upon which I have contributed to bringing newness into the world. Being trained as an elementary school teacher and classical musician (and thus passionate about the power and potential of the arts), and having married and worked cross-culturally in India and Nepal, are significant aspects of my life that have shaped this dissertation.

Since acknowledging that my dissertation is rooted in my own sense of being in the world, thinking about and exploring my research topic has been an enjoyable process. In part, because I have been able to return to the field of teacher education – a field that I studied, lived, and with which I remain committed. This dissertation has also allowed me to reflect on my own human embodiment in the world and what it means to *be* in the world. Although this dissertation is not auto-biographical, it is, in a sense, about me. It's a vehicle for me to live my hopes and dreams for teacher education. It is a space for me to celebrate the newness inherent in art-making and embodied self-expression and to have this be at the forefront of ways of knowing and understanding of what it means to be an educator. It's also a space for me to explore and honour the significant educational contexts in my life as an educator, that of Nepal, India, and Canada.

In addition to what this study and dissertation have afforded me, the goal of this study has been to expand, if even a little bit, the notion of what might be possible for teacher education. By facilitating an exchange of artistic representations of teaching and learning and inviting engagement with ideas from 'the other,' (in this case aspiring teachers from two vastly different contexts) my intention is to facilitate relationality and an understanding of teaching and learning.

While I acknowledge that context is central to how individuals conceptualize and live in the world, I also believe that shedding light on our commonalities is an exercise in humanity-building.

1.7 Research Questions

Although there are many questions that I thought about during this study, the three main questions that guide this document are: 1) What are pre-service teachers' understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach? 2) How are explorations of existential questions facilitated by an arts-based approach and an art exchange? 3) What possibilities might existentialism offer to pre-service teachers and teacher education programs? These questions served as a frame as I navigated my way through the messiness of field research. In asking these questions, I am asking existential questions – questions about the ways in which we understand our being in and with the world as educators.

The design of my study mirrors my goals for the study – possibility, relationality, and humanity-building. Methodologically, this study is framed within existential phenomenology which views humans as embodied beings in the physical world. An existential phenomenological approach supports the exploration of phenomena while honouring embodied, relational, and multiple lived understandings of being in the world. I used phenomenological interviews, art-making (in this instance, Chilean-inspired brightly coloured picture called *arpilleras*), and an art exchange between two vastly different contexts to explore my research questions.

1.8 Dissertation Structure

Chapter One, entitled *Birth*, begins with my story of how I came to be interested in pre-service teacher education and existential questions about teaching. I situate myself as an existentialist and introduce the concept of natality (a key concept woven throughout my dissertation) through the story of birthing my son, during my PhD. I also describe how I came to birth my dissertation by discussing the questions that I seek to explore and the structure that I will use to explore them.

Chapter Two, entitled *Being*, introduces readers to the current context of teacher education by describing the current goals and aims of teacher education within a neo-liberal worldview that is prevalent in many current educational contexts. I propose a reconceptualization of teaching, one that privileges an existential perspective and introduce key concepts from my theoretical framework centrally informed by the ideas of Biesta (2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). I then frame teachers' responsibilities to children and to the world within an existential perspective.

Chapter Three, entitled *Literature Review*, provides a discussion of existing research on pre-service teacher beliefs and teacher inquiry as important components in shaping how pre-service teachers view their role. Specifically, I discuss previous research on pre-service and in-service teacher exchanges of the sort conducted for this study, including key themes from this research. The discussion of previous research highlights key components of my study and informs a discussion of the two different teacher education contexts, Nepal and Canada, that I drew upon in my study.

Chapter Four, entitled *Two Different Educational Contexts – Nepal and Canada*, provides an overview of the two different educational contexts that are at the heart of my study – Nepal and Canada. It goes without saying that teacher education is taken up and enacted differently in these two cultural, social, political, and geographic contexts, as teacher education does not exist in a vacuum devoid of context. Given this, and in order to engage in my dissertation, this chapter provides contextual information about teacher education in Nepal and Canada, as well as country demographics, particularly in relation to Nepal, given widespread unfamiliarity in Western contexts with this country.

Chapter Five, entitled *Methodology*, provides an overview of my study including the research questions and the approach (existential phenomenology) that I undertook to explore my questions. I discuss the specific methods (phenomenological interviews, arpillera-making, art exchange, and follow-up phenomenological interviews) used to explore my research questions. I use the concept of becoming to frame a discussion of relationality between myself and the pre-service teachers as well as to explore moments of interruption in my self understanding as an educator, that I experienced throughout the research process.

Chapter Six, entitled *Data Analysis* begins with a discussion of how I analyzed the data. I discuss the concept of relationality as a way to explain why I chose to write letters to the pre-service teachers, as a way of presenting my findings. It also includes the letters, which include images of the pre-service teachers' individual arpilleras.

Chapter Seven, entitled *Possibility*, is the concluding chapter for my dissertation. I discuss the themes across the letters and share why they are important. I use the concept of becoming to discuss ‘recommendations’ or what might be possible for children and for the world, for teacher education, and for the self (i.e. individuals) if teacher education were to embrace an existential perspective. I also offer additional existential questions about teaching that can be explored (i.e. further research).

1.9 Summary

In this chapter, I presented my story - the story of how I came to be interested in pre-service teacher education and existential questions about teaching. I situated myself as an existentialist and introduced the concept of natality. I also described how I came to birth my dissertation by discussing the questions that I explored and the methodology that I used to explore the questions. The chapter concluded with an overview of the document and its structure.

Chapter 2: Being

“You tell me, you show me, you teach me, and then I know” – Eshaan Shah, aged 4

2.1 Overview

In this chapter, I introduce the context of North American teacher education by describing the goals and aims of teacher education within an increasingly neo-liberal worldview that currently pervades North American higher education. I propose a reconceptualization of teaching, one that privileges an existential perspective and introduce key concepts from my theoretical framework (Biesta) that support a reconceptualization of teaching. I then frame teachers’ responsibilities to children and to the world, within that perspective.

2.2 Existential Crisis: The Current Context of Teacher Education

I locate my doctoral research in the midst of several crises documented in the literature that are currently facing teaching, teachers and the education of children. For example, presently, between 25 and 40% of teachers in the Western world leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Buchanan, 2006; Ewing & Smith, 2003). This was also my story. During my pre-service teacher education program, I experienced an existential impasse between the “educative” agenda (pursuit of moral and intellectual virtues) and the “system of schooling” (managing children and classrooms) (Fenstermacher, 1992) which I encountered in my program and in school settings. This impasse is one that many others, who leave the profession, also experience (Dworkin, 2009) and represents a significant loss to both the profession and to those who leave (Smithers & Robinson, 2003). Without new ways of teaching and conceiving of what it means to teach, the status quo will be ever thus.

Neoliberalism as an ideology, public policy, and development model has had a significant impact on teacher education. In particular, its emphasis on bringing the ‘market’ into all aspects of life including the economy, politics, and society, has directly shaped what is possible and not possible in teacher education (Grimmett, 2018). Neoliberalism’s emphasis on individual responsibility and diminishing of the concept of the “public good” has led to a crisis in teacher education (Grimmett, 2018, p. 346). This crisis stems from a “fundamental transformation of Higher Education in Canada” as a result of neoliberalism (Grimmett, 2018, p. 352). Universities, which were previously relatively autonomous are now “entangled in an apparatus of government targets and incentives” (Grimmett, 2018, p. 351) and given that “higher education constitutes the context within which teacher education takes its place and has its being, what applies to academics in universities also applies in magnified form to teacher educators” (Grimmett, 2018, p. 354).

Teacher education programs are also in crisis as teaching jobs disappear and programs are required to show their relevancy (Hall & Schulz, 2010). Society also faces crises at a planetary level with respect to environmental degradation and socio-politico-cultural injustices; teachers are in a unique position to help children locate themselves in this wider and increasingly contested world (Biesta, 2013). Given these crises, space needs to be created in teacher education programs for existential conversations about teaching to occur, and for pre-service teachers to engage relationally with others in our shared work as future and current educators. An existential approach embraces possibilities for the larger world, including for children and teachers.

Based on my experience in a pre-service teacher education program, I believe that many pre-service teacher education programs limit possibilities for students to explore existential understandings of teaching. The system (including institutional beliefs/goals/practices, curricular decisions, and pedagogical practices) often creates hurdles for pre-service teachers and these hurdles can impact how many pre-service teachers perceive what is possible for themselves as future teachers and for the children in their care. If the systems and practices in pre-service teacher education programs do not make space for varied needs and understandings, then these programs are limiting the possibility for change in the world. They are also limiting pre-service teachers' ability to consider more deeply their desires and expectations from themselves and the profession, resulting in many teachers not living out their true desires as educators.

Given the pervasive impact of neoliberalism on teacher education and the resulting reality that teacher education finds itself in, what are the possibilities for teacher education? What possibilities might existentialism provide? Existentialism, as a form of philosophical inquiry explores the nature of existence, or what it means for humans to 'be in the world.' What differentiates existentialism from other philosophical perspectives is its focus on human embodiment through the body and the spirit - or what it means to act, feel, and live as a human. This focus on human embodiment differentiates existentialism from other philosophical perspectives which often emphasize humans as primarily rational, thinking subjects. Existentialism also acknowledges the importance of 'others' and relationships with others, particularly in relation to what it means to be human.

In a neoliberal world marred with an erratic and unstable socio-political-cultural landscape, an existential orientation to teacher education provides possibilities for what teacher education could be and opens up questions about being in the world as an educator. While I recognize that not all post-secondary institutions and teacher education programs support or operationalize neoliberal beliefs and practices, and similarly, while I recognize that there have been institutional and program-specific efforts to interrupt neoliberal beliefs and practices, the impact that neoliberalism has had on the possibilities for teacher education is evident.

2.3 Reconceptualizing teaching: Existential focus

Drawing on Hannah Arendt's concept of natality which can be defined as "the capacity for new beginnings" (Bernauer, 1987, p. viii), I believe strongly that teachers have a responsibility to support the 'coming of children.' The 'coming of children' is connected to birth (beginning), freedom (starting something new), and action (doing the unexpected) (Arendt, 1958). If pre-service teacher education and teaching become tools to perpetuate dominant ideas about how to be in the world, then children will stop 'coming' (starting new things, taking action, and doing unexpected things in the world). What kind of world will that be? I am not suggesting that children have no agency. My goal in proposing an existential focus to teaching is to suggest that an existential approach creates spaces to support children's capacity to come into the world.

Teaching, teacher education, and schooling are complex and are shaped by many forces. An existential view of learning embraces possibility and offers the potential to facilitate children 'coming into the world.' It also creates space for questions about teaching, teacher education, and schooling. For example, what might be possible if teacher education considered pre-service

teachers' responsibility to support the 'coming of children into the world' which is connected to birth (beginning), freedom (starting something new), and action (doing the unexpected) (Arendt, 1996). What might be possible if teacher education embraced the concept of natality which "signifies both our newness in relation to the world and the possibility that we might bring about something new in relation to it" (Levinson, 2005, p. 437). What might be possible if teacher education was framed as being about the world: that which is "common and shared among us" (Kattago, 2012)?

As an educational philosopher, Gert Biesta's theoretical and empirical research on the relationships between education, democracy, and the public place of education provides inspiration for re-conceptualizing teaching and teacher education as existential. Against neo-liberalism and in response to recent conservative shifts in educational discourse, policy, and practice towards learners and their learning (which Biesta terms the "learnification" of education), Biesta (2013) believes that education must involve three inseparable domains including qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Without these three domains, he argues, education is incomplete.

For Biesta (2013), education is more than "qualification," which he defines as the ways in which education qualifies a learner and provides a learner with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions. In simple terms, education should be about more than learning outcomes, lesson plans, and content. In addition to qualification, education also involves socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2013). Socialization involves the ways in which a learner can become part of and critically engage with society's existing social, cultural, and political practices and

traditions (Biesta, 2013). In simple terms, education should be about socializing learners.

Subjectification involves the ways in which education helps a learner exist outside of the existing order (i.e. the actions of others, existing social/cultural practices) through their own initiative and responsibility (Biesta, 2013). In simple terms, education should be about giving a learner the freedom to become their own individual and to exist as a subject of their own lives.

In articulating these three domains, Biesta re-conceptualizes teaching and teacher education as existential. Biesta's articulation of education as qualification aligns with common conceptions of teaching and teacher education; however, Biesta's theorizing of education as involving socialization and in particular, subjectification, suggests that teaching is undeniably an existential activity. But what does it look like for teaching, teachers, and teacher education to support qualification, socialization, and subjectification? In response to this challenge, Biesta argues teaching needs to be understood as transcendence - where teaching brings something radically new to a learner or perhaps, provides learners with the experience of "being taught." For Biesta, being taught involves both teachers (who are also learners) and learners co-constructing the world, where teachers are more than resource people who learners learn from, and where learners are not merely consumers. For teachers, the notion of 'being taught' involves re-framing the role of the teacher as having something to give and receive, not shying away from difficult questions and inconvenient truths, and working actively and consistently on the distinction between what is desired and what is desirable, so as to explore what it is that should have authority in our lives. For learners, 'being taught' involves being open to existential possibilities - to receiving the gift of learning, to welcoming the unwelcome, and to not limiting oneself to the task of learning from a teacher but being open to the possibility of learning in multiple ways.

2.3.1 Teaching as Transcendence

Gert Biesta's (2014a, 2014b, 2013a, 2013b) conceptualization of teaching as transcendence provides one possibility for re-conceptualizing teaching and teacher education in line with an existential perspective. Against the current backdrop of 'lifelong learning' and facilitative teaching, Biesta's (2013b) desire is to see teaching re-conceptualized as gift giving from a teacher to a student. These gifts are not material in nature. In fact, Biesta's (2013b) notion of the "gift of teaching" relates to the concept of transcendence, which involves interruptions in one's self-understanding. Specifically, Biesta (2013b) defines transcendence as "an interest in the 'coming of the world' or that which transcends the real of the possible" (p. 456). For teacher education, what might be possible if pre-service teachers experienced gift giving? Perhaps, pre-service teachers might experience interruptions in their self-understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach as part of coming into the world as a teacher.

Biesta's conceptualization of teaching and teacher education is existential in that it moves beyond the "facilitation of learning" to emphasize the political (which I define as enacting change in the world). His theorization draws on Hannah Arendt's (1958) philosophy of natality which "signifies both our newness in relation to the world and the possibility that we might bring about something new in relation to it" (Levinson, 2005, p. 437). Arendt's concept of natality (coming into the world) requires action. For Arendt, action requires humans to take initiative and to start something 'new.' Natality, or the process of 'birth' brings newness into the world.

In order for our actions to bring newness into the world, ourselves and others have to take up those actions. Within this conceptualization, self and other are in relation, with actions bringing about newness in the world. Biesta (2013b) applies Arendt's conceptualization of natality to gift-giving in teaching by saying: "To be taught – to be open to receiving the gift of teaching – thus means being able to give such interruptions a place in one's understanding and one's being. This is why...such teachings, when they are received, are a matter of subjective truth...of truth to which we are willing to give authority" (p. 459). From this perspective, Biesta believes that the educational 'project' needs to engage with its own impossibility.

Advocating for a post-humanist theory of education, Biesta (2013a, 2013b) wants to see education move away from focusing on the cultivation of self. Instead, he advocates for exposure towards the world (Biesta, 2013b). Against humanism and the idea of 'norms' for what it means to be human, he eschews education as a process of cultivation of human capacity because this assumes a fixed idea of what humans should become (Biesta, 2014a). In the context of teaching, Biesta (2014a) espouses that these fixed ideas limit opportunities for people to show their newness and to change and understand what it is to be human.

For Biesta, "being in the world involves being addressed or spoken to by the other" (2014b, p. 14). This definition of the other resists placing the self at the centre of the world and moves away from seeing learning as only an act of comprehension where the world is something to be brought into our understanding (Biesta, 2014b). According to Biesta (2014b), when learning is viewed as an act of comprehension, our existential possibilities are limited. To support his theorizing of the other, Biesta (2014b) uses ideas from Emmanuel Levinas who considers

uniqueness as existential. For Levinas, uniqueness is tied to the ‘Other’ and ‘otherness’ as uniqueness is where only I can respond or speak because I am “exposed to the other” and I matter (Biesta, 2014b, p. 18).

Biesta’s work on re-conceptualizing teaching and teacher education so that existential possibilities are present to both students and teachers helps to frame teaching and teacher education as existential. An understanding of teaching as existential enables me to frame my study as seeking to explore what might be unique and what might be possible that is not immediately present, in pre-service teacher education. I view teaching as ‘being in the world as an educator.’ This view of education places natality in relation to teacher education. Within my study, relationality, interconnection between self and other, and natality come together to interrupt the often dominant overly simplistic craft or apprenticeship notions of teacher education and the corresponding imitative ‘teaching as I was taught’ phenomenon. In addition, this view encourages pre-service teachers to explore their existing beliefs about teaching.

In this dissertation, I draw on Biesta’s conceptualization of teaching and teacher education as existential to theorize how pre-service teachers, both in Canada and Nepal, understand what it means to be a teacher and to teach. As an existentialist, I am interested in how teachers embody teaching in and through the world and the tensions and complexities that they experience in doing so. Although Biesta does not present a specific framework, set of tools, or model to theorize teaching and teacher education, I draw on many of his ideas throughout this dissertation. These ideas are woven throughout the letters presented in Chapter Six and re-appear in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the current context of teacher education by describing the current goals and aims of teacher education within an ever increasing neo-liberal worldview, while also acknowledging the complexity of teaching and teacher education. I proposed a reconceptualization of teaching, one that privileges an existential perspective and introduced key concepts from my theoretical framework (drawing on Biesta) that support a reconceptualization of teaching. I also framed teachers' responsibilities to children and to the world, within an existential perspective.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Overview

This chapter begins with a discussion of existing research on pre-service teacher beliefs and teacher inquiry as important components in shaping how pre-service teachers view their role. Next, I discuss previous research on pre-service and in-service teacher exchanges (in this instance, art-making and art exchanges), including key themes from this research. The discussion of previous research highlights key components of my study and informs a discussion of the two different teacher education contexts of Nepal and Canada that are used in this study.

3.2 Research on Pre-Service Teacher Beliefs

Pre-service teacher education is often the first formal activity on the road to becoming a teacher (Chong, Wong, & Choon Lang, 2005). However, the majority of students who enter pre-service teacher education programs come with many years of formal schooling experience, which shapes how they view “teachers and students, student learning and methods of instruction, curriculum, and schools” (Pajares, 1992, as cited in Chong et al., 2005, p. 2). These views are called teacher beliefs and can be defined as “opinions, attitudes, preconceptions, personal epistemologies, perspectives, conceptions, principles of practice, and orientations” (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992, as cited in Chong et al., 2005, p. 2). Several researchers have documented how upon entering teacher education, most pre-service teachers already have a set of beliefs that are well-developed and, at times, entrenched (see Anderson, Blumenfield, Pintrich, Clark, Marx & Peterson, 1995; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Lonka, Joram & Byson, 1996; Wubbels, 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). These beliefs can be related to a variety of things including “images of good teachers, images of themselves as teachers, and memories of themselves as students,” (Chong et al., 2005,

p. 2) and are often based on “cultural and personal beliefs, some of which may be long standing” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992, as cited in Chong et al., 2005, p. 2), “stable, deeply entrenched, and resistant or difficult to change” (Chong et al., 2005, p. 2). In addition, “the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter” (Pajares, 1992, p. 317).

The way pre-service teachers view and are open to theoretical components of teacher education is influenced by their beliefs (see Clark, 1998; Goodman, 1988; Holt-Reynolds, 1992).

Researchers have found that pre-service teachers value their practical experiences ‘in the field’ (Joram & Gabriele, 1998) believing that what they need to know as teachers will come from practice. As such, some pre-service teachers focus their attention on courses that explore practical approaches (i.e. how to teach) rather than on theory that they encounter in their coursework (Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Whitbeck, 2000; Wideen, Smith, & Moon, 1998). This matters because some researchers have stated that beliefs are so influential, that attempts to change teaching styles are ineffective, unless beliefs are made explicit and problematized (see Britzman, 1986; O’Loughlin, 1988). As a result, supporting pre-service teachers to be more aware of their own beliefs, to see how their beliefs can influence their learning during their pre-service teacher education program, and to inquire into their perceptions about teaching, learning, and students, should be important components of any pre-service teacher education program.

3.3 Research on Pre-service Teacher Inquiry

Creating candidates who “recognize the complexity of teaching, are thoughtful about their teaching practices, question their own assumptions, and consider multiple perspectives in order to make informed decisions about the learning needs of students” (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005, p.

315) is essential for aligning pre-service teacher education with the realities of teaching practice. In addition, this supports moving from traditional notions of teaching as requiring “craft skills” (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005, p. 316) and of the teacher as “technician, consumer, receiver, transmitter, and implementer of other people’s knowledge” (Cochran-Smith & Lyrtle, 1999, p. 19). Possibilities exist for an expanded conception of teaching as involving awareness of self as learner, awareness of students and how they learn, awareness of context, and of the teacher as knower, thinker, leader, and change agent (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005). The importance of helping pre-service teachers to be more aware of their own beliefs, including how their beliefs can influence their learning while they are completing pre-service teacher education programs has also been documented (Chong et al., 2005). Theories (i.e. constructivism, behaviourism, transformative learning theory, etc.) and practices (i.e. reflection, self-directed learning, etc.) from the field of adult education paired alongside Biesta’s existential orientation to teaching, can also help create conditions for teachers to examine their beliefs.

According to Schulz & Mandzuk (2005), the critical issue for teachers is “how they learn to think about the source and role of [their] knowledge for their classroom practice and how they blend theory and practice to further their knowing and understanding of learning, teaching, and schooling” (p. 316). One way to support pre-service teachers to become more aware of their perceptions about teaching, learning, and students, is to create opportunities for them to inquire into their perceptions. As such, there is a growing movement within many teacher education programs, to have students engage in inquiry (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005). In addition to helping create thoughtful teachers, inquiry-based approaches “encourage resistance to thoughtless implementation of teaching practices, support dispositions of critical thoughtfulness about

teaching, and nurture the ongoing learning, professional growth and intellectual development of teacher candidates” (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005, p. 316). Within the context of my study, I am interested in framing inquiry within an existential orientation, which frames teachers as fully human and creates space for pre-services teachers to bring their whole selves to the profession.

Within the literature, teacher inquiry (sometimes referred to as teacher research, action research, and self-study¹) is defined in several different ways. For example, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) define inquiry as a “systematic, intentional, and self-critical” (p. 22) examination of one’s own work in educational settings. Lindfors (1999) and Short and Burke (1991) define inquiry as a “collaborative, inquiry-driven interdisciplinary curriculum practice” (as cited in Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005, p. 318). Regardless of the definition, inquiry has common elements including “choice, decision-making, and reflective practice” (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005, p. 318). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) propose three different frameworks for inquiry including: 1) social inquiry where knowledge is constructed collaboratively by all stakeholders with the goal of social change; 2) inquiry as ways of knowing in communities where inquiry is a stance and works towards disrupting power relations in schools; and 3) practical inquiry which generates or enhances practical knowledge with the goal of helping teachers deal with their immediate practice needs. Within the context of my study, I am interested in the conceptualization of inquiry as stance, which conceptualizes inquiry as a “characteristic of teachers as learners who thoughtfully examine practices, theories, and research and systematically interrogate the larger

¹ In referencing these terms, I acknowledge that there are similarities and differences among these terms; however, a fuller discussion of these similarities and differences is beyond the immediate scope of this paper.

educational issues that relate to the political and social conditions of schooling, and to concerns about justice and equity” (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005, p. 329-330).

Researchers have examined various facets of pre-service teacher inquiry including, for example, ethics (Shockley Lee & van den Berg, 2003); professional learning (see Nelson, Strouse, Waechter, & St Maurice, 2003); and race and social class (see Brown, 2004). In fact, the field of teacher inquiry has gained traction at local, national, and international levels, demonstrated through the existence of an annual international conference focused solely on teacher inquiry, for example, the *International Conference on Teacher Research* (Clarke & Erickson, 2003) and several significant publications dedicated to teacher inquiry including *The International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* (Loughran, Hamilton, DeBoskey, & Russell, 2004) and *Teacher Inquiry: Living the Research in Everyday Practice* (Clarke & Erickson, 2003).

Within the narrower field of pre-service teacher inquiry, and of particular relevance to my dissertation research, Schulz and Mandzuk (2005), conducted a qualitative study that explored seventeen pre-services teachers’ experiences with inquiry during their teacher education program and found that the pre-service teachers identified several benefits and challenges of inquiry. The benefits included the potential to improve classroom practice, support teacher development, and contribute to the learning of the larger educational community. The challenges included the changing nature of the teacher’s role, the open-ended nature of the process, and the way in which a commitment to inquiry can disrupt the status quo in schools. This study highlights the

importance of framing inquiry within an existential orientation, as a way to acknowledge the human-ness of pre-service teachers.

In an example of the practical benefits of inquiry, Kidd (2012), in a qualitative study that used digital ethnography to explore the role of geographical location and geographical boundary-crossing in pre-service teachers' professional learning through inquiry, found that the process of boundary-crossing enabled teachers to negotiate the gap between professional practice and what they are taught about practice as a teacher. This process of boundary-crossing supports "teachers-in-the-making" (Kidd, 2012, p. 4) or teachers who are 'becoming' through processes of inquiry. This led to opportunities to explore how teachers "located themselves within a world which is redefining around them what it means to be a teacher" (Kidd, 2012, p. 5). In relation to my study, this study emphasizes the importance of the wider world and the possibilities inherent when pre-service teachers embrace the wider world in the context of teaching.

One area that is not addressed within the existing research on pre-service teacher inquiry is the relationship between pre-service teacher inquiry and the development of self-curiosity and self-awareness in relation to existing school systems be they local, national, or international. Specifically, what is the relationship between pre-service teacher inquiry and being in the world as an educator in relation to different cultural, social, geographic, and political contexts (elements of which are ever-present in multicultural classrooms be they in Vancouver, Toronto, or elsewhere)? Researchers have espoused the benefits of pre-service teacher inquiry for helping pre-service teachers develop curiosity and self-awareness beyond their immediate contexts (see Clarke & Erickson, 2003) and researchers have also espoused the benefits of helping pre-service

teachers become globally aware and culturally sensitive educators (see Merryfield, 1996) but how might pre-service teacher inquiry and global and cultural awareness intersect? One obvious answer is international teacher exchanges, given its focus on immersing pre-service teachers in new contexts that can lead to reflection and exploration of self and other while also providing opportunities to learn about formal schooling in international contexts that may differ culturally, socially, geographically, and politically. This particular approach is used in the current study to explore the value of such exchanges for pre-service teacher learning.

3.4 Research on Pre-service and In-service Teacher Exchanges

There is a plethora of literature that espouses the benefits of international cross-cultural exchange, international professional development, and short-term teaching placements for both pre-service and in-service teachers. For example, previous researchers have examined the value of international teacher exchanges (see Rapoport, 2008; Wilson, 1984); pre-service teachers' experiences during international practicums (see Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009); and the impact of trans-national art exchanges among students (see Cocciolone, 1989; Cruikshanks, 2007).

Numerous researchers have examined various aspects of international exchanges involving pre-service and in-service teachers, where the exchanges have involved sending North American participants outside of North America (see Santoro, 2014; Sharma, Rahatzad, and Phillion, 2013; Cruikshank & Westbrook, 2013) and sending non-North American participants to North America (see Wong, 2013). Within this literature, researchers have examined the impact of international exchanges on teachers' pedagogical practices upon returning home (see Rapoport, 2008; Wilson,

1984; Wong, 2013); teachers' engagement with the world and 'others' (see Cruikshanks, 2007; Conle, Blanchard, Burton, Higgins, Kelly, Sullivan, and Tan, 2000); how neo-colonial perspectives are reinforced and/or challenged (see Santoro, 2014; Sharma, Rahatzad, and Phillion 2013; McNiff, 2013); and how the self can be positioned, questioned, and altered as a result of these experiences (see Trent, 2013; Walters, Garii, and Walters, 2009; Cruikshank and Westbrook, 2013). Each of these are seen as beneficial in terms of expanding and enriching the perspective of beginning teachers and their impact on learners.

Notwithstanding the benefits described above, too often subjectivity and positionality are lacking from much of this literature. Thus, it is useful to explore the scope of this research in order to understand how my doctoral research might contribute to gaps in this literature and to understand how this research may inform the design of my study.

3.4.1 Teacher Exchanges

In this section, I summarize key themes from previous research on pre-service and in-service teacher exchanges that are particularly important for my study. Researchers have explored how international placements or practicums have led to pre-service or in-service teachers learning new knowledge and skills, and in some cases, making changes to their practice upon return. For example, Wilson (1984), in a conceptual paper on teachers as short-term international sojourners, explored how short-term placements help teachers to teach more accurately, authoritatively, creatively, enthusiastically, and with more understanding about places they have visited. In a phenomenological interpretive case study with 35 US and Russian in-service teachers with previous international exchange experience, Rapoport (2005) explored the impact of these

programs on educators' practices. He found that participants gained new knowledge and skills in both content and methodology. Wong (2013), in a qualitative study involving five Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in a postgraduate diploma course who completed a six-week teaching immersion in Australia, explored changes in participants' practices based on international experience. She found that teachers' fundamental beliefs in certain concepts of teaching and learning changed, but upon return, some teaching practices did not change, due to assumptions about teaching. Nonetheless, the opportunity to explore education beyond one's context (however that might present itself) is an important step in being in the world as an educator.

3.4.2 Engagement with the World & 'Others'

Learning about and engaging with the world and the 'other' is an obvious outcome of international teacher exchange. For example, Wilson (1984) found that exchange helps teachers extend themselves to people of different cultural backgrounds and Rapoport (2005) found that exchange helps participants overcome many stereotypes of the 'other.' Merryfield (2000), in a qualitative study involving eighty university teacher educators recognized for their commitment to multicultural and global education for preservice teachers, explored the relationship between educators' lived experiences and the development of their conceptual and programmatic work. She found that participants' encounters with people different from themselves shaped participants' work as global educators. Findings from Wilson (1984), Rapoport (2005), and Merryfield's (2000) studies support the importance of international teacher exchange as a vehicle to support engagement with the world and 'others.' In my study, although participants did not

participate in an international teacher exchange involving physical travel, the concept of engagement with the larger world and ‘others’ is central to my field work.

Cruikshanks (2007), in a dissertation that used phenomenology and aspects of narrative and interpretive inquiry, explored how participants’ experiences in an international art exchange involving teachers, administrators, and students from countries around the world, shifted the ways they viewed the world and their role within it. She found that art, story, and relationship, was a powerful combination for helping participants develop a “renewed perspective of education...that compels us to think differently about what it means to teach and to learn in an interdependent and fragile world” (p. iii). Similar to Wilson (1984), Rapoport (2005), and Merryfield’s (2000) studies, Cruikshanks’ (2007) study emphasizes the importance of exchange, albeit, through art instead of physical travel, for supporting pre-service teacher engagement with the larger world and ‘others.’

The power of self-study has been shown to be important for being in the world as an educator when physically visiting another context is not always possible. Conle, Blanchard, Burton, Higgins, Kelly, Sullivan, and Tan (2000), in a study exploring cross-cultural learning in pre-service teacher education, reflected on their experiences in a pre-service teacher education course on cross-cultural learning and explored experiential interactions between students and between students and instructor. They found that these interactions were moments of learning that led to a vision of pluralism where diversity is engaged, refined, and expanded through encounters of difference and self-study. Their study is an example of how ‘exchange’ can be viewed as

interaction among individuals, without always having to travel across geographic borders, and aligns with my study design which does not involve physical travel.

3.4.3 Reinforcing & Challenging Neo-colonial Perspectives

Researchers have explored how international teacher placements can in some cases, challenge neo-colonial perspectives, and in other cases, reinforce neo-colonial perspectives. For example, Sharma, Rahatzad, and Phillion (2013), in an interpretive phenomenological study involving 76 American elementary and secondary pre-service teachers who taught in schools in rural Honduras, found that the experience promoted a deeper understanding of colonial social relations and the questioning of neoliberal networks that perpetuate the status quo. In addition, it supported reflexive and critical dialogue where the participants were able to negotiate difference, engage with self and other, and question their own knowledge and practices in sustaining colonial relations. This study highlights the potential of pre-service teacher exchange as a vehicle for supporting pre-service teachers to develop a critical understanding of the wider world and the socio-politico-cultural forces that can shape teaching.

McNiff (2013) in a qualitative action-research based study involving four UK international educational service providers delivering a teacher education programme to Qatari teachers, examined how the program supported teachers to interrogate existing practices and transform personal professional values into effective learning and teaching. He found that in this process, the teachers engaged in producing knowledge for their own uses and with its own epistemological base, avoiding being consumers of outsiders' knowledge that was created in and for other contexts. His study raises questions about cultural imperialism and the need for

dialogue with self and others, in order to resist the global agenda of colonization, privatization, marketization, and performativity.

Santoro (2014), in a qualitative study with 14 Australian pre-service teachers who taught in India for a month, examined participants' perceptions of the value of an international experience to their development as teachers. She found that the one-way exchange reinforced postcolonial and neo-colonial attitudes towards racial and cultural difference. Specifically, participants saw the trip as an opportunity for self-realization and developed views of Indian people as the exotic other and the deficit other. This study highlights that not all exchanges are beneficial in terms of being in the world as an educator.

The above studies, which are drawn from a much wider literature, illustrate the importance of framing pre-service teacher exchange as an opportunity to be in the world as an educator and to explore the relationship between self, other, and the wider world, and to develop a critical understanding of the wider world and the socio-politico-cultural forces that can shape teaching. The studies also highlight the importance of including opportunities for dialogue with self and others, and to explore two-sided exchanges in an effort to reduce the potential for the reinforcement of postcolonial or neo-colonial attitudes towards racial and cultural difference.

3.4.4 Positioning, Questioning, & Altering Self

Many researchers have examined the impact of international placements on the self. In particular, positioning, questioning, and altering of the self are aspects that have been explored.

For example, Trent (2013), in a qualitative study involving eight Chinese pre-service English language teachers during a teaching practicum in Hong Kong, investigated participants' experiences of becoming a teacher. He found that participants positioned themselves, and were positioned by others, as particular types of teachers during their practicum. Specifically, during their practicum, they were positioned in ways that they felt were inconsistent with their preferred teacher identities. In the context of pre-service teacher exchange and of relevance to my research, his study raises questions about how to facilitate identity work for pre-service teachers during exchanges.

Walters, Garii, and Walters (2009), in a conceptual paper on incorporating international exchange and intercultural learning into pre-service teacher training, highlighted the importance of international field experiences for helping participants challenge their perceptions of their professional self, within the larger context of creating globally aware and culturally sensitive educators and students. Mills (2013), in a qualitative longitudinal study that explored two Australian first year teachers' dispositions (i.e. tendencies, propensities or inclinations) towards social justice over time, found that both participants experienced change in their dispositions towards social change, demonstrating that dispositions towards social justice are acquired through a gradual process of inculcation into teaching. Although Mills' (2013) study did not involve international exchange, it underscores the process of positioning, questioning, and altering of the self that pre-service teachers experience and the important role that this process has in supporting teachers who are aware of the wider world.

Cruikshank and Westbrook (2013), in a study involving 24 Australian pre-service teachers who participated in a three-week teaching practicum in Beijing, examined the ways that participants made connections between their learning during overseas practicum and their teaching in Australia. They found that the experience of being in a different context where pre-service teachers could not rely on shared understandings and beliefs, required the pre-service teachers to question their teaching-related knowledge, skills, and beliefs and their assumptions about curriculum, learning, and learners. This supported enhanced intercultural understanding.

In a qualitative study involving eighty university teacher educators recognized for their commitment to multicultural and global education for preservice teachers, Merryfield (2000) explored the relationship between educators' lived experiences and the development of their conceptual and programmatic work. She found that participants spoke about contradictions between beliefs, expectations, or knowledge pertaining to lived experiences and that their experiences with people different from themselves were profound. Her findings highlight the importance of seeing interrelationships across identity, power, and experience in order to support a consciousness of other perspectives and a recognition of multiple realities. Her study is of particular relevance to my research as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience and being in the world as a teacher.

de Oliveira Andreotti, Fa'aoi, Sitomaniemi-San, and Ahenakew (2013), in a qualitative study that analyzed eight New Zealand pre-service teachers' journals from a multicultural and language studies course, explored the 'perceived costs' participants felt they had to pay, relating to cognition, affect, and relationality, for participating in the course. They found that the course

created a space where students had to confront both the perceived costs of ‘shifting’ between conceptualizations and heart/head spaces and the perceived relational and affective costs of ‘staying the same.’ Their study raises questions about the relationship between cognition (thinking), affect (feeling), and relationality, and highlights the role of crisis in learning that aims to help learners reshape their imaginaries and their capacity to relate to difference.

The above studies illustrate the importance of international placements and opportunities for engagement with difference for supporting positioning, questioning, and altering of the self. The ability to explore the self, including one’s beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives, etc. is an important part of changing one’s beliefs and practices, in support of a more global and pluralistic worldview.

3.5 Shaping my Study Based on Existing Research

Building on the findings from the above studies, in my study, I am interested in seeing “exchange” broadened to include inquiries across international contexts (context being an important element of inquiry) exploring what it means to be a teacher, something that all pre-service teachers can relate to and that they think about in their pre-service teacher training. In my research, the definition of teaching is not based on “craft” skills, but based on relationality across contexts which is about bringing newness into the world. This is a different definition of teaching compared with the approach held by many teacher education programs.

Within the context of my doctoral research, I also acknowledge the structural, financial, linguistic, and political challenges of having pre-service teachers from Nepal and Canada engage

in a physical exchange across geographic borders. As such, my study emphasized pre-service teachers engaging in self inquiry through art making about what it means to be a teacher; sharing this work across contexts; and engaging in inquiry about what it means to be a teacher, based on having viewed the work of the other. Through this exchange of art, there is the potential for reciprocity (albeit limited due to the very different contexts and programs) and benefits to both groups of pre-service teachers. This study is a departure from much of the current literature where there is a presumption that exchanges always require pre-service teachers from dominant countries to be sent to impoverished or developing contexts (sometimes where the other is seen as in need of saving).

My belief in the importance of inquiry for pre-service teachers is also shared by the UBC Faculty of Education. In the fall of 2012, the UBC Faculty of Education launched their revised Bachelor of Education Program. As part of the program revision, teacher inquiry was woven into the fabric of the program, with three courses on teacher inquiry (Inquiry I, II, and III) included to support an inquiry approach to teacher education (Phelan, McTavish, & Carr, 2012). As such, my focus on teacher inquiry supports the three primary goals of UBC's teacher education program including: 1) supporting an inquiry stance (a "consistent interpretive engagement with educational ideas and practices"); 2) intellectual maturity (an "appreciation of diverse perspectives and publics; and the necessity of reasoned judgement"); and 3) responsibility for one's own ongoing learning as a teacher. An inquiry stance helps students move beyond a sense that teaching and learning are about following routines, towards an orientation to curiosity, engagement, wonder, internal deliberation and deliberation with others (Phelan et al., 2012). Intellectual maturity enables students to understand that the world consists of plurality – of

people, ideas, perspectives, and that we have a responsibility to understand our own perspectives on things and to communicate this with others (Phelan et al., 2012). Responsibility for one's ongoing learning as a teacher supports students to explore their own curiosities and to link different kinds of knowledge from courses and experiences within and beyond their program (Phelan et al., 2012). In addition, as part of supporting inquiry, the UBC BEd program includes a compulsory three-week community field experience (CFE) in a local, national, or international context. Of note is the increasing number (now 15%) of pre-service teachers who opt for an international context to complete their CFE (Clarke, Fan, Webb, & Zou, 2020). To date, 489 UBC teacher candidates have visited 45 countries since the CFE was first offered (Clarke et al., 2020).

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed existing research on pre-service teacher beliefs and teacher inquiry as important components in shaping how pre-service teachers view their role. I also discussed previous research on pre-service and in-service teacher exchanges, including key themes from this research. The discussion of previous research highlighted key components of my study and informed a discussion of the two different teacher education contexts including Nepal and Canada, which are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Two Educational Contexts - Nepal and Canada

4.1 Overview

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the two different educational contexts that are at the heart of my study – Nepal and Canada. Specifically, I provide contextual information about teacher education in Nepal and Canada, as well as country demographics, particularly in relation to Nepal. Although my study is not intended to be cross-cultural or comparative, my intention is to provide contextual information for readers who may be unfamiliar with one or both of these educational contexts.

4.2 Nepal

Nepal is a landlocked country bordered by China and India (see Figure 1), and is located in the Global South. It is well-known for being the home of the Himalayas and for Mount Everest, which is the highest point on Earth. Nepal's capital city is Kathmandu, where the majority of the country's 27.8 million people live. Nepal is inhabited by people of diverse social, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. There are 125 caste/ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken as mother tongue in Nepal (national census 2011). Despite this variation in language, Nepal's official language is Nepali. The majority of people in Nepal practice Hinduism (81.3%), with a small number practicing Buddhism (9%). Nepal has the largest per capita population of Hindus in the world.



Figure 1 Map of Nepal

https://college.holycross.edu/projects/himalayan_cultures/2011_plans/gwollak/images/nepal-map.jpg

Since 1951, Nepal has experienced significant political changes marked by conflicts, referendum and elections. The country remains divided on the ways and means of facilitating socio-political transitions. The most significant change of 2006 abolished the monarchical system and declared the country a federal republic. Presently, Nepal is a parliamentary republic with a multi-party system. For administrative purposes, the country is divided into 7 federal provinces, 77 districts, 6 Metro Cities, 11 Sub-Metro Cities, 276 Urban Municipalities and 460 Rural Municipalities (Government of Nepal, 2017). The country is currently ruled by the Nepal Communist Party and is governed according to the Constitution of Nepal, which came into effect in 2015. It defines Nepal as having multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural characteristics with common aspirations of people living in diverse geographical regions, and being committed to

and united by a bond of allegiance to the national independence, territorial integrity, national interest, and prosperity of Nepal.

Nepal is an agro-based economy and is defined as one of Asia's least developed countries (LDCs) (Regmi, 2017). Economically, the country depends on financial assistance provided by bilateral and multilateral agencies including the United Nations. The yearly per capita income is approximately \$730 US dollars (2014) and more than half of the country's population live on less than \$2 US dollars per day. About one fourth of the population (25.16%) lives below the poverty line. In addition to economic challenges, Nepal experienced an armed conflict from 1996 to 2006 alongside political instability and more recently, experienced a devastating earthquake in 2015.

Nepal's overall literacy rate (for the population age five years and above) is 65.9% (2011). More than half of primary school students do not enter secondary schools, and only one-half of them complete secondary schooling. The secondary education (grade 9–12) enrollment rate is 24%. Fewer girls than boys join secondary schools and fewer complete the 10th grade. The mean years of schooling is 3.2 years. The life expectancy in Nepal is 67 years for males and 69 years for females (WHO, 2011). Poverty, illiteracy, economic vulnerability, and conflict continue to be pervasive problems in Nepal.

4.2.1 Education in Nepal

The first formal school in Nepal was established in 1853 by Jung Bahadur Rana (Nepalese prime minister who ruled Nepal starting in 1846) and was intended for the elite. Up until 1951, the Rana oligarchy (who were in control of the government from 1846 until 1951) limited education to elites; however, when the oligarchy was overthrown in 1951, school education became available to the wider population through community schools. One year later, the Ministry of Education was established in Nepal, to focus on school education. In 1971, with donor support, the Government centralized control over the education system and began funding public education. This allowed communities to establish schools and receive Government support.

Presently, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education have educational oversight. The Ministry of Education has directorates in the five development regions and education offices in all of Nepal's 77 districts. These decentralized offices are responsible for overseeing local informal and school-level educational activities. Regional directorates are primarily responsible for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating educational activities, and the district education offices provide services.

Nepal has two main types of schools: community (public) and institutional (private). Community schools receive government grants and institutional schools are self-funded. Over 86% of primary education students are enrolled in community schools; only 14% attend institutional schools. In addition, there are a number of religious schools, including madrasas for Muslims, gumbas and vihars for Buddhists, and ashrams and gurukuls for Hindus.

The majority of universities and academies of higher education are publicly managed and supported by public funding. Universities have constituent and affiliated colleges across the country and can provide affiliation to private colleges, while academies of higher education are typically single-college institutes.

Schooling in Nepal is divided into three categories: 1) pre-primary education (or early childhood development), 2) primary education (or basic education), and 3) secondary education. Pre-primary education is for children reaching 4 years of age. Primary education consists of grades one through eight (including five years of primary and three years of lower secondary), with the minimum age of admission in grade one being 5 years old. Secondary education includes grades nine to twelve. Primary education is enshrined as a human right in Nepal's Interim Constitution with instruction in one's mother tongue as the medium of instruction in early primary grades.

Secondary education consists of two levels including: 1) secondary level (grade 9 to 10), and 2) higher secondary level (grade 11 to 12). A national level centralized examination known as the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) examination is conducted at the end of grade ten.

Higher secondary education examinations at the end of grade 12 are known as the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) and are organized by the National Education Board (NEB) at the national level. Higher secondary technical education is also available through the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training² (CTEVT). Currently, technical schools affiliated

² The word 'training' is used in Nepal to reference teacher professional development. In using the word training, I am choosing to be consistent with the terminology used in Nepal. I acknowledge that there is a difference between training and teacher professional development, with the former being more behaviourally focused and the latter being more holistic.

to the CTEVT offer skill training courses either to tenth grade pass students or to those who have a Technical School Leaving Certificate. The technical and vocational education is offered through 45 CTEVT constituent technical schools and 875 affiliated technical schools (Rijal, 2020).

In addition to formal education, non-formal education is also available through an Out-of-School Program (OSP) to support youth and adults who have not attended primary school. There are also flexible/open school programs with condensed courses for those who are unable to attend school during regular hours, and a School Out-Reach Program for those who do not have access to schools in their geographic area. Various forms of adult education programs, such as basic and functional adult literacy and open school programs are provided by the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC) to support attainment of primary to secondary level education (grades 1-10). Teacher education is an important component of the education system in Nepal, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Nepal's current public education system faces many challenges. These include ongoing barriers to equitable access to education, particularly for lower-caste and Indigenous peoples; challenges with physical infrastructure and resources (i.e. textbooks); absence of a unified national curriculum; and minimal use of constructive and critical pedagogical strategies including opportunities for practical education. Improving the internal efficiency of school education in order to ensure quality primary/basic education to all eligible children of Nepal, continues to be a significant challenge. To address these challenges, the Government of Nepal, the World Bank, and other Development Partners have supported educational reforms since the late 1990s, to achieve access, equity, and efficiency in Nepal's basic and primary public education system. In

particular, the World Bank has supported these objectives since 1999 through four projects: Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP I); BPEP II; Community School Sector Project (CSSP), and Education For All (EFA). The EFA project was designed to address gaps in educational achievement in access, equity, quality, and efficiency.

In 2000, after attending the World Education Forum on EFA, Nepal adopted the Dakar Framework for Action (DFA) for EFA: Meeting Our Collective Commitments, after realizing that as a country, they were far from attaining the stated EFA goals. The DFA included six major EFA goals along with twelve strategies to achieve by 2015. Nepal added a seventh goal to address linguistic diversity in the country, in order to ensure the right of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education delivered in their mother tongue. The goals included the following:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.
- Achieving 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in, basic education of good quality.

- Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.
- Ensuring the right of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue.

DFA focused on collective commitments, nationally as well as internationally, to ensure that no country would be left behind because of a lack of technical capacity and/or resources. Given Nepal's status as an LDC, this commitment brought funding support for the development of education in Nepal. The concept of external funding to support the development of education is not new to Nepal. Nepal's educational development is primarily funded and shaped by external forces including non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, and political groups, with the World Bank being a major force controlling educational policies and practices in the country (Winther-Schmidt, 2011). Since Nepal became a member of the World Bank in 1961, the country has received loans from the World Bank for several developmental projects.

According to its official website (<http://www.worldbank.org/>), as of October 2019 the Bank has 25 active projects in Nepal with a net commitment of about US\$ 2.4 billion.

Nepal has continued to promote EFA as the core strategy for educational development in the country and adopted the EFA goals as the country's education goals. The EFA mid-decade assessment in 2007 revealed that all stakeholders, including the government have been consistently making efforts towards achieving the goals of EFA with financial and technical support by a consortium of development partners, including UN agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors. A

satisfactory level of progress was noted towards achievement of the goals in terms of 18 key indicators.

4.2.2 Teacher Education in Nepal

Teacher education in Nepal is offered by two different groups including universities and the Ministry of Education. Teacher education originated in 1947, with the establishment of a Basic Teacher Training Programme. The government of Nepal and the Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC) 1954-55 recommended the development of a College of Education, which was established in 1956. The main objective of the College of Education (COE) was to produce trained educators to teach at primary and secondary schools. In 1971, the National Education System Plan was introduced and the COE was renamed the Institute of Education (IOE). Ten years later (i.e. in 1982), following the recommendation made by the Royal Commission on Higher Education, the IOE was re-named the Faculty of Education (FOE).

Educational requirements for teachers in Nepal vary by level of education. Presently, the minimum qualification for a primary school teacher is a school leaving certificate (passing grade 10) and ten months of teacher training. Teachers at the primary level must complete their proficiency certificate level (PCL) in education, and a two-year program offered from Tribhuvan University, or its equivalent. The courses taught include English language education, Nepali language education, mathematics education, science education, health and physical education, population education, history education, geography education, economics education, political science education, and vocational education.

Teachers at the lower secondary and secondary level must complete a Bachelor of Education (BEd), which is a three-year program with one additional year of practical training. Secondary level pre-service teacher training programs are conducted by different universities and are three to four years in duration. Programs cover educational management, primary education, nonformal education, educational technology, early childhood education, special education, educational planning, and curriculum evaluation. For administrative positions, completion of a Master of Education degree is usually required.

Despite the availability of teacher education programs, many primary and lower secondary teachers do not have adequate formal qualifications. In 2001, only 15 percent of teachers in Nepal were trained. Currently, among the male and female teachers recruited almost equal proportions are trained at the primary and lower secondary level. At the secondary level, a higher proportion of male teachers are trained. Around 83% of the community school teachers at the primary level and 68% at the lower secondary level have some teacher training. Given these gaps in education and training, teacher preparation and training are even more essential for ensuring the successful achievement of the EFA goals. Enhancements to teacher training are needed to better prepare teachers to effectively support learners. Specifically, teachers need training and skills in pedagogical practices, human rights and child rights, classroom management, teaching how to learn (self-learning), developing teaching and learning resources, and linking education to real life.

4.2.3 Teacher Education at Tribhuvan University

Founded in 1959 as a public university, Tribhuvan University (TU) is the oldest and largest university in Nepal, with an enrollment rate of more than 80% of the students in the country

(Onta & Uprety, 2014). TU's Faculty of Education was established as a College of Education in 1956, prior to the founding of TU. It is the largest faculty at TU based on the number of students and the number of affiliated campuses (i.e. 62 constituent campuses and 1062 affiliated colleges throughout Nepal). Its goal is to “produce trained teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers,” as well as “educational planners and managers, curriculum designers and human resources needed for the educational sector of the country.”

To meet this goal, the Faculty of Education offers degrees at the Bachelor, Masters, MPhil and PhD levels. TU has offered a three-year Bachelor of Education degree since 1996, and in 2016, they began offering a four-year BEd degree. The addition of one year to the degree program was intended to allow BEd students to complete both a major and a minor, as opposed to only completing a major in the three-year program. This enables graduates to teach two subjects at the secondary school level.

In the BEd program which is developed, upgraded, monitored, and evaluated by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of TU, students can select from the following majors: Nepali Education, English Education, Mathematics Education, Science Education (physical science), Health and Physical Education, Population Education, History Education, Geography Education, Economics Education, and Political Science Education. Topics for minors include: Science Education (Biological Science), Health Education, Physical Education, vocational education, Primary Education, Early Childhood Development Education, Non-formal Education, and Education Management.

Students must complete annual exams and pass twenty-two courses to earn their four-year BEd. These courses are divided into five major groups including: 1) Communication Skills, 2) Professional Core Courses, 3) Specialization Major Courses, 4) Specialization Minor Courses, and 5) Teaching Practice/Practicum. Within Communication Skills, students must take one course in each of general Nepali and general English. Within Professional Core Courses students must take one course in each of Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology, and Curriculum and Evaluation, as well as one elective related to instructional technology. For their major, students are required to take ten courses pertaining to that major, and for their minor, students are required to take five courses pertaining to that minor. Teaching practice/practicum is a 150 hour fourth year course designed to provide students with hands-on experience teaching in schools, under the supervision of faculty members. Students undertake a variety of activities including construction of operational plans, micro teaching, peer teaching, test construction, curriculum and textbook analysis, preparation of records maintained in the school, teaching at a school, and report writing. Students are evaluated on all of these components.

Upon completion of a BEd, graduates can apply for a Teaching License through the Government of Nepal's Teacher Service Commission (TSC), an independent body under the Ministry of Education. To get a teaching license, a candidate must complete a written examination. To be eligible for this examination, the candidate must have graduated with an education degree or have completed a minimum of ten months of teaching training through the Ministry of Education (MoE). A teaching license is mandatory for teaching positions in government-funded schools,

which receive funding through quotas; however, a license is not required for teaching positions in private English medium schools or community schools.

4.3 Education in Canada

In 1867, when the British North America Act (BNA) came into effect and constituted Canada as a federation of provinces, each province became autonomous regarding educational policy (Perlaza & Tardif, 2016). This has remained the case with teacher education in Canada still a provincial/territorial responsibility led by departments or ministries of education. As a result, there is “no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education” in Canada (Van Nuland, 2011, p. 409). At a provincial/territorial level, ministries are responsible to provide guidance on curricula to school boards, to set diploma requirements, to distribute allocated funds, and to make regulations governing the organization of schools and school personnel (Van Nuland, 2011). School districts or local school boards are responsible to build, equip, and furnish schools and to employ teachers and other school personnel, to operate schools, to provide special education programmes, and to ensure that schools follow regulations (Van Nuland, 2011). Public education at the elementary (six or eight years) and secondary school levels is compulsory and free of cost to children meeting age and residency requirements (Van Nuland, 2011). Private education is also available and typically requires payment of tuition. In both public and private schools, students learn a variety of subjects including language, mathematics, social studies, science, health and physical education, music, and art (Van Nuland, 2011).

4.3.1 Teacher Education in Canada

Given that each province/territory in Canada is responsible for its own educational system, teacher education differs by province and is designed to meet the systemic and socio-cultural reality of each province (Tardif, 2011). Consequently, there is no Canada wide common framework to guide teacher education in Canada (Hirschhorn, Kristmanson, and Sears, 2013); however, programs must meet certain criteria and learning goals set out by the provincial ministry and other regulatory organizations for teacher education. Canadian universities have relative autonomy in the organization and delivery of teacher education programs, resulting in differences between universities within a province (Tardif, 2011). However, all programs have to be approved by the BC Teachers' Council which provides general oversight but refrains from a detailed prescription of how and in what ways programs are to be conducted (See Appendix A: BCT Teacher Education Program Approval Standards).

Although most Canadian teacher education programs share a common goal of providing teacher candidates with the basic knowledge, skills and experiences needed to enter teaching, programs differ in structure and duration, leading to significant differences in delivery, time allocation and utilisation, and students' learning experiences and opportunities for clinical practice. Given the geographical, historical, linguistic and cultural diversities in Canada and varying provincial regulations for teacher certification, no one teacher education model can meet the needs and interests of all of the provinces/territories. For example, depending on the context, programs may be offered in English, French, or other languages, or may focus on specific learners (i.e. Jewish, Indigenous, etc.). The different models of teacher education are affected by curricula and pedagogies, recruitment and support programmes for teacher candidates, and areas and levels of

professional expertise of instructors. This necessitates wide programme variation (Sloat, Hirschhorn and Colpitts, 2011).

Current teacher education programs range in length from eight months (typically, a post-initial degree programme) to five years (Sloat, Hirschhorn, and Colpitts, 2011). Usually, students follow one of two structures: consecutive or concurrent. To achieve a Bachelor of Education (BEd), consecutive students first complete an undergraduate degree (generally a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BSc) of three or four years' duration) followed by a two- to four-semester programme of study in teacher education. During this time, they undertake professional and methodological courses. In the concurrent education programme, students generally first acquire an undergraduate degree in a particular discipline; this study includes some teacher education courses. They then continue on to their teacher education programme in their fourth or fifth year to attain a BEd. In another form, concurrent students take courses in a particular discipline and education courses and clinical experiences throughout their years of study to become a teacher. Full-time study is the norm, with few faculties or schools of education offering part-time studies.

All teacher education programs require students to participate in some form of teaching experience in a school setting (Crocker and Dibbon 2008; Falkenberg 2010) where teacher candidates observe and practice teaching in a school and apply theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge to construct understanding of professional issues. These learning opportunities allow teacher candidates to immerse themselves in 'the daily teaching and learning process' (Ontario College of Teachers, 2010) and to understand a classroom setting with support

provided by an experienced teacher and an advisor assigned by the faculty or school of education. The associate teacher (an experienced teacher with whom the teacher candidate works closely during practicum, sometimes termed the ‘mentor teacher’, ‘advising teacher’ or ‘co-operating teacher’) observes student teaching and provides focused feedback; often the faculty advisor fulfils a similar role. The duration of practicum varies greatly throughout Canada since it is determined by provincial teacher certification requirements.

Since the beginning of the millennium, teacher education in Canada has shifted from a traditional perspective, based on the transmission of knowledge, to a more holistic approach grounded in social constructivist learning. This has led to a focus on the “whole teacher” and a pedagogical focus on “reflective practice, critical inquiry and the engagement of candidates in learning communities” (Gambhir et al., 2008, p. 17).

Despite the absence of national direction for teacher education in Canada, as well as differences in the certification process, the diversity among institutions, and the differences in structures, there is some common ground: all programs include knowledge about who is to be taught (learners), what is to be taught (subject matter and curriculum), how to teach (principles and practice of teaching), where the teaching takes place (context), and why teach (foundations of teaching).

4.3.2 Teacher Education at the University of British Columbia

The University of British Columbia (UBC) was established in 1908 as a public research university. It is BC’s oldest university and it consists of two campuses – one in Vancouver and

one in the Okanagan. The Vancouver campus includes twelve faculties and two academic colleges. The UBC Faculty of Education is the largest Faculty of Education in BC and it offers degrees at the Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral level, as well as professional development programs including certificates, diplomas, and summer institutes. Its goal is to “advance the role of education in the well-being of people and communities” (UBC Faculty of Education, 2021).

The UBC Faculty of Education offers a variety of bachelor degree options, with the 11-month degree being the most commonly offered program. To be eligible for the BEd degree, individuals must have completed a bachelor degree including relevant academic preparation. Applicants must also have volunteer or work experience in a group setting with children or youth, preferably at the age level that they wish to teach. Within the BEd degree at the Vancouver campus, applicants select a program focus including: elementary and middle years option, secondary option, Indigenous teacher education program, international baccalaureate educator stream, and programmes de spécialistes en français. Each program operates in a cohort model, where students take courses together and are assigned practicum placements in schools within specific school districts.

As an example of one of the 11-month degrees, in the Elementary and Middle Years option, students learn to teach all subject areas in the elementary curriculum, from Kindergarten to Grade 7. Students select a cohort which explores a particular teaching theme or approach. The cohort options include: arts-based and creativity, community of inquiry in teacher education, education for sustainability, French immersion, Indigenous education, international baccalaureate, outdoor learning, primary years, social and emotional learning, and teaching English language learners through cross-curricular inquiry. Although the particular theme or

approach varies in each cohort, the courses are the same for all teacher candidates, with each cohort and instructor tailoring the courses in unique ways.

In the Elementary and Middle Years Option, students complete courses in a variety of areas including: historical and philosophical foundations of education, teacher inquiry, teaching methods, curriculum development, assessment and evaluation of learning, ethics, and equity and diversity. Students also complete a practicum which includes a one-day introductory pre-practicum experience, a two-week school placement, and a ten-week extended practicum.

Upon successful completion of a BEd, students receive a recommendation for teacher certification by the Ministry of Education Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) which means that individuals are typically awarded a certificate to teach in BC. Individuals can also apply for teacher certification in other provinces within Canada; however, each province has its own certification requirements.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the two different educational contexts that are at the heart of my study – Nepal and Canada. Although my study is not cross-cultural or comparative, this chapter provided contextual information about teacher education in Nepal and Canada, as well as country demographics, particularly in relation to Nepal, given widespread unfamiliarity with this country. Differences between the two contexts include: national vs. provincial oversight of teacher education; the number of years of study to complete a BEd; requirements to obtain a teaching license; and the ability to teach without formal qualifications. Similarities between the two contexts include: requirements for completion of a practicum/practical experience teaching

in schools; curricular areas/topics of study. An understanding of some of the cultural, social, political, and geographic forces shaping Nepal and Canada, provides helpful context for engaging with the nuances of my study.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, I provide an overview of my study methodology (existential phenomenology) including the research questions and the approach that I undertook to explore my questions. I discuss the specific methods (phenomenological interviews, arpillera art-making, art exchange, and follow-up phenomenological interviews) that I used and the importance of living inquiry and arts-based educational research, as part of my methodological approach. I use the concept of ‘becoming’ to frame a discussion of relationality between myself and the pre-service teachers as well as to explore moments of interruption in my self-understanding that I experienced throughout the research process.

5.2 Existential Phenomenology: Being & Lived Experience

Methodologically, my study is grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology (as a specific form of phenomenology), which focuses on the nuances and details of personal experiences as understood by the individuals involved in these experiences. Within phenomenology, researchers aim to “describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon” being studied” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 5). According to Lavery (2003), “phenomenological research is descriptive and focuses on the structure of experience, the organizing principles that give form and meaning to the life world” (p. 27). There is a focus on “practice – the practice of living” (van Manen, 2007, p. 13) and this focus on living leads phenomenologists to ask “...what is this experience like” in order to try and “unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence (Lavery, 2003, p. 22).

Given the potential tension in my study between a phenomenological approach (i.e. understanding the phenomena of what it means to teach) and an interpretative approach (i.e. using Biesta's ideas about teaching to understand the phenomena of what it means to teach), my methodological approach is most closely aligned to hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology conceptualizes consciousness as a "formation of historically lived experience, and "meaning is found as we are constructed by the world, while at the same time we are constructing this world from our own background and experiences" (Laverty, 2003, p. 24). In hermeneutic phenomenology, "interpretation is seen as critical to this process of understanding" where "every encounter involves an interpretation influenced by an individual's background" (Laverty, 2003, p. 24).

In addition to phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology, the field of existential phenomenology provides nuanced ideas for conceptualizing the existential aspect of my thinking and theorizing. Specifically, given my interest in understanding pre-service teachers' conceptualizations of what it means to be a teacher and to teach and my theoretical interest in natality (coming into the world), transcendence (the coming of the world), and uniqueness (tied to the 'Other' and otherness), existential phenomenology aligns most closely with my study. Existential phenomenology views humans as embodied beings in the concrete world. According to Garko (1999), existential phenomenology "studies phenomena from the perspective of those being researched" with a goal of understanding "what lived experiences mean... for the experiencing person" (p. 169). Given this view, it can support the exploration of phenomena while honouring embodied, relational, and multiple lived understandings of being in the world.

Existential phenomenologists (those who theorize existential phenomenology) study concrete human existence, including our experience of free choice and/or action in concrete situations. Existential phenomenologists believe that “consciousness is what connects humans to existence” as it is “how they relate to and intentionally give meaning to phenomena” (Garko, 1999, p. 170). They also subscribe to the belief that the relationship between the individual and the world is “interdependent and dialogically co-constituted” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 410, as cited in Garko, 1999, p. 170). As such, it is through “communication that the individual and the world become inextricably and ‘meaning-fully’ united” (Garko, 1999, p. 170).

Key philosophers who embrace an existential approach include Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Arendt, and Levinas, to name a few. Merleau-Ponty’s work is of particular interest given how he conceptualizes the individual, the body, and the world. For Merleau-Ponty, people exist in a world which has already been formed, but never completely. It is in the world that they learn about themselves. Merleau-Ponty seeks to understand people as beings in situ, never fully free but in a world never fully finished either, as being born is simultaneously being born from and in the world (Sadala & Adorno, 2001).

Merleau-Ponty sees the individual as the body itself, at a place and time, acting in the world in which it lives (Sadala & Adorno, 2001, p. 286). The body is the perceiving subject and is the point of view of the world and the time-space structure of the perceiving experience (Martins, 1992, as cited in Sadala & Adorno, 2001, p. 286). For Merleau-Ponty, there is a dialectic relationship between a person as a body and the world where it is located. People are always moving forward, in a coming-into-being of possibilities. People are seen as a set of possibilities

that keep being realized through dialectical relationships with the world. People as lived bodies in the world they inhabit get in touch with beings and things that are part of those worlds.

Given its focus on understanding human existence, its focus on embodiment, and the belief that the relationship between the individual and the world is co-constituted, existential phenomenology aligns with my desire to explore pre-service teachers' understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Existential phenomenology also aligns with my research questions, which are existential in nature and substance – questions about the ways in which we understand our being in and with the world. These questions include: 1) What are pre-service teachers' understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach? 2) How are explorations of existential questions facilitated by an arts-based approach and an art exchange? 3) What are the implications for pre-service teacher education programs?

5.3 An Existential Methodological Approach

A commitment to existential phenomenology requires a methodology that is consistent with that approach. But what is an existential methodological approach? What does it mean to explore questions about being in the world while also 'being in the world' as a researcher? In the context of my study, I found myself inspired by two areas that illuminated potential responses to these questions: living inquiry and arts-based educational research. The concept of inquiring into how to live with awareness, which living inquiry emphasizes, aligns with an existential view of being in the world. Arts-based educational research privileges embodied understandings of being in the world. Together, living inquiry and arts-based educational research provide fertile terrain for conceptualizing an existential methodological approach to my study.

5.3.1 Living Inquiry

In my study, I embraced the concept of living inquiry, based on my interest in conceptualizing the self as in a state of being and becoming. Living inquiry is an inquiry into how to live with the quality of awareness that sees newness, truth, and beauty in daily life” (Meyer, 2006, p. 11).

Epistemologically, living inquiry begins from the belief that “humans belong to the world before birth and that each of us is born into the course of a larger human story and existing timeline, place, culture, and family” (Meyer, 2010, p. 85). As such, worldliness is what constitutes our belonging in the world (Meyer, 2010).

According to Meyer (2010), engaging in living inquiry requires seeing inquiry as a practice of inquiring into “knowing the world” (p. 88). There is an inherent focus on the human condition and “what it means to be self-as-human in the world” and “what it means to be me...in the human condition of plurality” (self and self, self and other) (Meyer, 2010, p. 95). The horizons of inquiry are our everydayness and our immediate participation in daily life. For Meyer (2010), “Belonging to the world means sharing otherness with every one and every thing there is. ‘Other’ includes non-human entities as well as ‘things’” (p. 87).

As a way of knowing and inquiring in the world, Meyer’s conceptualization of living inquiry resonates with me and aligns with how I theorize the concepts of self, other, and world in my work. Firstly, it sees the self as in the world as opposed to removed from the world, thus placing the self and the world in relation. Secondly, it conceptualizes the ‘other’ as in relation to the self and the world. For example, living inquiry requires seeing ourselves as both self and other

insofar as we share the sameness of being human in a way that “none of us is the same as another” (Meyer, 2010, p. 86). We all share otherness with every one and every thing there is (Meyer, 2010, p. 88). In addition, Meyer (2010) believes that living inquiry can be used to support students becoming newcomers in the world. This highlights the existential nature of living inquiry. Living inquiry also places emphasis on the concepts of time (as an element that puts things in relation), self and place, and identity (including home) which are pertinent given the international scope of my work.

While there are no specific ‘tools’ or ‘methods’ to undertake living inquiry, I chose to undertake phenomenological interviews for the purpose of this study, with the pre-service teachers in Canada and Nepal. I use the phrase phenomenological interviews as opposed to semi-structured interviews, given that I am being attentive to the existential elements that emerged in the conversations. Recognizing that interviews can vary widely in approach and structure, I view interviews as phenomenological (see Hoffding & Martiny, 2016). This aligns with my methodological positioning which is based on existential phenomenology. Phenomenological interviews conceive of both the interviewee and the interviewer as ‘yous’ where “subjectivity (i.e. the ‘you’ in the interview) possesses a transcendental and ubiquitous dimension” (Hoffding & Martiny, 2016, p. 543). Based on this premise, phenomenological interviews conceive of the interview as an encounter where knowledge is co-generated by both the interviewee and interviewer (Hoffding & Martiny, 2016). Phenomenological interviews focus on both experience (“which always transcends the here and now”) and the “invariant structures of experience” (Hoffding & Martiny, 2016, p. 543). In my study, the conversations followed the norms of a semi-structured interview where the conversation was flexible in that it was open to deviation,

exploration, and invention as it unfolded. I valued the possibility inherent in each conversation and was attentive to participants' experiences of being and becoming a teacher.

In my study, I had the opportunity to undertake two phenomenological interviews with each participant – one that focused on their individual understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach and one that focused on their experience engaging in the art-making process and viewing the art produced through the art exchange. These interviews focused on participants' experiences being in the world.

5.3.2 Arts-Based Educational Research

In my study, I used an arts-based approach to support the pre-service teachers to creatively express their embodied understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Carter and Irwin (2014) argue that bringing arts-based approaches and creative expression into pre-service teacher education enables existential explorations. Previous researchers have found that arts-based activities support teacher inquiry (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2008) and create opportunities for transforming perspectives on teaching and learning (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Eisner, 1997).

Many arts-based approaches emphasize the relationship between the body and the production of art. This is particularly true for arts-based scholars in dance (Snowber, 2012) and music (Bresler, 2006) who theorize embodiment. Scholars who theorize embodiment hold the belief that the “body is a site of knowledge” (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, p. 238). According to Cancienne & Snowber (2003), much phenomenological curriculum research has described the “lived

experience of the body as central to learning, being, knowing, and teaching” (p. 238). In addition, Cancienne and Snowber (2003), citing Grosz (1994) asserts that “as individuals, we are subjects separated from the world or from others but that we have access to knowledge of the body only by living it” (p. 238). Arpilleras invite an embodied experience made explicit through art-making.

An emphasis on the physical body aligns with existential phenomenology which explores the lived experiences of individuals. In my research, the self and the body are central to how I am conceptualizing what it means to be in the world. The self is born (both in flesh and in existential terms). In my study, materiality to an existential approach is facilitated by an arts-based approach. It is interesting to note that not all scholars who explore embodiment take an existential approach. As such, how might an embodied sense of the self, contribute to a different understanding of the self?

Arts-based approaches are encompassed within the field of arts-based educational research (ABER), which is an umbrella concept used to identify a genre that contains a variety of approaches (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 98). According to Barone and Eisner (1997), there are no specific procedures to produce arts-based ‘products’ as its forms of data representation are open to invention. Instead, there are criteria for judging whether an approach to educational research is arts-based. These include 1) having an artistic purpose that is also educational in nature (i.e. “meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities”) and 2) having aesthetic qualities/aesthetic design elements (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 95). At its heart, arts-based educational research strives for the “enhancement of perspectives” and new ways of seeing

educational phenomena, in order to call attention to things that are often taken-for granted (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 96).

Artmaking is a means to an end, in the context of my study in that I am not exploring the concept of art-making, but rather using art-making to support pre-service teachers to explore their embodied understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Given ABER's potential to help individuals come to see/know others through a focus on particularity and dimensionality and given ABER's potential to help readers build empathy and develop a change in perspective, arts-based methods align with my study. Specifically, in the context of my study, arts-based methods allow for honouring the conceptualizations that individual pre-service teachers have about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. My hope is that these conceptualizations help others broaden their understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach.

It is important to acknowledge that the 'products' produced through ABER can be classified as alternative forms of data representation as opposed to standard data collection practices such as survey instruments, questionnaires, tests, and so on. Alternative forms of data representation are connected to ideas about knowledge and representation of knowledge. In choosing to use arts-based methods, in the context of my work I acknowledge that I am making a statement about what I see/value as knowledge. I also acknowledge that form and content are connected. In the context of my work, the production of arts-based products will shape what is possible for people to see (and not see). According to Eisner (1997), form shapes content. For example, "how one writes, shapes what one says" (Eisner, 1997, p. 4). As such, any form limits what can be seen (Eisner, 1997).

In thinking about form, it is important to consider the following questions: “What do we get and what do we give up? What gets revealed and what gets concealed?” (Eisner, 1997, p. 7). These are important questions for consideration in the context of my work, based on the phenomena that I explore (what it means to be a teacher and to teach) and the most appropriate way to represent pre-service teachers’ understandings of this phenomena. Given my interest in exploring their embodied understandings of this phenomena and how they experience self and in relation to others, I selected arpilleras (described later in this discussion), as a form that privileges both of these aspects of knowing.

An art exchange was chosen as a deliberately provocative and engaging way to encourage participants to extend and deepen their own thinking about teaching and learning by engaging with ‘the other,’ especially the distant other (MacKenzie, Enslin, and Hedge, 2016), and by engaging with others’ ideas about what it means to be a teacher. For the exchange, I carried the artwork made by the UBC pre-service teachers to Nepal and invited the TU pre-service teachers to respond to the themes about “What does it mean to be a teacher and to teach?” that emerged through the UBC pre-service teachers’ art and to compare these to the themes that emerged in their own art.

5.4 My Study

A brief story will help illustrate how I came to conceptualize my study. During the third year of my doctoral program and during a course on globalization with Dr. Vanessa Andreotti, I spent a significant amount of time reflecting on my own experiences of ‘being in the world.’ At that

point I found my ‘calling’ in the intersection of teacher education through the arts as a form of knowing and being in the world, and cross-cultural relationships as a way of opening up possibilities for thinking differently about tacitly held perspectives on education. Upon reflection, it was clear to me that these areas have been the bedrock upon which I have contributed to bringing newness into the world during my time as a teacher. Thus, my study was born.

I chose to conduct my research in Canada and Nepal and to involve two groups of elementary (K-7) pre-service teachers: one from the UBC Teacher Education Program and one from the Tribhuvan University (TU) Teacher Education Program in Kathmandu, Nepal. My selection of both of these programs was somewhat opportunistic in that I had both familiarity and existing relationships with these groups, gleaned from my past teaching experience in the UBC Teacher Education Program and work experience with TU and UNESCO in Kathmandu, Nepal. That being said, I was keen to work with teacher education students in public post-secondary institutions (as opposed to private post-secondary institutions), and UBC and TU both fall into that category. The distinction between public and private is particularly relevant in Nepal, which I will discuss in detail later. I also chose to select two different geographic locations because I wanted to provoke thinking among the pre-service teachers of the concept of the larger ‘world’ that we live in. This aligned with my interest in exploring what happens when pre-service teachers from two different geographic contexts engage with each other’s ideas. In choosing these two different geographic contexts, my intention was not to conduct a cross-cultural study or to engage in comparative research.

Given my interest in existential phenomenology I chose to work with a small group (i.e. ten) pre-service teachers, consisting of five from each context who volunteered for my study; allowing for an in-depth exploration of how participants within each group conceived of their role in helping children “come into the world.” With each group, I conducted an in-person arts-based project that invited each individual to create an arpillera (design appliqué on burlap) to represent their understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach.

In sum, my study had three phases:

- 1) Facilitating and observing an arpillera-making project with five UBC BEd students on the theme of “what does it mean to be a teacher and to teach” and engaging in phenomenological interviews with five UBC BEd students.
- 2) Repeating the same process with five participants from TU in Nepal and facilitating an art exchange between the participants from UBC and TU.
- 3) Upon my return to Canada, I brought the artwork created by the TU pre-service teachers to the UBC pre-service teachers and invited the UBC students to respond to the same question and compare to the themes that emerged in their own art.

I submitted an application to the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) in January 2018 for approval to conduct my research. This was approved in February 2018. Getting approval to conduct my research proved to be more challenging than I had anticipated, in part because it involved working with two different countries (Canada and Nepal), one of which does not have a formal process for research ethics approval. It was also complicated by the fact that my study involved both a classroom component (i.e. working with an entire class of pre-service

teachers at UBC and an entire class of pre-service teachers at Tribhuvan University (TU) in Nepal, to engage them in an arpillera-making project) and a research component (i.e. engaging in phenomenological interviews with five pre-service teachers from UBC and five pre-service teachers from TU). It also involved a follow-up classroom component where the art produced by pre-service teachers in each geographic location was shared through a classroom presentation provided by me, with the other group of pre-service teachers. Needless to say, the research ethics board had a difficult time sorting through the various components of my study and I had to clarify my procedures.

Simultaneously, I sought approval from TU in Kathmandu, Nepal, to conduct my research. I was informed that TU does not have a standardized process for approving research requests, nor does it have an ethical review board. As such, I received written e-mail approval from an administrator at TU. As part of seeking approval, I submitted the same materials that I submitted to the UBC BREB, including an initial contact letter for participants, two consent forms (one for the first interview and one for the follow-up interview), and my research proposal.

In addition to the required institutional ethics approval, I approached my study with an awareness of the importance of situating myself. I found myself often thinking about two reflexive questions, grounded in a commitment to not just do no harm, but rather to doing good. The questions included: Who am I? How am I approaching my study and my interactions with others? These questions were particularly salient as I designed and conducted my field work in Nepal. This was partly due to my positionality as a foreigner, but also partly because of the process for approving research.

5.5 Situating Myself

Who am I? What knowledge, experiences, and ways of knowing and being do I bring to this study? What do I consider as research? How am I, as a researcher, situated in the research process? These are some of the questions that I often found myself thinking about. Post-modern, post-structural and feminist scholars who theorize self and others, examine issues of power, privilege, and analyze discourse, are particularly helpful. The question of: “Who am I?” relates to my subjectivity, positionality, and temporality in relation to my doctoral study. While not letting this perspective dominate the study (i.e. have me become the centre of the study, or place myself at the centre), it deserves discussion.

I come to my research with a subjectivity that is grounded in my lived experience in a pre-service teacher education program that was shaped by particular discourses and practices (Davies et al., 2004) about what it means to be a teacher. My lived experiences as a teacher, necessarily shape how I see teaching, learning, and teacher education and the aspects that I deem important to pre-service teacher education. I also come to my dissertation with an understanding of temporality (i.e. what it means for me to be doing this work at this time). Having previously taught in elementary schools and in the UBC teacher education program, I have some awareness of the context of elementary schooling and the UBC teacher education program. Similarly, having spent a fair amount of time in Nepal, and having taught in the TU teacher education program, I have some awareness of that program. Being married to a Nepali, I also have some awareness of Nepal’s socio-political history and of the current context of teacher education in Nepal. These experiences shaped all aspects of my study. To use Britzman’s (1997) words, I

experienced the “tangles of implication” (p. 32) which “requires something more than the desire to know the other’s rules and then act accordingly.” Instead of simply ‘checking the subjectivity and positionality box’ by passing “through the confession known as biography, the body, social markers like race, sex, and gender, and then wrap[ping] these things up in that grand narrative known as experience,” (Britzman, 1997, p. 31), I needed to delve into the messiness and fluidity of subjectivity and positionality. As Britzman (1997) states: “...making room for diversity and making diversity a room is not the same as exploring the tangles of implication” (p. 32).

Although I acknowledge that my positionality is fluid, contextual, and relational (Alcoff, 1988), I also acknowledge that there are some important experiences that influence my positionality and what is heard by others (Alcoff, 1991). For example, I am no longer a pre-service teacher, no longer teaching in the Canadian K-12 system, and I am not currently living in Nepal. These ‘facts’ are relevant to how I see teacher education, the K-12 school system, and teacher education in Nepal. The question then, is how will I maintain awareness and balance my subjectivity, positionality, and temporality during the research? My answer to this question lies at the heart of my study – inquiry (which involves making explicit, making sense, and making public (Clarke, forthcoming). Engaging, as a researcher, in the very thing that I seek to explore (inquiry), is one way that I propose to maintain awareness of my subjectivity, positionality, and temporality.

Like Appadurai (2006) I see research as involving both self-centering and self-decentering. For example, as researchers, as we write the text, we are written by the text (Davies et al., 2004). As such, one could argue that research is a self-centering process. Self-decentering is also necessary,

particularly when one is interested in exploring existential and relational questions about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. I acknowledge that all research involves representation (Britzman, 1997) and as such, I will never be able to fully capture the experiences of those who participated in my study. Through the writing of my dissertation, I am representing the experiences of individuals involved in my study – a part of research that likely “...is not very popular for those it purports to represent” (Britzman, 1997, p. 35). In this act of representation, I will be speaking *about* others (Alcoff, 1991) which not only involves representing their needs, goals, situation, and who they are, but also involves constructing their “subject-positions” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 9). Although representation is unavoidable, my hope is that the findings from my research will enhance the lives and educational programs of pre-service teachers, thus making them the primary ‘audience’ of my work. According to Castenada (2006), “by understanding that the first and primary audience...is the emergent one in fieldwork, one displaces the representational project as the teleological value of fieldwork” (p. 87). Building on Castaneda’s (2006) point, perhaps maintaining focus on the needs, voices, and desires of the pre-service teachers who choose to participate in my research, will help to minimize my concern with representation.

I also acknowledge that “in speaking for myself, I am also representing myself in a certain way, and occupying a specific subject-position” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 10). How I choose to represent myself (i.e. what I say and don’t say about myself) will shape how I am viewed. It goes without saying that as a Caucasian woman conducting research in Nepal, the concept of race needs to be acknowledged. According to Best (2003), “...research itself serves as a space wherein racial categories and hierarchies are recreated” (p. 898). The fact that I am Caucasian in and of itself is

not a barrier to my engagement in Nepal. My race is a relational category (Best, 2003) and as such raises questions about power, privilege, and speaking for and about others (Alcoff, 1991). Recognizing that there are various factors that influence how race is constituted in research studies, Best's (2003) experience highlights the need to be attentive to what researchers' participants say, how they say it, and what is not said. She also reminds us that our positioning as insider or outsider moves along a continuum and is created through interaction (Best, 2003). Perhaps reflexivity, which can "open new ways of addressing...long-standing questions of how and what we can legitimately take ourselves to know and what the limitations of our knowledge are" (Davies et al., 2004, p. 364) is one way of coming to understand what research is and for exploring questions of subjectivity and positionality.

5.5.1 Fieldwork in Canada – Part 1

My research was conducted over a seven-month period between February and August 2018. Throughout my research, I kept a field journal (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) that recorded my questions, curiosities, insights, and observations. Importantly, the field journal served as a space to capture my emergent thinking in relation to the two research questions. It also served as a space to document my being and becoming a researcher. Although I did not use my field journal as a form of data, it still served as an important support for this study.

Once I received approval to conduct my research, I approached Dr. Alex DeCosson, a UBC Art Education instructor who teaches EDCP 301: Art – Elementary: Curriculum and Pedagogy, an art education methods class for pre-service teachers enrolled in the elementary education program, to see if he would be willing to allow me to engage his students in an art-making

project. He was supportive of my research and during our conversation, he proposed arpillera making.

Arpilleras are brightly coloured patchwork pictures typically constructed from simple materials including burlap and scraps of cloth. The making of arpilleras represented an arts-based approach to exploring questions about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Arpilleras were used as a form of art-making in this study because they are a simple but powerful way to express understandings, ideas, and conceptions that may not be easily reproduced in spoken or written form. However, they can be still be ‘read as text’ for the purposes of this study (Doolan, 2016):

The methods and materials that were used to make arpilleras made it possible for Chilean women from all levels of society to create them, and to record the emotions and events that they were experiencing. As Basic (2015) explains, “appliqué was more suitable than embroidery both because the level of skill required was easier to reach and production was speedier. Using whatever material was close to hand for the characters, buildings, and other elements of their poblaciones (neighbourhoods) made them colourful, intriguing and rather cheap to produce” (p. 396). The small amount of technical skill required, together with the low price of production, allowed arpilleras to be made by large sections of the female population, not just the rich or skillful. Most creators were often poor or middle class, however, creating them in order to sell, and thereby generating a modest income to help support themselves and their families (Adams, 2013). Many aspects of arpilleras have been infused with images that may be read as texts.

At the time, I was planning on having the students use fabric and textiles to create a visual representation of their ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach; however, Dr. DeCosson suggested arpillera-making, in part based on his own knowledge and experience with the art form. After conducting some research on the history and significance of arpilleras, I found myself in agreement with Dr. Cosson; however, I also felt apprehensive about potential cultural appropriation given that arpilleras have significant meaning for marginalized and silenced people in Chile, who have used arpilleras as political tools to tell their stories. Simultaneously, I also felt inspired by this rich history, by the simplicity of the art-making process that accompanies arpillera-making, and by the similarities between arpillera-making and quilting (which I used during my MA research). As such, Dr. Cosson and I began our planning for the arpillera-making sessions and decided on two, 2-hour sessions to be held at the beginning of March 2018, with the pre-service teachers. Prior to the first arpillera-making session, I visited Dr. DeCosson's class to provide a short introduction to my research and to invite up to five participants to participate in the research component of my study. My intention was to engage in a conversation with the five participants prior to the arpillera-making project. Thankfully, I was able to recruit five participants and to schedule an individual conversation with each of them about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, prior to the arpillera-making sessions. I'll talk more about the participants and the individual conversations later.

Upon culmination of the individual conversations, I was ready to begin the arpillera-making process. On day one of arpillera-making process, I provided a brief PowerPoint presentation to introduce the concept of arpilleras to the pre-service teachers. Dr. DeCosson showed some sample arpilleras created by previous pre-service teachers and introduced the materials (felt,

fabric scraps, yarn, etc.) that the pre-service teachers could work with. During both the first and second arpillera-making sessions, the pre-service teachers worked in small groups to individually create an arpillera based on their ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. I spent the majority of the sessions observing the arpillera-making and informally talking to the pre-service teachers about their arpilleras. At the culmination of the second arpillera-making session, the pre-service teachers had an opportunity to view each other's work. I thanked the class for allowing me to be present during their arpillera-making and committed to share images of the arpilleras that the Nepalese pre-service teachers would be making, towards the end of the summer.

5.5.2 Fieldwork in Nepal

A few weeks later, I found myself on an airplane to Kathmandu, Nepal, with my husband, two and half-year old son, and mom in tow. The plan was for me to engage in the same arpillera-making process with the Nepalese pre-service teachers from TU. As you can imagine, I had undertaken quite a bit of background work to make both the trip and the arpillera-making process possible. Firstly, I had to secure a classroom to work with. While this may seem like a simple process, in reality, I was and still am an outsider (i.e. I don't live and work in Nepal) and I was requesting to use valuable classroom time from an instructor.

I started my request by approaching Dr. Bidya Nath Koirala, a colleague whose TU classroom I had taught in several years previously, to see if he was still teaching. Unfortunately, he was not; however, he connected me with Dr. Prem Phyak, a colleague of his and the Head of the English Department in the Faculty of Education at one of the many TU campuses. Dr. Phyak was

supportive of my research and was able to provide me with a letter of support (in lieu of a formal ethics approval process, which doesn't exist systematically for research in Nepal) and to connect me with Mr. Tek Mani Karki, an instructor at the Mahendra Ratna Campus of TU (see Figure 2³), which offers a four-year Bachelor of Education program in English Education. Mr. Karki then introduced me to Mr. Hari Kafle, the instructor of ED 315: Critical Thinking in English, a required course for third year students in the BEd program in English Education. Mr. Kafle agreed to allow me to introduce my research project to his BEd students and to conduct the arpillera-making project with his full class of students. Mr. Kafle and I established several dates and times for me to visit his class.



Figure 2: Tribhuvan University, Mahendra Ratna Campus

³ Figure 2 is included to familiarize readers with the geographic context of Mahendra Ratna Campus.

I was excited and relieved to have secured a classroom (see Figure 3⁴) to conduct my research. That excitement was soon dampened by several logistical challenges. The first logistical challenge, which was one that I didn't anticipate, was the scheduling of the BEd classes. Given that many TU students have jobs during the day, the majority of the BEd classes at Mahendra Rata Campus are scheduled from 6-9am each morning. Students then have the remainder of the day to work in paid employment. This meant that the only time the pre-service teachers were available for individual conversations about what it means to be a teacher and to teach was from 6-9am. In addition, it also meant that the arpillera-making project would also need to occur during this time window. This was further complicated by the fact that each BEd class, including ED 315 (the class that I would be working with) is scheduled for approximately 50 minutes. As any instructor will tell you, 50 minutes is not a lot of time to teach or interact with students, particularly when you want to undertake art projects which usually require set-up and clean-up of materials. Regardless of these logistical challenges, I found myself keen to start this second phase of my study.

⁴ Figure 3 is included to familiarize readers with the physical context of a classroom at Mahendra Ratna Campus.

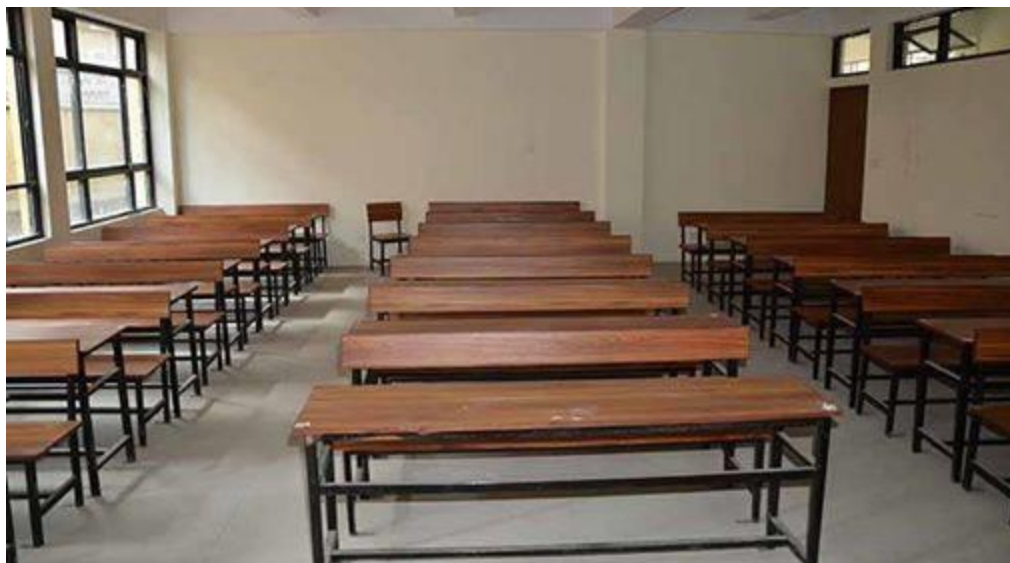


Figure 3: Classroom at Tribhuvan University

Much like the process that I undertook with the UBC BEd students, on the first day of my visit, I introduced myself to the Nepalese BEd students, provided a brief overview of my research, and proceeded to invite up to five students to participate in the individual conversations. The recruitment process was interesting in that I distributed the UBC-approved consent forms and allowed the participants some time to read the form. During this time, the classroom teacher was present and proceeded to ask for volunteers, using a ‘show of hands.’ A few students volunteered; however, the instructor then proceeded to call certain students by name to see if they would volunteer. This was a slightly uncomfortable moment for me, as it breaks the ‘rules’ of voluntary consent; however, I allowed myself to sit with the discomfort in the hopes that if a student truly didn’t want to participate, that they would say ‘no’ to their instructor. Immediately after five students had been identified, the instructor asked the students to step outside the classroom and chat with me about scheduling the individual conversations. I confirmed with each student that they were OK in participating before proceeding to gather the students’ names

and phone numbers and to immediately schedule a couple of conversations for the next morning. The experience of having the Nepalese instructor ‘recruit’ participants was different from my experience at UBC where the pre-service teachers self-identified as being interested in participating. Perhaps, this is reflective of a different cultural context and a different relationship between the Nepalese instructor and students.

The individual conversations ranged in length from 45 to 90 minutes and were another component of the study that led to some logistical challenges. Coming from UBC, where there are numerous locations for quiet conversations, it hadn’t occurred to me that it would be difficult to find a ‘quiet’ location at Mahendra Ratna Campus, to conduct an audio-recorded conversation. Well, it certainly was! The majority of the classrooms were either in use (i.e. with students and a teacher) or locked, so I found myself attempting to find other places – on the side of the sports field where students were engaged in informal sports activities in between classes or in a corridor or on a stairwell. From my perspective this was less than ideal for creating an environment for participants to share their thoughts and ideas; however, I got the sense that the students weren’t particularly bothered by the many ever-present distractions including people and noise, to name a few. This was further illustrated in one of the recordings where I pause for a period of time because there is a loud siren in the background. Upon reflection, I remembered that Krishna, the person I was speaking with seemed confused as to why I was pausing in the middle of our conversation. Needless to say, my initial foray into conducting research with the pre-service teachers in Nepal challenges many of the taken for granted research practices that I have been accustomed and acculturated to as a ‘researcher’ in Canada.

Upon completion of the interviews, I was ready to begin the arpillera-making process with the TU pre-service teachers. During the first arpillera-making session, I spent some time introducing arpilleras to the students by showing them the same PowerPoint presentation that I had shared with the UBC BEd students. Specifically, I provided a definition of what arpilleras were and showed them some visual examples of arpilleras made by women in Chile. I then explained that we would be spending the next class creating arpilleras to represent their ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach, using materials that I had brought with me from Canada. The students didn't have many questions so the class ended and I proceeded to travel home for the day.

During the next class, I arrived early to lay out the arpillera-making materials including felt squares, fabric scraps, embroidery thread, sequins, needles, and glue. As the students arrived to the classroom, it was fascinating to see them approach and view the materials, which were on a table near the front of the classroom. I welcomed the class and proceeded to invite them to individually make an arpillera that represents their ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Students gathered their materials and began to create their arpilleras. At the end of the art-making session, I collected students' work in progress and tidied up. The arpillera-making process continued during our second and final art-making session.

What was fascinating for me to observe during both sessions, was that not all students chose to make an arpillera. Unlike the UBC BEd students who all individually produced arpilleras, many of the Nepalese students chose to work in small groups with one person doing the art-making. As the end of the second session drew nearer, I noticed some students starting to take apart their arpilleras. When I individually asked some of the students why, many of them said that their

work was not good or not finished. Although I tried to re-assure them that their work was ‘good’ (i.e. meant to represent their own ideas of teaching), my efforts didn’t change the outcome. In the end, approximately 10 arpilleras were created and were presented to the class with a description of what they represented. Given what I had experienced with the UBC BEd students, where everyone produced an arpillera, I thought this was unusual; however, I accepted that this was the outcome of the arpillera-making project.

The next week, I returned to the class and gave a PowerPoint presentation that included images and text descriptions of the arpilleras produced by the UBC BEd students. The purpose of this was to engage the Nepalese students in an ‘art exchange’ where they could think about and respond to the ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach, that were represented in the arpilleras created by the UBC students. At the culmination of the presentation, I asked the TU students to respond to the following questions: What were some common themes in the Canadian BEd students’ arpilleras? What were some differences in the Canadian BEd students’ arpilleras? What is similar or different to your arpillera? Their responses to these questions included observations about the physical presence of teachers, the inclusion of nature, and the role that the teacher has in the classroom.

Later that week, I began individual conversations with the five pre-service teachers who had volunteered to participate in my study. The focus of the second conversation was to explore their experience engaging in the art-making process and to share their observations about the similarities and differences between the UBC and TU students’ understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. I was also interested in understanding how the art-making process and art exchange contributed to their understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to

teach. To support these conversations, I had the UBC students' arpilleras available for the Nepalese students to touch and examine, which proved to be useful for prompting conversations about similarities and differences. Through the conversations, I came to realize that engaging in arts-based methods was completely foreign to the Nepalese students. None of the students I spoke with had ever been given an opportunity to produce art in school and not surprisingly this impacted their comfort and ability to do so. This was an important insight that I hadn't anticipated. Interestingly, their arpilleras look quite different from the UBC BEd students' arpilleras particularly in regards to the use of glue versus sewing.

To conclude my fieldwork in Nepal, I provided the students and the classroom teacher with my contact information and a small token of my appreciation in the form of Canadian memorabilia – bookmarks, pencils, etc. I returned home in early April 2018, and began the process of analyzing my data.

5.5.3 Fieldwork in Canada – Part 2

Fast forward a few months to July 2018, when I found myself re-engaging with the UBC pre-service teachers who had just completed their final teaching practicum. I contacted Sue Belliveau, who at the time, was the instructor for EDUC 452: Teacher Inquiry II, which was the course that the UBC pre-service teachers were completing. I was keen to re-connect with the UBC pre-service teachers to share the arpilleras produced by the Nepalese pre-service teachers and I envisioned giving a short presentation to the class and discussing the Nepalese students' responses to the art exchange as well as sharing their arpilleras. Sue was delighted to have me present and on July 4th, I spent one hour with the students. I had prepared a PowerPoint

presentation to provide some background information on Nepal and to show images of the Tribhuvan University campus and classrooms. My intention was to help the UBC students ‘visit’ the spaces and places that the Nepalese students engaged in. I could see that some of the UBC students were taken aback by the learning conditions that the Nepalese students were situated in.

The next part of my presentation involved sharing images and descriptions of the arpilleras that the Nepalese students created. I also shared some of the Nepalese students’ responses to the UBC students’ arpilleras. For example, I shared the following response from one of the Nepalese students: *I visioned, the relation of teachers and students and I visioned that teaching is possible only when the teacher and student present together. In Canada, students mainly focus on getting knowledge themselves through the nature, through materials, and through the pictures.*

I also facilitated a discussion about the similarities and differences between the UBC students’ arpilleras and the Nepalese students’ arpilleras, by asking the following questions: What were some common themes in the Nepalese BEd students’ arpilleras? What were some differences in the Nepalese BEd students’ arpilleras? What is similar or different to your arpillera? What did you find interesting about their arpilleras and their descriptions? The conversation sparked several insights about the differences in exposure and access to arts-based learning and the focus on didactic learning in Nepal.

Within a few days of my presentation to the class, I scheduled follow-up phenomenological interviews with the five UBC pre-service teachers who had originally agreed to participate in my research project. The purpose of these conversations was to understand their observations about

the similarities and differences between the UBC and TU students' understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. I was also interested in understanding how the art-making process and art exchange contributed to their understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. To support these conversations, I had the Nepalese students' arpilleras available for the UBC students to touch and examine, which proved to be useful for prompting conversations about similarities and differences. At the culmination of these conversations, I thanked the UBC students for participating in my research project and I mentioned that I would follow-up with them after our conversations had been transcribed. These conversations served as the culmination of my fieldwork in Canada.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of my study methodology (existential phenomenology) including the research questions and the approach that I undertook to explore my questions. I discussed the specific methods (phenomenological interviews, arpillera art-making, art exchange, and follow-up phenomenological interviews) that I used and the importance of living inquiry and arts-based educational research, as part of my methodological approach. I used the concept of 'becoming' to frame a discussion of relationality between myself and the pre-service teachers as well as to explore moments of interruption in my self-understanding that I experienced throughout the research process.

Chapter 6: Gift Giving

6.1 Overview

In this chapter, I discuss the four-stage approach that I used to analyze my study data. I also discuss my rationale for undertaking letter writing as both an analytical tool and representational form and I describe the steps that I undertook to write the letters to the pre-service teacher participants. This chapter includes five letters which contain key themes from my analysis, and a summary chart describing each theme and sub-theme.

6.2 Data Analysis

At the culmination of my fieldwork, I found myself with a mountain of data including audio recordings from twenty phenomenological interviews (two interviews per participant), images of participants' arpilleras, and a field journal. As I mentioned previously, the images of the participants' arpilleras and my field journal were not analyzed as primary data sources; however, they served as important artifacts in the larger process of thinking and reflecting on my data. My field journal captured my questions, curiosities, insights, and observations during my fieldwork and the arpillera images served as a reminder of the art-making experience, of the phenomenological interviews that I engaged in with each pre-service teacher, and the relationship that I developed with each individual. The audio recordings from the phenomenological interviews formed the primary data source for analysis.

As a busy educator and mother, I hired an external consultant to transcribe the data from the phenomenological interviews. I reviewed each transcription to identify any errors or inaccuracies. This involved me listening to each audio recording while reading the interview

transcript created by the external consultant, and making changes as needed. In most cases, the transcriptions captured the main ideas from the phenomenological interviews; however, the recordings of the conversations with the Nepalese pre-service teachers often included significant background noise from traffic, people, etc. In addition, given that English is an additional language for the Nepalese pre-service teachers, at times, it was difficult to decipher some of the words that were spoken. This was particularly true for the transcriptionist who was not used to the structure and cadence of the Nepali language. As such, my review of the transcripts involved a close listening of all the audio files and correction of the transcripts as necessary.

In analyzing the transcripts, I followed a four-stage process: 1) reading through all of the transcripts, focusing on both the pre and post art-making conversations for one participant at a time; 2) identifying written text from the pre and post art-making conversations that sparked my curiosity, particularly in relation to my research questions and writing these excerpts on one column of the transcript; 3) summarizing key ideas from the identified written text down a second column of the transcript; and 4) writing a document for each participant that connected the summarized key ideas with key theoretical concepts from Biesta's writing.

Stages two and three (see Figure 4), which involved identifying written text from the pre and post art-making conversations and writing these excerpts on one column of the transcript and then summarizing key ideas from the written text down a second column of the transcript, helped me identify key themes from the transcripts. The process of identifying a final set of key themes from across all of the transcripts consisted of looking at key themes within each transcript and finding similar and different themes in other transcripts.

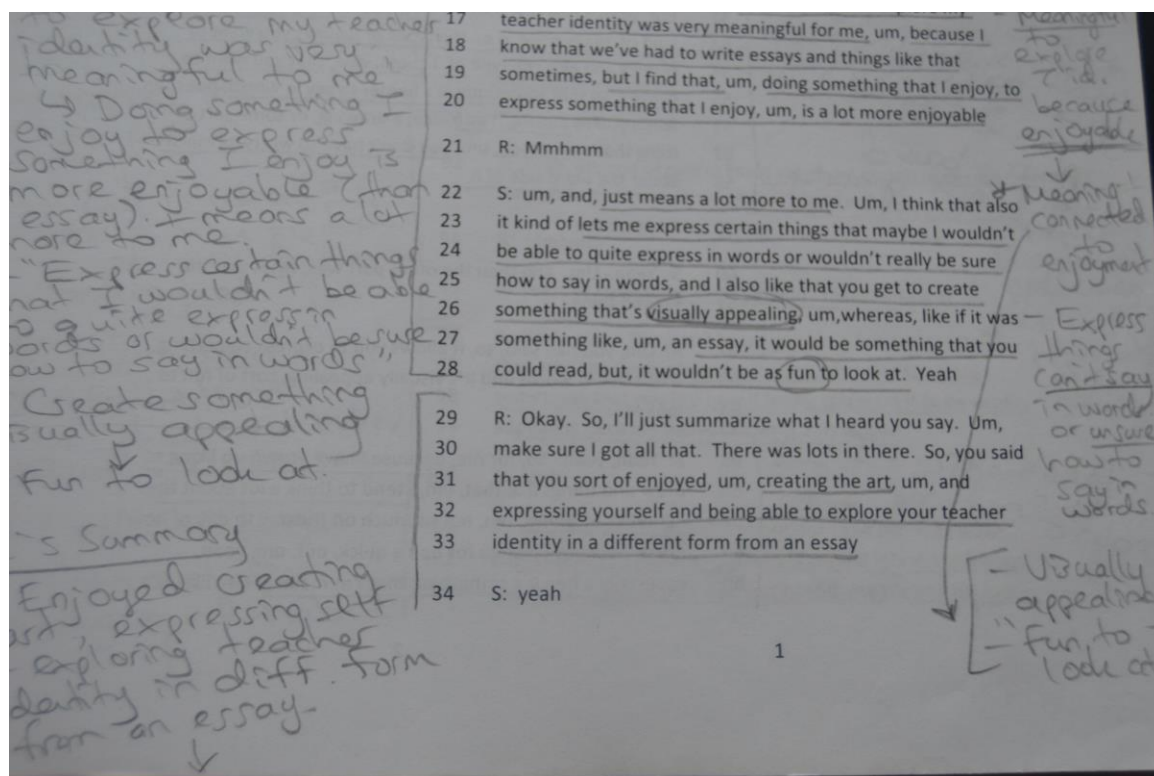


Figure 4: Image of Analyzed Transcript

The basic steps in my four-stage process align with Hoffding & Martiny's (2016) two-stage process which includes: 1) generating descriptions of experiential content which helps researchers to gain intimate first-hand knowledge of the interviewee's lived experience; and 2) analyzing these descriptions to help generalize to say something about experiential structures and subjectivity (p. 543).

6.3 Letter Writing: An Analytical Tool and Representational Form

As a result of the experience that I gained during my MA research in analyzing and presenting my data (which involved hand-coding of interview transcripts and generating themes and sub-themes using the constant comparative method), I knew from the outset that I wanted to

undertake a different process to ‘go deeper’ with and to represent the data from my PhD research. This is in part due to the vivid memories I have related to carrying around multiple envelopes, each containing hundreds of tiny pieces of colour-coded white paper (representing sections from interview transcripts) and the never-ending process of sorting and re-sorting them into different piles (i.e. themes and sub-themes). This was followed by the difficult process of organizing themes into a written representational form. While the four-stage data analysis process that I explained above was an important part of my data analysis, to align with the existential focus of my PhD research, I was committed to doing something different, particularly in representational form. Upon reflection and after several conversations with my committee, I decided to explore letter writing as both an analytical tool and representational form.

As a child, writing letters was a hobby that I relished. From the age of five or six, my parents instilled the value of writing thank you notes to family members and close friends who provided gifts for birthdays, Christmas, and other important holidays and milestones. This practice was something that was expected of me and became a routine that I looked forward to. In part, it was a way of formalizing my relationship with important elders and adults in my life and a way of expressing things that as a small child, I sometimes had difficulty saying in words. As I grew older and attended week-long summer camps through Girl Guides, I met friends from various parts of the province with whom I developed friendships. In the age of minimal internet access, these friendships were sustained through pen-pal relationships where handwritten letters were the primary form of communication. I remember the excitement that came along with purchasing, selecting, and decorating the stationary that my letters were written on, the careful reflection that was part of the process of writing my letters, the commitment that was present through having to

mail the letter, and the anticipation-filled process that followed with the sometimes endless waiting to receive a response.

Times have changed since my days as a child. Hand-written letters are a rarity and require a significant commitment on behalf of the writer and reader, as both are engaged in a conversation as they relate to each other. The growth and spread of technology has also changed the frequency and prevalence of hand-written letters. For many people, it is simpler and easier to send an instant text message or e-mail, as opposed to writing out a letter, mailing it, and waiting for a response. As someone who is a participant in our technological world, I am aware that my own engagement with letter writing has reduced over the years. Although letters are less frequent, they are still an important vehicle for my self-expression, particularly for sharing ideas that I have a difficult time expressing in person. They facilitate an opening for me, and allow for risk-taking, in ways that I wouldn't otherwise have access to. Perhaps, this is one reason why I chose to engage in letter writing to go deeper into and analyze my data and to represent my insights and understandings.

The process of 'going deeper' with my data through letter writing, involved an embodied awareness. As I sat in front of my computer and typed the opening phrase "Dear Shelley⁵," for example, I thought about Shelley – my first impressions of her, her demeanor, the moment that she became teary-eyed during our first conversation when she spoke about the role of her teacher

⁵ All participants have been given pseudonyms. The pseudonyms were chosen by me, to protect the identity of the participants involved in the study.

during her mother's passing, and her hopes for what she might create in her future classroom and in through her future relationships with her students. I thought about how I felt when I spoke with her – how I felt sad when she spoke about her mother's passing but how I also felt inspired by her strength to overcome such a significant loss, and how I felt a general calmness in her presence. As I thought about Shelley and relived these feelings in my heart and in my body, I thought about the 'gifts' that my relationship with Shelley had presented. To honour my relationship with Shelley, I began the letter writing with the goal of sharing the 'gifts'⁶ that I received from Shelley. By doing so, my hope was to honour her as a human being in the world, and to thank her for having an impact on my being in the world. In essence, my goal with writing the letters was to honour our relationality. The letters also served as a vehicle for me to ask questions and explore my curiosities.

In addition to the honouring of relationality, the letter writing process created a space for me to theorize without the confines of a pre-determined structure or format. There is something inherently open and creative about the free-flowing format of a personal letter, that for me, facilitated a space for existential theorizing. This involved weaving concepts, ideas, phrases, and insights from my data with my theoretical framework (Biesta), in order to frame teaching as an existential activity and teachers' responsibilities to children and to the world from an existential perspective.

⁶ The origin of the word 'data' comes from the Latin word *datum* or "(thing) given." This aligns with the notion of a gift.

In addition to helping me go deeper with my data, the letters are also a representation of the analytic process that I went through. This process was reductionist. It involved synthesizing ideas from the phenomenological interviews with the individual pre-service teachers, connecting these ideas to Biesta's ideas, and articulating these ideas in written form. While I did not write a letter to each of the ten pre-service teachers who participated in the phenomenological interviews, I ensured that each letter contained one or more key themes. Please note, I have highlighted these themes in bold text in each letter specifically for the dissertation reader. The key themes align with my research questions and are explored in depth in *Possibility*, the final chapter of this dissertation.

It is important to note that colonial dimensions (signaled through the use of deficit language) are present in some of the letters, through the form of participant quotes and discussion about differences between their contexts (i.e. Nepal and Canada). In choosing to include and discuss these quotes, my intention is not to imply or undertake a cross-cultural or comparative approach between the two educational contexts explored in my study, but rather to honour participants' voices.

Each letter also contains a 'P.S.' (or postscript), which contains a summary of the key themes woven into the letter. The postscripts were written after each letter, in alignment with traditional letter writing practices and the latin definition of *postscriptum* which means 'written after.' The postscripts are intended to help the letter recipient efficiently identify the key themes from the letter and to help the readers of my dissertation to identify my claims to knowledge, arising from my analysis.

Later in this chapter and at the end of the five letters, key themes from my analysis of the phenomenological interviews with the ten pre-service teachers are represented in a summary chart. The five letters include all of the key themes that emerged from my analysis, with some repetition of key themes. Given this repetition, I chose not to write and include letters to all ten pre-service teacher participants. The five letters include three to Canadian pre-service teacher participants (i.e. Carley, Shelley, and James) and two to Nepalese pre-service teacher participants (i.e. Krishan and Madhu). The decision to select three Canadian and two Nepalese participants to write letters to, was based on the depth of the insights that participants shared during their phenomenological interviews and the key themes from my analysis.

Given the many purposes that the letters serve in my dissertation – as a tool for going deeper with my data, for the honouring of relationality between myself and the pre-service teachers who participated in my research study, as a space for theorizing, and as a representation of the analytic process that I undertook, I chose not to send the letters to the pre-service teachers. Although I did not send the letters to the pre-service teachers, participants did have an opportunity to review the interview transcripts from both of the interviews that they participated in. This included the ability to add or remove anything from the transcript.

Although my decision not to send the letters may seem contrary to the purpose of letters (i.e. as documents to be shared with a recipient), not all letters are shared with others. There are many letters that are written with the goal of allowing the letter writer to express their thoughts, ideas,

and feelings. Once these have been expressed, the writer may decide not to send or share their letter with the intended recipient, as they may not want or need a response. In this case, for the writer, the process of writing the letter served a purpose and once this purpose has been met, the letter is merely a physical remnant.

In addition to containing text, the letters contain an image of the arpillera that each pre-service teacher made. Although the images do not do justice to the arpilleras, they provide an image of each arpillera, as a reminder of the art-making experience, of the phenomenological interviews that I had with each pre-service teacher, and the relationship that I developed with each individual. The individual letters are contained in the remainder of this chapter.

6.4 Letter to Carley (Canadian, Female)

Dear Carley,

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying teaching.

Firstly, I want to thank you for supporting my PhD research. Without your support and encouragement, in the form of encouraging your classmates to participate in my research study, I wouldn't be where I am today. Perhaps, that feeling of support is mutual in that we have known each other for eighteen years and have stood by each other through highs and lows. I still remember the bright-eyed, energetic, and knowledge hungry seven year old girl who I enjoyed reading and spending time with. At that time, I was finishing high school and was on my way to pursuing my dream of becoming an elementary school teacher. I didn't have many tools in my toolbox, but looking back, it is clear to me that your willingness to learn and

my desire to support your passions and interests led to the growth of a really special relationship – one built on trust, mutual respect, and shared understanding. I am so proud of all that you have accomplished and I am delighted that you have chosen to immerse yourself in the world of teaching. You have many gifts to offer your students and I am honoured to be able to bear witness to the journey that you are on, to explore and experiment with what it means to be a teacher in a complex and ever-changing world. Thank you for committing yourself to the children and to helping them explore the world. Although I chose to leave elementary school teaching, I get to live vicariously through you – by listening to your stories about the children and the actions that you are taking to help them come into the world. Thank you for being a teacher and for sharing your ideas about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, with me.

As you know, my PhD research is grounded in my desire to explore the existential – being in the world and possibility – and to explore how an existential perspective on teaching might lead to more possibilities for teacher education programs, both here and in Nepal. In this letter, I want to share some of the ‘gifts’ that you shared with me through our conversations. The notion of gift-giving is something that Gert Biesta (an educational philosopher and a man whose thinking and teaching inspired me to pursue the existential in my PhD research) writes about. In the context of teaching, he says that gifts are not material in nature, but rather relate to the concept of transcendence, which involves interruptions in one’s self-understanding (Biesta, 2013b). Many of the things that you shared with me were gifts in that they allowed me to think about my own ideas about teaching. I’ll write more about some of these later on.

As I reflect on the two conversations that we had about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, I was struck by how our first conversation focused on what I see as the tension between teachers providing ‘knowledge’ and ‘encouraging wonder and curiosity.’ You spoke about how a teacher is someone who does

both and also connected 'wonder' to creating an environment that children like or desire to be in.

Specifically, you said this leads to 'wonder' and being 'passionate' about things in life. Here is an excerpt of what you said:

We want these students to be able to want to learn more and we don't want their learning to be cut off just because the subject is boring or they don't see the subject as relevant to their lives. We want them to continue to wonder and be passionate about things in life.

We spent quite a bit of time talking about the younger/primary grades, partly because you hope to teach in those grades but also because you believe that children are 'so full of wonder' in those younger grades. In our conversation you said that teachers 'need to interact with student engagement, curiosity, and wonder.'

When we talked about wonder, I found it interesting that you defined it as being about 'more' in relation to both content and 'things about the world.' Your emphasis on 'more' and 'things about the world' highlights the importance of the existential to teaching. This also aligns with Biesta's understanding of gift-giving where teachers have the potential to impart gifts which can lead to interruptions in self-understanding. This is transcendence or how newness is brought into the world.

During this part of our conversation I found myself thinking, what might happen if teachers don't interact with students' wonder? Might it die? How might this connect to bringing newness into the world?

We also spent time discussing the role of the teacher and how you believe that teachers encourage wonder through student-led inquiry, which you see as student led and not teacher-directed in that it involves 'teach[ing] a lesson and just go[ing] wherever the students take you.' This is based in part on your belief

that students have knowledge and are not a 'clean slate' and that it is the teachers' job is to facilitate and hear student voices. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

...the students can provide you with...valuable information that they know. They're not coming into the classroom as clean slates. They have so much background knowledge of experience and knowledge, from like all areas. So, you don't really want to cancel that out or like silence their voices.

During this part of our conversation, I found myself wondering, where is the teacher in this? You responded by offering that you see the teacher as a co-learner involved in exploring, creating, and learning and that facilitation involves the teacher letting students do research and providing support, as needed. In essence, students are in charge of learning and the teacher creates a safe environment as opposed to being in a directing role. We also talked about how it is necessary to have a balance between teacher-led and student-led activities in the classroom. When I asked about the relationship between these two activities, you mentioned that it involves starting with student inquiries and having the teacher provide the subject matter and aligning this to the curriculum. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

I would say that the teacher is a co-learner as well, so that we're not directing, we're not managing; we are exploring and creating and learning with them, not just the teacher as the only person who...knows the knowledge. Just being the co-learner with the students, facilitating and keeping it on track, but also letting the students voices be heard and their interests...be heard.

During our conversation, I found myself focused on pushing you to explore if it is possible for a teacher not to be a subject-matter expert in the classroom. **You talked about how the teacher selects content (based on students' interests)** in order to encourage wonder; therefore, the content chosen by the teacher must be relevant to "students lives and interests." Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

I think [student led and instructor led] teaching come together in certain aspects. You need to find a balance there, so, there is room for the inquiry and that's where you can take it. The inquiry is where you can begin a subject, but then...it's the teacher's role to create lesson plans or create subject matter around the student inquiries and then, also, it's the teacher's role to relate it back to the curriculum and keep it so that they're on track curriculum wise and development wise.

This led me to question whether a teacher is simply a facilitator or do they actually deliver content? Can and should they be both a facilitator of learning and deliver content as a subject-matter expert? If so, what does it look like to do both of these things? **I think my interest in this tension between what Biesta calls “facilitative teaching” and “gift-giving” has to do with my own struggles of wanting to create an environment where the teacher supports, guides, and facilitates students to develop themselves but also recognizing that teachers have a unique role to provide knowledge – information and ideas to students (2014b). The former leads to cultivating the self (which according to Biesta (2014b) can result in limiting opportunities for people to show their newness) and the latter leads to exposure towards the world (which creates possibilities for transcendence and involves being addressed or spoken to by the other” (2014b, p. 14).**

In addition to our conversation about the role of a teacher, we also spoke about the context within which a teacher operates – i.e. the education system. You mentioned that a teacher is someone who works in a formal or informal setting and “*shares, conveys, and imparts knowledge and information.*” When I asked you to define knowledge, you defined it as ‘everything’ but eventually divided it into two areas including ‘socialization’ and ‘educational studies’ including Math, English, Science, Social Studies. **I was struck by how your definition of knowledge aligned with how Biesta (2011) defines the ‘what is’ of education – i.e. that education can be a form of adaptation where children are socialized into the ‘what is’ of**

society. I think this is because I have often struggled with the tension between what Biesta & Safstrom (2011) write as “‘what is’” and “‘what is not’” or the idea that living in the ‘what is’ leads to letting go of the possibilities for education or its interest in freedom, and the idea that living in that ‘what is not’ leads to dreaming of a utopia for education rather than making it possible now. The goal is to stay in the tension between ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’ (Biesta & Safstrom, 2011). This requires being responsible for the present (Biesta & Safstrom, 2011).

The last part of our conversation that I found particularly meaningful was around relationality and the role of power in the classroom. We spent quite a bit of time talking about a ‘new understanding of teachers and what it means to be a teacher in the classroom’ and the ‘old version’ where teachers fear losing their power. We also talked about how there is also a culture of fear in schools where some students feel scared, and perceive that they don’t have a voice. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

I think we are moving towards a newer understanding of teachers and a newer understanding of what it means to be a teacher in the classroom and I think [the teacher being in charge] is the old version of what school used to be and...I think it's just that it would say that a teacher is...scared to let go of their power and scared to try new things and scared to come out of their comfort zone.

During this part of our conversation, I found myself thinking about **how this fear closes wonder and curiosity (two concepts that we spoke at length about earlier in our conversation). A teacher may not intend to create an environment that leads to students feeling fearful and they may not know that students are scared because they didn’t create opportunities for students to use their voices or to perceive that their voice is valued. Instead of creating the opportunity for dialogue that leads to curiosity and wonder, this culture of fear leads to the ‘death’ of a student and limits possibilities for**

bringing 'newness in the world'. It also prevents gift giving from teachers to students as students don't feel valued or heard. We talked about the alternative to this, which is the teacher knowing their students and being 'aware.' While we didn't talk about what it means to be aware during our first conversation, our second conversation about your experience during the art-making project led to some profound ideas about the importance of reflection and being aware. I'll write more about this a little later.

Right now, I want to take a few minutes to share what struck me from our second conversation, which focused on your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, the meaning behind your arpillera, and what you learned from this project (including any shifts in your thinking) about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. In order to do that, I want to share an image of your arpillera, because it helps me cast my mind back to the arpillera-making process and our subsequent conversation.



Figure 5: Image of Carley's Arpillera

Can you recall what your arpillera represents in relation to what it means to be a teacher and to teach, given that it has been quite some time since you made your arpillera? Let me help you cast your mind back by sharing what you originally wrote:

This arpillera symbolizes the transfer of knowledge from one person to another. The location is outside to symbolize that a teacher is not confined to the specific education system or classroom setting. Specifically, this arpillera tells a story of a cultural experience where an elder is passing on traditional wisdom/knowledge about the local Indigenous plants.

What I hear in this description of your arpillera is the importance of elders teaching life lessons, the idea that teachers can be located anywhere (not just in a classroom), and the belief that teaching involves the transfer of knowledge. When I reflect back on our first conversation (prior to the arpillera-making), it strikes me that your description of your arpillera and the emphasis on the transfer of knowledge aligns with the description of what it means to be a teacher and to teach that you shared in our first conversation. Specifically, you said that “a teacher is a person in an educational setting who provides knowledge.” It’s interesting to see this consistency between what you told me and what you represented in your arpillera.

I also remember how during our conversation you clearly told me that you didn’t want your arpillera to be interpreted as teacher-centred, which you felt it visually depicted because it included an elder with children. I was curious to know more about this, and you mentioned that your arpillera was not teacher-centred because although the elder is giving information to the children, the children are actively interacting with the information. **What struck me about this is your belief in the importance of student interaction with content and how what students do with information helps shift things from a teacher-centred**

approach to a student-centred approach. This led to a conversation about how teachers don't always have to "have the knowledge" because teachers and students can learn together. This requires an inter-relationship between the teacher and student. Here is an excerpt from what you shared with me:

You don't have to always have the knowledge. You and the student can learn together and I think as teachers we feel that we always need to have answers but we don't always have to answer their questions. It's okay for us to say "I don't know", like, let's research that together and I think that's something regarding teaching that people don't acknowledge as much.

In the latter part of our conversation, we had an opportunity to talk about what you learned from the arpillera-making project and you mentioned that the project was different from what you normally experience in the teacher education program. Specifically, you said: *"it was a lot different doing the art piece because usually it's just like verbally or a paper talking about experiences."* This was an interesting comment for me, particularly given my interest in creating opportunities for existential conversations within teacher education programs. I found myself reflecting on what 'normal' looks like in relation to teaching, and in particular, in relation to teacher education, and asking myself several questions. Is the norm reading and writing in teacher education? Do arts-based approaches create opportunities for existential conversations about teaching? What might be possible if teacher education embraced more arts-based approaches?

Now let me return to your comment that I mentioned earlier in this letter, about how the arpillera-making project led to some profound insights from you, about the importance of reflection and being aware. **During our conversation, you mentioned that the benefit of participating in this project has been learning about others and gaining a different perspective. Specifically, you said it was "eye opening"**

because the project provided an opportunity for you to reflect on your self-reality in relation to others. You also mentioned that you appreciated the opportunity for conversation about your art including explaining the meaning behind your art, sharing your ideas with others (including your classmates), and hearing different ideas about being a teacher. Here is an excerpt of what you shared:

I find it really fascinating about other people in the world, doing the same program as I am, and I think, it just gives me a different perspective...which I think is needed every once in a while to change your thinking. It's eye opening because...we have it so good over here. It's such a different experience than what they have.

This made me reflect on how perhaps, the process of hearing different ideas helped expand your thinking about what it means to be a teacher and to teach and led to a deeper self-understanding of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. I'm curious to know what you think about this? When we talked about whether or not participating in this project has shifted your ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach, you said that your ideas are still the same; however, you mentioned that you have a desire to be more "student led."

The last part of our conversation focused on what insights you gained from the art exchange, which involved viewing the arpilleras created by the Nepalese pre-service teachers. You mentioned that the arpilleras created by both groups of pre-service teachers convey different pictures; however, there is a common or shared goal emphasizing the importance of student led learning. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

There's like other people all around the world who are going through the same program but everybody has different experiences. We all have the same goal, to become educators, to become

teachers, but, we all have different paths. Over there it's different. It's more teacher led compared to here...but learning that they want to be more student centered and student led, I found that interesting.

Although there are many more aspects from our two conversations that I could share with you, I want to end this letter with one last excerpt from our second conversation, where you spoke about what you had learned from this project about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. We had just finished talking about the commonalities between the Nepalese pre-service teachers and the UBC pre-service teachers, particularly in relation to a shared desire to implement student-led learning, when you shared the following:

We want to best serve the child and we want to best educate the child in what we think will best help educate the child and I think that it's interesting, that...both countries are working towards that step but we're just at different places.

As you move forward as a teacher, in what I believe is the most important career that one can undertake, I want to encourage you to continue to embrace your goal of 'best educating the child,' and to hold your ideas about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, close to your heart, soul, and practice. Always remember why it is that you chose to become a teacher and the commitment that you made to bringing children into the world.

Thank you for the gifts that you shared with me.

Yours in teaching and in friendship,
Roselynn

*P.S. In case it is helpful, the themes that I heard in our conversations and that I tried to draw your attention to in the preceding letter included Biesta's three conceptualizations of teaching (i.e. teaching as

qualification, teaching as socialization, and teaching as subjectification); facilitative teaching (which is part of teaching as qualification); gift giving and teacher-centred and student-centred approaches (which are both part of teaching as subjectification); and your experience exploring existential questions through art creation and exchange including relationality between self, others, and the world; and enhanced awareness of what it means to be teacher and to teach.

6.5 Letter to Shelley (Canadian, Female)

Dear Shelley,

Firstly, I hope this letter finds you well. It has been quite some time since we last saw each other – in fact, the last time was during your teacher inquiry seminar after you had returned from completing your final practicum. The last I heard, you had taken up a teacher-on-call position in the Surrey school district. I hope you are enjoying that.

I am writing to you to thank you for your willingness to share your ideas about teaching and what it means to be a teacher with me, and for contributing to my PhD research. As you know, I am interested in exploring what might be possible for teacher education, if teaching is viewed existentially – that is, in a way that invites questions about how teachers understand what it means to be in and with the world. Perhaps, this might seem odd given that most teacher education programs (including UBC's program that you experienced) are 'packaged' as short-term programs to prepare teachers to teach and to acquire their certification to do so. After all, what else might a teacher education program do? It is precisely this 'what else' that I am interested in and that your ideas have helped me explore. In this letter, I want to tell you how

our encounters in the form of two phenomenological interviews, have led to new insights and thinking for me, about what it means to be a teacher and to teach.

During our first conversation, you shared with me that a teacher is someone who “facilitates learning.”

When you shared this with me, I remember being struck by the use of the phrase ‘facilitates learning’, in part because I had been doing a lot of thinking both about what it means for teachers to facilitate and also about what learning means. My curiosity led to a lengthy conversation between us about what facilitation means. You shared with me that facilitation is about “creating experiences that children can learn from.” Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

A teacher is someone who...facilitates learning, supports their students, and works with others to make the learning environment an experience, um improved. Not necessarily ideal, because I think that...if you add any ideal part, then it wouldn't apply to most teachings, just because it's really hard to make things actually ideal, but you can always still improve things. As a teacher, you're not necessarily making children learn. We talk a lot about facilitating, like creating experiences that the children can learn from and...take away things, rather than telling them like, “Okay. This is what we're doing. This is what we're learning. This is how we're learning it.”

This reminded me of what Gert Biesta, an educational philosopher and someone who provokes my thinking about possibilities for education, says about learning. Specifically, he talks about how the phrase (and language of) learning needs to “pay attention to questions of content, purpose, and relationships.” While clarifying all three of these aspects is important, he emphasizes that asking oneself questions about the purpose of learning is the most important because it helps inform other decisions (i.e. about the content that we want to expose children to the kind of relationships that we want them to experience). What he means by exploring questions about the purpose of learning is that teachers need to clarify what it is that they want to achieve through their “educational activities” (the things they say and do in schools and

classrooms). **Biesta believes that when teachers say that they want students to learn, responsibility for student learning is placed only on teachers, and removes the responsibilities that students have as thinking and acting subjects who have a part in the educational process.** What are your thoughts about that? Do you think that children have responsibilities as thinking and acting subjects? If so, what are these responsibilities?

During our conversation, we also spoke about how you view learning as a “process”, and how teachers can create environments where students see and experience learning this way (i.e. as a process). In order to create this kind of environment, you mentioned that teachers have choices about how they respond to students and about the actions that they take or don’t take as teachers, in the classroom. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

If you don’t feel included, I think it’s harder to make relationships inside the classroom. I’d expect that you’d feel kind of disengaged from the learning process. So, thinking more about how you can help with the learning, rather than...like, “Okay, this is what we have to cover” or “This is what I want to cover” and being very rigid. Being really flexible so you can do a better job of...helping children learn things, kind of helping them learn in a more wider and more curious way as well.

This highlighted Biesta’s ideas about how education has several purposes, one of which includes “socialization” which connects students to particular traditions and ways of doing and being and another of which includes “subjectification” which helps students form as a person or a subject and not just remain objectives of the desires and directions of others. Of course the other main purpose that Biesta identifies has to do with transmission and acquisition of content, but we’ll talk more about that later. In our conversation about learning being a “process,” you mentioned that the teacher’s goal is for students to “be woke.” From my perspective, this aligns beautifully with

Biesta's views of both socialization and subjectification and with my ideas about education being about helping children to come into the world.

During our conversation, we also spent time discussing how teachers are part of a larger system that has a “certain set of standards” for practice and teaching in schools. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

All schools...talk about how even if you do something in your classroom, if it's not really being done outside of your classroom it won't necessarily have the same impact. So, for example, if you had a 'no running' rule in your classroom, but then all the other teachers they let their kids run around, then the kids in your class would probably be like, "Oh, why don't we get to run?" Like, it wouldn't really work. Working with the other teachers, you kind of have a certain set of standards.

This discussion was particularly meaningful for me given the choice that I made many years ago, to leave elementary school teaching. As I may or may not have told you during our conversation, this was largely due to the fact that I perceived the larger system to be limiting possibilities for what I could do in the classroom. **I have found Biesta's theorizing about education's relationship to the knowledge society useful for understanding where the 'system' and 'standards' for practice emerged from. In particular, Biesta (2014b) talks about how viewing society as a knowledge economy “comes with a particular educational 'agenda' that calls for the cultivation of certain qualities that make individuals 'fit' for participation in the knowledge society” (p.14). Like Biesta, I know that the educational agenda of a knowledge economy limits what is possible for individual teachers because the emphasis from the larger educational system including government, administrators, parents, etc. becomes about the “production of flexible lifelong learners who are able to adjust and adapt to the ever-changing conditions of global capitalism” (2014b, p. 14). How can teachers even**

begin to hope for something different in their schools and classrooms when faced with a system that closes off existential possibilities for being in and with the world? Now that you are working in a school and classroom, I'm curious to hear if you have found ways to navigate the system?

During our second conversation, we discussed your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, the meaning behind your arpillera, and what you learned from this project (including any shifts in your thinking) about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. I want to share an image of your arpillera, as a way of returning to our conversation.



Figure 6: Image of Shelley's Arpillera

One of the things that I find amazing about art-based approaches, is their ability to support sensory and embodied learning (i.e. things that we know through our senses and bodies) and to help learners “tap into [their] cultural, cognitive, and spiritual centers” (Clover, 2000, p. 20). Your arpillera is a powerful visual depiction of your beliefs about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, which was reinforced by your arpillera description:

I chose to make a person with flowers blooming out of their head and a watering can helping the flowers grow. I choose brightly coloured accents to draw the eye more to certain areas. The background is a simple burlap fabric with frayed edges. Essentially, all the components of my arpillera that lay on top of it beautify it as education beautifies the world we live in. Learning and knowing enhance the way we engage and appreciate the world around us. I initially wanted the person to appear more gender neutral; however, with the use of colours and glitter, my person ended up looking more feminine than originally intended. The use of glitter throughout the arpillera is for a mixture of aesthetic and symbolic purposes. I wanted to show the beauty and value of education. Many glittery objects such as gold and emeralds are deemed more valuable; I had hoped for the glitter and sparkle elements I added to convey that idea. The person represents the students in our classrooms and the watering can is the teacher. The watering can is placed off of the background of the arpillera, as it is not firmly part of the picture. Teachers are often with their students for a short period time but have impacts that exceed the time together. The teacher helps the student grow and blossom through the learning experiences they offer. These learning experiences are shown in the form of water droplets. The growth experienced by the student could be academic but also socially, emotionally and even physically. Some flowers are fully bloomed, while others are still waiting for their time to bloom. The use of the orange circle was in part aesthetic as I wanted to fill space and also focus attention on the purple face, but I also choose it because Buddha is often shown with a halo of light showing his enlightenment. My family is Theravada Buddhist where Buddha is seen as a teacher figure, rather than a godly figure like in the Mahayana variant. As such, teachings and knowledge are seen as very important and also transformative. As a teacher, I hope that my students are transformed by the learning experiences they have in my classroom and are able to blossom in different ways.

If I had the time and resources, I would love to replicate the student flower concept to create a garden by having multiple arpilleras together making a quilt-like piece with one large watering can, or maybe even multiple watering cans to show that teachers do not affect just one student at a time and students are not affected by just one teacher at a time.

What I hear from your description of your arpillera is the importance of the relationship between teachers and students, for supporting student growth and development. What strikes me about how you described your arpillera is the way that teaching is knowingly (or perhaps unknowingly) framed as existential. I hear this in your description when you use the metaphor of the blooming of individual flowers and write: “some flowers are fully bloomed, while others are still waiting for their time to bloom.” This aligns strongly with the notion of bringing newness into the world and the notion that students “are able to blossom in different ways.”

I want to take a few minutes to share some insights that I gleaned from our second conversation. One of the things that struck me right from the start of our conversation, is the importance that you place on art as a vehicle for self-expression, the importance that you place on the aesthetic aspect of art-making, and the enjoyment that you experience through art-making. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

I've always really enjoyed artwork and it's been something that I've used to express myself in other ways. To get to use it to explore my teacher identity was very meaningful for me, because I know that we've had to write essays and things like that sometimes, but...doing something that I enjoy, to express something that I enjoy, is a lot more enjoyable and just means a lot more to me. It kind of lets me express certain things that maybe I wouldn't be able to quite express in words or wouldn't really be sure how to say in words, and I also like that you get to create something that's visually appealing, whereas, if it was something like an essay, it would be something that you could read, but it wouldn't be as fun to look at.

During our conversation, we also focused on what insights you gained from the art exchange, which involved viewing the arpilleras created by the Nepalese pre-service teachers. After viewing the Nepalese students' arpilleras, we had a lengthy conversation about the similarities and differences between the Nepalese students' arpilleras and the UBC students' arpilleras. Some of the similarities that you highlighted included the emphasis on people and how this aligns with the teacher's role. You also highlighted how the frequency of people, particularly in the Nepalese students' arpilleras demonstrates the importance of students. **This led to a conversation about how both groups of teachers visually depicted care for students, and how this is connected to students being happy while they are learning.** You also mentioned that this is a "universal" theme among all teachers, regardless of location:

It's pretty clear from what they've made, that they do care about the students. All the students are smiling and if the students being happy wasn't important to them, I don't think that they would have necessarily cut out all the smiley faces. I think it kind of shows that...the student being happy while they are learning, enjoying what they're learning, and being kind of helped with their learning, I think that's something that's very similar to what Canadian teachers' value, and I think that's probably a universal thing as well. You'd rather a kid be happy when they're learning than unhappy.

We also discussed some of the differences between the UBC students' arpilleras and the Nepalese students' arpilleras. Specifically, you highlighted how the Nepalese students' arpilleras are more literal, how they focus on academic knowledge, and how they emphasize teaching occurring in a physical classroom. In comparison, you mentioned that the **UBC students' arpilleras include an "emphasis on the whole child," on learning occurring within and outside of the classroom, and on learning being not just about "learning how to read and write."** To help understand these differences, we talked about how

this may be connected to high literacy rates in Canada, which means that there is space in Canadian school curriculum to focus on socialization:

A lot of these seem more literal. It looks like they're taking place mostly in a classroom or some sort of educational type setting. This one...has the whiteboard, and then it has the students sitting around a book. We're kind of taught that you don't have to be teaching in a classroom. Teaching doesn't need to occur in a classroom for it to be teaching. I think that for something that's different...the emphasis on the whole child. In Canada, it's not just about learning how to read and write. Most children, we have very high literacy levels here. So, I don't think it's a very big concern for teachers here if the kid will learn to read or write. It's more about when. I think that there's an emphasis on also teaching kids about social skills.

Our conversation about the arpilleras led to a rather insightful comment about the recognition of society's impact on teaching, by shaping what is and is not possible in a classroom. Specifically, you mentioned that in Canada, creativity and art is something that is generally valued by society, and as such, teachers have opportunities to bring the arts into their classrooms. You mentioned that this is directly connected to the inclusion of the arts in formal curriculum documents and the end result is the valuing and supporting of "different learners." This exchange led to a discussion about the differences between Canada and Nepal including the role of arts-based education in both schooling and teacher education in Nepal, and the resulting challenges that the pre-service teachers likely experienced in this project with not being able to "fully express...their ideas in an art format":

For some of them, they had never really done something like this or remotely similar. I think that's probably in part because there are certain things that we get very used to here...like creativity and art is something that...in Western society, is fairly valued. In our curriculum in BC, we have the arts education and then we also have applied design and technology. I think in a lot of different subject areas, creativity and being able to represent knowledge is increasingly valued which is great,

especially because there's different learners. They're able to have their ways of expressing what they know and representing what they know valued. I think that because [the Nepalese teachers] also haven't had arts based education like the one that we have here, I think that probably made it hard for them to really fully express...their ideas in an art format.

The final part of our conversation that I found especially pertinent in terms of my study relates to what you learned from this project about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. **During our conversation, you mentioned that although participating in the project didn't change your core beliefs about teaching, it did shift some of your assumptions about what others value in teaching, particularly in relation to arts education. Our conversation also highlighted a key learning for you – that reflecting on others' teaching beliefs and practices helps you reflect on your own beliefs and practices.** Here is an excerpt of what you shared:

It didn't change what I think about it but I think it changed...some of my assumptions about what other places value in teaching...especially in terms of arts education. Participating in this experiment...really kind of changed how I see the value of creativity and different skills representing. It...gets me to think more about...what type of skills the children already have. Maybe they are coming from a...context where art isn't really emphasized, so where other forms of representing knowledge aren't really valued as much...so it...probably would be very frustrating for them. It...made me reflect on my own teaching practice. When you're reflecting on other teaching practices you end up reflecting on you own.

Although there are many more aspects from our two conversations that I could share with you, I want to end this letter with one last excerpt from our second conversation, where you spoke about what you had learned from this project about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. We had just finished talking about the importance of self-reflection, particularly in relation to experienced teachers:

The thing is that [experienced teachers] are still learning too, about how to teach their class, about how to teach kids in general, and there are so many differences in how kids are and how they learn that no matter how much experience you have, you might feel more comfortable and more confident, but there's still things that you could be improving on.

As you continue to learn and grow as a teacher, your notion that learning and growing are endless and that your commitment to learning and growing is important and will help you bring children into the world is particularly powerful in terms of thinking about teaching and learning through an existential perspective.

Thank you for the gifts that you shared with me.

Yours in teaching,
Roselynn

*P.S. In case it is helpful, the themes that I heard in our conversations and that I tried to draw your attention to in the preceding letter included Biesta's three conceptualizations of teaching (i.e. teaching as qualification, teaching as socialization, and teaching as subjectification); facilitative teaching and preparation for the knowledge society (which are part of teaching as qualification); gift giving and relationships with self, others, and the world (which are both part of teaching as subjectification); and your experience exploring existential questions through art creation and exchange including your enhanced awareness of what it means to be teacher and to teach.

6.6 Letter to James (Canadian, Male)

Dear James,

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying teaching in Alberta. When we last spoke, you were excited to be pursuing teaching opportunities in Alberta. I hope that you have found an environment where you feel supported to implement your ideas about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, which I have spent quite some time thinking about. In this letter, I want to share some of the ideas that we discussed in our initial conversation about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Our conversation was rich and although we didn't know each other prior to our conversation, by the time we had finished chatting, I felt I had a clear understanding of what you value as a teacher.

As you know, through my PhD research, I am interested in exploring possibilities for teacher education, particularly existential possibilities. An existential perspective emphasizes what it means to be in and with the world. This is significantly different than a utilitarian or functional perspective which emphasizes attainment of knowledge and skills solely as a means to an end (i.e., only done to produce a desired result)..

Perhaps, the first thing that struck me from our initial conversation was that you distinguished between formal teaching and informal teaching. This was something that the other pre-service teachers that I spoke to didn't highlight or emphasize during my conversations with them. My sense is that the distinction between formal and informal teaching is significant to you, given your background working in environmental and outdoor education through Parks Canada. In our conversation, you defined what a formal teacher is and expressed sadness around this definition. Specifically, you said:

For me, there was a clear move to being a formal teacher and that would mean being certified by the government or by the country so that you can actually go into a school and...be the traditional role of a teacher. [It] seems a little bit sad to me right now. This... abstract, beautiful thing

of...teaching yourself and just exploring the world and having curiosity and it seems like once it's packaged in a certain way, especially in this program, that it seems less beautiful unfortunately.

Your ideas emphasized the notion that **formal teacher training in its current state takes away the possibility for viewing teaching in an existential way.** Your ideas are consistent with the work of Gert Biesta, an educational philosopher who wants to see teaching conceptualized as helping children 'come into the world.' His ideas connect to society's current emphasis on knowledge and lifelong learning. Specifically, Biesta believes that society's desire for knowledge and the widespread emphasis on fueling the knowledge economy has led to education focusing on comprehension (i.e. understanding and gaining knowledge about the world). To me, it is not surprising then, that the current state of teacher education emphasizes the formal role of the teacher and the importance of certification. This is merely an extension of his theorizing around the knowledge society and knowledge economy.

As you so aptly mentioned during our conversation, the **challenge for teachers and students is to be creative within the structure and system of schooling.** Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

To have kids just sit down and be like, 'this is what we're doing,' like find some creative energy and I think sometimes it's not there but you're forced to work with a nine to three clock and then there's recess and you have to put down your project and I think it can be really challenging, at least for me. It's like 'Today we're doing this, this is how it looks, now do it.' I've definitely seen...in different classrooms where teachers are just...running with their own strengths and they're also finding the strengths of their students in a really beautiful way and...they're creating projects that everybody is really into.

The ability to be creative is indeed essential, in order to work around and through institutional constraint. Biesta pushes these ideas further by emphasizing the importance of the role of the teacher. He states: “Teachers are not disposable and dispensable resources for learning, but where they have something to give, where they do not shy away from difficult questions and inconvenient truths, and where they work actively and consistently on the distinction between what is *desired* and what is *desirable*, so as to explore what it is that should have authority in our lives” (Biesta, 2012, p. 459). This aligns with the goal of shifting education and the project of schooling from being focused on fueling the knowledge economy to a “wider democratic transformation of individual ‘wants’ into collectively agreed upon ‘needs’” (Biesta, 2013, p. 459). I’m curious to know what your thoughts are on Biesta’s ideas about the relationship between the knowledge economy and the current practices of teacher education? How might his ideas shift, if at all, how you see your role as a teacher?

During our conversation, **we also spoke about the world and your desire (and recognition of the challenge) to bring the world into a classroom. Specifically, you spoke about how the classroom and the world are separate:**

I certainly have had profound moments of learning or having knowledge passed to me in the public school system, but for me, it’s usually out in the world. The challenge is how do I, as a formal educator...pass on or at least create an environment where students could experience those things? It does seem like a challenge to bring a lot of the really exciting curious things about the world into a classroom. It’s almost too sanitary, in a way, like inside the classroom.

I found your distinction between the world and the classroom interesting, yet also not surprising given my own experience as a classroom teacher and wanting to engage students with the larger world but finding it challenging to do so given the system’s focus on knowledge transfer. This is

something that Biesta writes about in his work. Specifically, he believes that different understandings of what it means to 'know' (and of knowledge) are related to very different conceptions of what it means to be 'in' the world. As such, they are related to very different modes of existing and thus open up very different existential possibilities. For example, constructivism, which many teacher education programs emphasize places the student at the centre of the world to be known, and thus puts the world in the position of object or as something that students seek to master by constructing, understanding, and comprehending. This definition of knowledge places students before the world and as existing first in order to start making sense of the world. In essence, students "assume that the world exists *for me*" – that the world is in some way at my disposal as an object for me to make sense of and construct knowledge about (Biesta, 2014a, p. 238).

Biesta believes that defining knowing as an "event" of reception, which is the opposite of construction, creates possibilities for the world to be conceptualized as "something that comes to us" (2014a, p. 238-239). Reception assumes that students engage in a process of "listening to the world, of having concern for the world, of caring for the world, and perhaps even of carrying the weight of the world" (Biesta, 2014a, p. 239). As such, the world is an object with its own "objectivity" and its own "integrity" (Biesta, 2014a, p. 239). Although reception also assumes the existence of the self before the world, the difference is that the self receives the world, as opposed to constructs the world (Biesta, 2014a). Biesta (2014a) also believes that the relationship between the self and the world can be understood in such a way that the world comes before the self and the self emerges from this encounter. In this relationship, the self is a response to an address – "a response to an experience of being addressed or being spoken to by what or who is other" (Biesta, 2014a, p. 239). The experience of being addressed comes from the "outside to us... and asks us to respond" (Biesta, 2014a, p. 239). So, why does this matter for teaching? For me, it comes down to the fact that **in relationships with others, a focus on listening, caring, or being spoken to will lead to**

different relationships than a focus on comprehension and understanding will. I'm curious to know what your thoughts are about the relationship between different conceptualizations of knowing and resulting interactions with the world? How might we create awareness among pre-service teachers of this relationship?

Although there were many things that we spoke about during our initial conversation that sparked curiosity in me, the last one that I want to tell you about is our conversation about **helping students in 'becoming human.'** Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

It's exciting to go through the process of becoming human, like socialization, like they're just learning how to work together. I don't know if that's the best way to say it but...like teaching how to be good human beings with each other and being able to collaborate and work together and also have some self discovery as well. Either school's a really exciting place where they can do lots of interesting things or it's just this awful place and I think that's a really bad way to start.

I'm interested to know more about where your notion of 'good' comes from? Is there such a thing as the opposite (i.e. a 'bad' human being)? Do you think any of Biesta's ideas that I have discussed so far, align with your idea of a 'good' human being? One thing that Biesta writes about that I think is relevant to our conversation about becoming human (i.e. through socialization) **is the idea that education can be understood as an encounter with something that is radically new, where newness is defined as something that students do not already have.** Specifically, he wants to see education conceptualized as "an encounter with something that comes to you without reason" (Biesta, 2014a, p. 240). **This is an existential conceptualization of education – one that emphasizes possibility. For Biesta (2014a), new aligns with things that come from the outside and that students may perceive as a burden – something that needs to be carried as opposed to being an insight that is already familiar and can**

just be added to what students already know and understand. If you think of things that you might classify as a burden, sometimes a burden can be transformed into a relationship and potentially may even become a passion. The opposite is also true.

Conceptualizing education in this existential way (as opposed to conceptualizing it as comprehension) puts students in a different kind of position – a position where possibility is present. For me, this aligns with the belief that with every child, you do not know what the child will become. **In viewing education this way, teachers must take responsibility for the outcome of teaching being things that one cannot predict, define, or foresee.** From an educational perspective, when students receive things that come from outside themselves, they may not have anchor points for connecting with what is coming to them. This may mean that they are unable to see the reason of what is coming to them. Now, you may be thinking that the things I have said make sense (or perhaps not), but are they possible in practice?

I recognize that putting these ideas into practice may be challenging. The reality, as you and I discussed in our conversation, is that the current system of schooling is not structured or pre-disposed to support an existential approach to teaching. That being said, **if we are to support students to move beyond their current focus of comprehending and understanding the world, we need to think of creative ways to help them *experience* a different way of being with and in the world.**

Here is one idea that might be useful or spark some thinking. Several years ago, I had the opportunity to be a student in a three-week UBC summer course entitled *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (which is also the title of one of his books) led by Gert Biesta. During the course, each student was asked to put their hand into a ‘magic hat’ and select a small piece of paper that listed a concept. His request was simple: *You are*

required to adopt one of the key concepts discussed in the course – and adoption is meant in the literal sense in that that you are required to let the concept live with you for a period, to try to establish a relationship with the concept, to take care of it and to care for it. Despite this simple request, I remember being disappointed when the concept I selected was not one that initially resonated with or spoke to me. I didn't have a choice or control, which are things that I have become accustomed to as a learner. After all, I am a product of an educational system that affords choice and control over my learning, even though the notion of choice and control are things that one needs to learn to let go of to truly embrace an existential approach to teaching and learning. The other aspect to Biesta's request that was challenging was shifting from *learning about* the concept to simply *existing* with the concept. Instead of researching the concept, the request was to 'establish a relationship with the concept.' My experience of adopting a concept was a powerful learning activity that helped reinforce my desire to see learning be about more than comprehension. As Biesta (2014) states, "Learning is not the only meaningful way in which teaching can proceed and education can take place" (p. 242).

During our second conversation, we explored your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, the meaning behind your arpillera, and what you learned from this project (including any shifts in your thinking) about what it means to be a teacher and to teach.



Figure 7: Image of James's Arpillera

I'd be curious to know if how you know think about your arpillera in relation to what it means to be a teacher and to teach, given that it is has been quite some time since you made your arpillera? Let me know help you cast your mind back by sharing what you originally wrote:

My art project represents the challenges I face as a teacher candidate.

The clock is a symbol of the oppression of time and efficiency while I teach my students. As an educator I often feel like the lessons and topics covered and discussed in class are cut short and not fully developed due to time constraints. The volume of curricular content is vast and attending to the needs of each individual student is challenging within the confines of time.

The dumpster is included on my arpillera to represent that many items can be diverted from the waste stream and used in the classroom to reduce the amount of trash produced. The NY Times recently reported that there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans by the year 2050. Reusing and repurposing is a way to engage the creative and imaginative aspect of a child's thinking.

Lastly, connected to the dumpster, the fallen tree represents the detrimental effects of the modern classroom on the environment. As discussed above, classrooms create a lot of garbage, and being

aware of this fact opens up the space to make choices to reduce our footprint. The materials used in this arpillera were rescued from the garbage.

When I read your description, I was reminded of our initial conversation where we discussed what it means to be a teacher and to teach. In that conversation, you shared your passion for environmental stewardship and experiential education, your belief that teachers should support socialization among children, and you highlighted time as a significant institutional constraint. What struck me now is how closely your arpillera description aligns with those ideas we previously discussed. I was also touched by your commitment to ‘walk the talk’ of environmental stewardship, by using discarded materials to create your arpillera.

One of the things that struck me right from the start of our conversation, is the value that you gleaned from the experience of creating an arpillera, **as a form of experiential learning, and the value that you place on the arts for self-expression, relationship building, and for bringing newness into the world.** Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

***I like the arts approach because other people might see our creation and see in it things that we ourselves don't see as the author of our work. Someone might look at this and be able to tell a lot more about me that is probably quite true, that I didn't really notice or that wasn't really my intention to have that show in the art.** There's more dimensions to it. It creates a lot of conversations that maybe you normally wouldn't have or you might not think to write about.*

During our conversation, we also focused on the insights that you gained from the art exchange, which involved viewing the arpilleras created by the Nepalese pre-service teachers. After viewing the Nepalese students' arpilleras, we had a lengthy conversation about privilege in relation to the UBC BEd program. Specifically, we discussed how opportunities for UBC pre-service teachers to engage in reflection and to

explore ideas are a privilege afforded by the program, and how this privilege may be limiting awareness of the realities of schooling in the larger global context. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

I often get the impression that at UBC we have more breathing room to sort of play with ideas where maybe in other education systems in the world there's not as much time provided to kind of play around a little bit with ideas. I think maybe my artwork comes from more of a privileged place. At UBC we talk a lot about different kinds of literacy and you can have computer literacy, guitar literacy, video game literacy, but even that seems like it's coming from a privileged place where we've kind of become bored with the traditional ideas of what literacy is. It seems like our playing with ideas is great, but...maybe in the global context...we should be considering global education more than just our own pocket of privilege.

Although we didn't spend a great deal of time exploring similarities and differences between the arpilleras created by the Nepalese and UBC pre-service teachers, you did mention that some of the ideas represented in the arpilleras "seem to be running parallel." Specifically, you said:

I think that we would agree that having a good relationship with your teachers are important and the fact that the relationship isn't just...transferring knowledge but...there's a deeper relationship there and that we're not just filling empty vessels; that we're teaching kids to critically engage with the curriculum and material.

In the latter part of our conversation, we spoke at length about what you learned from the arpillera-making project, including the possibilities that art-making provides. What I found particularly meaningful from our conversation were your comments about **art providing a mirror to reflect back things that an artist may not see or know about themselves, thus creating space for new self-understandings. We also discussed how art creates conversations between self and others who are forced to relate as art producers and viewers.** Here is an excerpt of our conversation:

It's nice to feel all of the emotion about your own artwork. Someone would look at this and they might have some ideas, but I also think it creates a lot of separation between the artwork and also the author of the artwork, which I think is comforting as an artist. Art can be quite raw but it also does give space and I think it makes it a little more comfortable. Sometimes there's things that are very difficult to express and I think that's what's so beautiful about the arts. Each step of a project like this is quite fruitful. You have to think about things that you care about in education and then you have to give form to them. It's a different way of thinking about it.

Although there are many more aspects from our two conversations that I could share with you, I want to end this letter with one last excerpt from our second conversation, where I asked you to reflect on your participation in my PhD research project and to think about whether you developed any new ideas about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Here is what you shared:

I like to think about something before I create it, because you're bringing this new thing into the world.

As you move forward as a teacher, in what I believe is the most important career that one can undertake, I want to encourage you to continue to think about bringing newness into the world and the important role that teachers have in creating opportunities for learners to share their newness.

Thank you for the gifts that you shared with me.

Yours in teaching and in friendship,
Roselynn

*P.S. In case it is helpful, the themes that I heard in our conversations and that I tried to draw your attention to in the preceding letter included Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as subjectification including

relationships with self, others, and the world; your experience exploring existential questions through art creation and exchange including relationality between self, others, and the world, and bringing newness into the world; and existential possibilities for teacher education.

6.7 Letter to Krishna (Nepalese, Female)

Dear Krishna,

Namaste and hello from Vancouver, Canada. How are you doing? I hope this letter finds you and your family well. It has been quite some time since we last saw each other – the geographic distance between Canada and Nepal is quite the barrier to in-person conversations! Despite the distance, I have fond memories of our conversations and of your friendly and positive attitude. You are one of those people who I instantly liked and who I found it easy to talk with. Well, since we last chatted, I have done quite a bit of thinking about some of the ideas about teachers and teaching, that you shared with me. In this letter, I want to share some of my responses to your ideas, with you. Perhaps, this is a way for me to extend our conversation, albeit in written form, which I know you don't particularly like!

As you may remember, our conversation began with a discussion about 'what is a teacher?' – not a simple question to answer by any means. You spoke a fair bit about how people in Nepal view teachers differently than they used to, highlighting how the old view focused on the teacher as someone with knowledge and power whereas the new view is more relational. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me:

In the context of Nepal, in very beginning days, people used to say teacher is everything. Whatever teachers told us, whatever teachers deliver, we need to gain. Students or...other people never used to comment teacher's view, in the beginning days. But now this modern time everyone

became a little bit logical and critical in every kinds of view. That's why, we think if we are in the role of teacher, we can be not like previous days teachers. Like friend, councilor, director, advisor. Like that kinds of person as a teacher. I think teachers should be very friendly with the students because these kinds of roles play very significant role while teaching in the classroom. If the teacher became like a very superior person – I am everything, I am a great person, you are inferior than me...if a teacher do like that kind of behaviour to those students who are interested to learn...new things from teacher, they will feel I am weak.

It was interesting to hear you identify the importance of how teachers see themselves and operate within the classroom and it reminded me of Gert Biesta's (an educational philosopher) theorizing of teacher identity. Specifically, he talks about **how a teacher identity is not something that a teacher can claim, simply because they have 'teacher' as their job title or because they work in the teaching profession, but rather that teacher identity has to be understood as a "sporadic identity" (Biesta, 2013, p. 457). What he means by this is that students identify someone as a teacher when they feel that a person has taught or revealed something to them. In these moments, students receive the "gift of teaching" (Biesta, 2013, p. 457).** What are your thoughts about the idea of a teacher being someone who students identify as a teacher based on their contributions to student learning, as opposed to someone who is a teacher simply based on their job title? How might the idea of learning from someone as opposed to being taught by someone (Biesta, 2013) change how Nepali teachers operate in the classroom? What might this mean for how teachers are trained and educated?

During our conversation, your comment about students wanting a relationship with their teacher(s) really struck me in a profound way. I found myself saddened for both students and teachers as perhaps there are many students who don't feel they have a relationship with their teachers. Similarly, perhaps there are many teachers who don't feel they have a relationship with their

students. What a loss for both students and teachers. You connected the lack of relationships with teachers to a lack of a student-centred approach:

Some teachers are not habituated face to face contact with students and they never ask students questions. They never used to ask to students. That is not good. As a student, I want to interact more and more with the teacher but some teachers never listen to the students' answer and never react to the students' answer. I think student-centred means more chances are providing to the students than teacher-centred. Students also want that kinds of chance sometimes. That create our confidence and so I think student-centred method is good for us.

As someone who values and implements a student-centred approach to teaching, I understand the connection between teacher-student relationships and implementing a student-centred approach. **Perhaps, in a student-centred environment, teachers create space for students to share their voices and to be seen. Biesta's work follows a similar line reasoning where the desire to see learning not as an act of comprehension or understanding (as it relates to knowledge) but rather as a process of reception, which leads to being in the world and being addressed by the other (i.e. someone other than oneself) is important. In this view of learning, we have to think about what it means to "exist" as a learner.** If we connect the concept of existence with your desire for students to have relationships with their teacher(s), what do you think it might take for students to be seen by their teachers? How might being seen change what happens in the classroom? I also found myself wondering if your teachers know about the desire that you and other students have, to develop relationships with them? If they don't know, what might they say if you were to share this desire with them?

Krishna, I want to thank you for sharing your personal story of schooling with me. You mentioned that during your childhood, you attended a government school in your home community (in a remote part of

Nepal) and that as a result of attending a government school, you are committed to supporting other students who attend government school. As you told me your story, I could hear your passion for learning and I could feel your commitment to providing the very best that you can, to your future students.

I want to make students because I am from government school. In Nepal, English is very poor in government sector. Private sector creates different kinds of methodology for creating...universal language but government sector is very poor. They never try to make English environment. I want to make those students who are in government school and those students who are weak in English language than private schools children; I want to make them as me – how much I gained from the study in English Education subject.

While I wasn't surprised to hear your commitment to English, given that you are completing a BEd with a focus on English teaching, I was surprised by our conversation about the **importance of English for employability in Nepal. Specifically, you mentioned that English is a “universal language” and you went on to say that as a teacher, your message to students will be “you will get good opportunities in job; your future will be very good; you will be independent person.”** Your comments echoed what I heard during many of my conversations with the other pre-service teachers in your class – that English is essential for securing good employment.

My goal is that the act of being a teacher, I will make my all students very active, very creative in English Language. I force them positively to learn English language and I...make familiar the advantage and the necessary of English language in this...present content, modern context – what is the importance of English. So you need to learn English more than our native language because our native language is our language we know already. That why we need to focus in second language because it's a universal language. If you know about this language you will get good opportunities in job also in the future. Your future will be very good, you will be independent person. You don't need to depend on other person.

After spending much time reading and thinking deeply about your comments, I was reminded of the role that **globalization and capitalism have in shaping formal education systems (including teacher education and schools)**. Although my PhD research is an attempt to push back against pervasive efforts to see formal schooling be a place where neo-liberal ideas about learning and how to be in the world are perpetuated, **I can't ignore the impact that globalization and capitalism have had on schooling both in Canada and Nepal, and perhaps even more so in Nepal, given its status as a developing country.** In alignment with my thinking, Gert Biesta emphasizes the impact of globalization and capitalism on schooling through his theorizing of the relationship between the “knowledge society” and what he sees as the resulting purpose of education – to serve only as a function of society (2014b, p. 14). He says that the outcome is the “production of flexible lifelong learners who are able to adjust and adapt to the ever-changing conditions of global capitalism” (Biesta, 2014b, p. 14). So, if we don't push back against globalization and capitalism, we will continue to have an educational system that prioritizes “a particular educational ‘agenda’ and that calls for the cultivation of certain qualities that make individuals ‘fit’ for participation in the knowledge society.” What are your thoughts about this?

While I don't want the tone of this letter to predominantly be one of negativity, I do want to talk about one more thing that you mentioned during our conversation and that brought about some sadness in me. You may remember us talking at length about why you want to be a teacher. During that part of our conversation, you spoke about how in Nepal, people who take up the profession of teaching are seen as less talented than people who take up other professions such as nursing, medicine, flying, management, etc.

After I completed plus two level, everyone used to say, teaching is not good subject, this is very old subject. Those person who are talented, they used to join...to learn in nurse, doctor, pilot, manager. Teaching is not good; not talented student are being in educational campus. Almost all people used to say and I used to think maybe we have also no talent; we are also very low levels of student. We can do nothing in the future. I used to think but I...share my problem with my one teacher and he used to say, 'that is the people's thought, not yours and you try and you will be the teacher in the future. If we try, we can get everything, whatever we want.'

I'm curious to know what your thoughts are on the reasons why the teaching profession is viewed poorly in Nepal? Might it have to do with the fact that in many Nepalese government schools, teachers may not have formal education, training, or a license? We talked about this reality when you mentioned that getting a government teaching license is very difficult given the political rules and the importance of 'knowing someone' in a government job in Nepal.

Canada is very different country. There are many chances to get a job, a very good job. But in the context of Nepal, very difficult. We can get job...many small jobs; not according to your level. Getting according to our level is very better for us. To get government license in teaching also is very difficult. Providing different paths, like temporary, permanent, and many more students are here. Most of all rules are political in Nepal. The political rules...make it almost try not to get a chance and we who are not able to do in this sector. Those who don't have that kinds of capacity to work in education, to be a teacher, that person can get easily if they have a great person in their post. That's the problem of our country. That's why all educational students used to join in primary school for teaching and less salary. That's the problem.

As you know, my husband is a Shah from Nepal and interestingly, there are many female teachers in my husband's family. Teaching is viewed as a respectable and acceptable role for females, partly because it doesn't come with long hours or strenuous work. In Canada, teaching is seen as a professional role and one that is typically taken up by folks who come from the middle class. It also requires a license. Although I

am saddened to know that structural and systemic inequities are limiting the possibilities for trained Nepalese educators to take up teaching positions in Nepal, I acknowledge that caste (or background, as you say) also plays a role in the opportunities available. The differences between how the role of the teacher is viewed in Canada and Nepal also highlights the socio-politico-cultural differences between Nepal and Canada.

In this letter, I also want to share some of the highlights from our second conversation, where we explored your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, the meaning behind your arpillera, and what you learned from this project (including any shifts in your thinking) about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. Perhaps, you remember this conversation, but in case you don't, I want to share an image of your arpillera and the description of it that you wrote, as a way of returning to our conversation.



Figure 8: Image of Krishna's Arpillera

This is the relation of teacher and the student. We know what kinds of people need to be in class as a teacher, that situation. I imagine teacher and students relation within the period of teaching and learning activities. I fit in my feelings in this picture, teacher as a guider and then, controller, and like a friend, in this way.

Teacher cannot be teacher only in the classroom. Teacher can be a teacher outside the classroom also. This is not in classroom, this picture. Student and teacher getting together out of the class and they discuss about the course work. Whatever the student didn't understand before in class, the student shares with the teacher by meeting outside and then teacher guiding the student. They are having tea to share the problem. They want to meet outside. That's why they meet in a particular place in the name of having tea. It can be in classroom also, but I'm saying that teacher can not only be teacher in classroom, a teacher can help student out of the class also.

During our conversation about your arpillera, I remember being struck by the emphasis you placed on the setting (outside; having tea) for showing the importance of the relationship between teacher and student.

This was interesting to me because the concept of the teacher having a role outside of the classroom didn't come up in our first conversation. I'm curious to know if you have ever had an opportunity to meet your teacher for tea, outside of the classroom? What might it be like to have this kind of relationship with your teacher?

During our conversation, you shared with me that the arpillera-making was the first time you had ever made art or engaged in 'practical learning' in your entire schooling experience. I will admit that when you shared this with me, in some ways, I was surprised, while in other ways, I wasn't. Although I understand that institutional resources are not available to support practical or arts-based learning in the public education system in Nepal, perhaps, I was optimistic that somehow, you (and the majority of the other students)

would have had an opportunity to learn about this form of learning in your teacher training program.

Needless to say, I enjoyed hearing that you felt happy during the process and that you had an opportunity to use your imagination to express your ideas about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, through your arpillera. The pedagogical value of art-making is multi-faceted but at its most basic level, it allows for self-expression – something that we both know is limited in the current Nepali public schooling system.

During our conversation, we had an opportunity to discuss the similarities and differences between the arpilleras produced by you and the other Nepalese pre-service teachers and the Canadian pre-service teachers. Specifically, you said that **viewing the arpilleras helped you realize that teaching and learning is different in the two countries, and that this is partly due to financial, structural, and geographic constraints placed on Nepalese students.**

By seeing these pictures, I realize that teaching and learning activities is vast difference between Nepal and Canada because Canada is more developed than Nepal. In Nepal, all students never focused only in teaching and learning activities. They give time in house work and in outside work, like a job. Only they give time in classroom and after classroom, they give time in other works but in Canada, I think students only focus on being students. In our nation, they need to be aparted from their family. They need to leave own house and need to go far from house to get education.

This led to a conversation about student-centred teaching and learning in Nepal and Canada, and the role of the teacher in this model. During our conversation, I sensed that you (and many of the Nepalese pre-service teachers) understand the value of student-centred teaching for supporting learners and that you share a common desire to embrace student-centred approaches; however, the current institutional reality of schooling in Nepal and the economic imperative of finding employment and earning money, limits your

ability to experience (as a pre-service teacher) and implement (as a classroom teacher) a student-centred approach. Am I correct? I would be curious to hear your thoughts on this.

I present only the relation of teachers to students and I present the teaching is possible only when the teachers and students present together and possible only by using the course book. Canadian students, they learn by nature, themselves, independently. They didn't present here a most necessary of teachers. They learn, they teach themselves independently. They learn by using materials and by nature, natural things. I present here if we need to learn something, we need teacher and because until now almost all teaching and learning activities is not student centered. In our Nepal context, students focus education only to pass the examination. In Canada, I think they want to make their education long lasting. But in our country, almost all students focus only in exam and to pass the exam and to get a certification and get job.

The latter part of our conversation was focused on your (and others') experiences using an arts-based pedagogical approach to explore your ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. You shared that this was a new experience for you and for the majority of the pre-service teachers, and although you found the experiential learning to be meaningful, some of the learners found it challenging.

This is practical way method and this is long lasting for me and I never forget about this experience and what is teacher. If someone questions me after some days, I can give this answer without hesitation, without any confusion. They plan to make all things well. They imagine that they can't present in the materials and that's maybe the problem of inhabituate. We never habit to present in this way. They are happy also in this day – the interesting plans.

As I write this letter, an important element that comes to the fore is the ethical implications of introducing this approach in your classroom. Specifically, I wonder if the art-based approach made anyone feel uncomfortable, in a way that limited their abilities to share their ideas about what it means to be a teacher

and to teach? Given my social location and my positionality as a foreigner, researcher, and outsider, I wonder if anyone felt silenced and unable to express their discomfort? While I don't expect you to answer these questions, I wanted to share them with you, as a way of responding to what you shared with me about the challenges that other learners experienced with the arpillera-making activity.

The final part of our conversation focused on your learning from this project, in relation to what it means to be a teacher and to teach – big areas which we could have probably spent many conversations discussing.

You shared that this project helped you learn about the similarities and differences between teaching in Canada and Nepal, and that it gave you insight about the value of arts-based approaches for supporting self-expression.

*"I learned Nepalese teaching method and Canadian teaching method both. I already knew about the Nepalese teaching method but I learned about Canadian learning style – their method and today I've become clear by looking these pictures about the Canadian learning style and their method. They spend total time in teaching and learning activities while they are student. To engage in this way is too difficult. It takes too much time to learn – can feel by looking these pictures also. So that's the differences of two countries learning style and Canadian learning system is more advanced. **Before, I used to learn only by written or reading and after engaging to make these pictures I get new thing that sometimes we need to give time to the students to make these kinds of art within the classroom and that may include them to make different kinds of art and present their feelings, their imagination in the paper, in the art. It makes it interest them. It creates the students thinking in different ways because we only say them 'make this art' process and they need to imagine themselves and present in paper and the art, their imagination. It makes them creative as well as logical. They need to think logically, creatively, and it makes them more intelligence.**"*

As you continue to learn and grow as a teacher, I want to encourage you to give time to your students to express their feelings and their imagination, as a way of creating space for students to embrace possibility.

Thank you for the gifts that you shared with me.

Yours in teaching,

Roselynn

*P.S. In case it is helpful, the themes that I heard in our conversations and that I tried to draw your attention to in the preceding letter included two of Biesta's conceptualizations of teaching (i.e. teaching as qualification, teaching as subjectification); preparation for the knowledge society (which is part of teaching as qualification); gift giving and teacher-centred and student-centred approaches (which are both part of teaching as subjectification); your experience exploring existential questions through art creation and exchange including relationality between self, others, and the world; and bringing newness into the world.

6.8 Letter to Madhu (Nepalese, Male)

Dear Madhu,

Namaste. I hope this letter finds you well and nearing completion of your Bachelor of Education studies.

Although it has been quite some time since we last saw each other in Kathmandu, Nepal, I have spent a fair amount of time re-living our conversation about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. In this letter, I want to share the 'gifts' that you offered to me during our conversation. I also have some questions for you and would love to hear your thoughts and insights.

Let me begin by sharing what I remember about our first conversation, which occurred at your campus of Tribhuvan University. I remember us having a hard time finding a quiet place to sit and chat, and that after quite some time walking around trying to open doors of various locked classrooms, that we ended up sitting on a concrete ledge at the side of a field where many students were playing sports. It was noisy and I felt slightly distracted by the sports activities that were occurring right in front of us. You seemed genuinely excited to chat and unbothered by the various distractions, which I think helped keep me calm – thank you for that.

We started our conversation with you sharing your ideas about what a teacher is and I remember being struck by how you connected the importance of students' learning the subject matter with helping to "make their future," which you connected to preparing students to learn English. You also identified English as an international language and something that is necessary for Nepalis in order to achieve.

I would like to be a teacher because teacher's role is very important. Teachers have to make the future. Without teacher, [children] cannot learn from subject matter as well. I'll advise them you should learn the English language, we cannot achieve our goal without English language. We can stream the globalization the world. We can express our thought and feelings in the international language. Nowadays, everything's recording, written as well in English medium - like this mobile telephone. It is written in English. If we cannot learn English language, we cannot understand; we cannot express our thought and feelings to all others or everywhere. That's why I think it is very important for us.

During our conversation, Gert Biesta's (an educational philosopher) ideas about what it means to be or to exist as a learner had particular relevance. Biesta (whose ideas I find particularly useful for thinking about the possibilities for education) doesn't want to see learning as an act of comprehension, where the goal is to understand and gain knowledge about the natural or social world. The reason he doesn't support

learning as comprehension is because this puts individuals (i.e. students) at the centre of the world where they focus on comprehending or understanding something, for their purposes. In this way, understanding is based on a desire or request that an individual student has. This student then collects information to fulfill their desire or request. **According to Biesta, this information seeking request “makes the world into an object of the self’s comprehension” and places the self at the centre of the world (Biesta, 2014, p. 237).** I’m curious to know if you see a relationship between the purpose of education in Nepal (i.e. to prepare students to gain knowledge which they can use to gain employment) and Biesta’s resistance to viewing learning as an act of comprehension? While the notion of learning as comprehension may not seem particularly troubling, particularly in the context of Nepal, where securing good employment can be critical for ensuring a family’s success, Biesta wants schooling to be a place where existential possibilities for students and for the world are embraced. I’m curious to know whether you think that education should be about helping students to understand their being in and with the world? What might that look like in your context?

During our conversation, we talked about the role of the teacher. **You mentioned that you view the teacher as a facilitator and as someone who is responsible for assisting students to express themselves and to demonstrate their learning. You also mentioned that the teacher is responsible for creating an environment where students feel comfortable to engage in self-expression. During our conversation, Biesta’s words seemed especially relevant:**

“So just to say that children should learn or that teachers should facilitate learning, or that we all should be lifelong learners, actually says very little – if it says anything at all. Unlike the language of learning, a language of education always needs to pay attention to questions of content, purpose, and relationships” (Biesta, 2014, p. 234).

In this quote, Biesta is trying to draw our attention (as educators) to thinking thoughtfully and intentionally about why education exists. What are we really trying to *do* through education? Is it enough to say that we are helping students to learn? What is the purpose of learning? What are students learning for? For themselves? For others? For the world? What kinds of relationships are we hoping students develop? Biesta feels strongly that the language of learning is not sufficient to talk about education because learning in and of itself refers to empty processes (i.e. processes that are void of content and purpose). Instead, he wants to see education ask questions about content (knowledge, skills, dispositions), purpose (what it is that we seek to achieve through teaching), and relationships (between self and others). I'm curious to know what you see as the purpose(s) of education? Biesta believes that what distinguishes education from many other human practices is the fact that it doesn't work in relation to only one purpose, but actually functions in relation to a number of 'domains of purpose.' For me, the primary purpose of education is to help children come into the world. For Biesta, "education is always about the transmission and acquisition of some content (knowledge, skills, dispositions), but always also 'connects' students to particular traditions and ways of doing and being, and has an impact on their formation as a person" (Biesta, 2014, p. 235).

During our conversation, we also spent time talking about the **importance of relationships and rapport-building in education. While we were talking, I was struck by how you used the word 'love' to convey the importance of relationships between teachers and students.**

We should love them. Teachers should love them. Without loving, we cannot give the good education across the students. Sometimes, these students are asking, can you, you should not love me? If we are loving to our students and they are cooperate us as well, and they can learn more.

I'm curious to know more about your understanding of love, particularly whether the teacher, the student, or both the teacher and the student are the ones who decide whether love exists in their relationship with each other. For example, does a student decide if they are loved by the teacher? Does the teacher decide whether they love a student? Or do both the teacher and student have to feel that love exists in the relationship? How does a person know if love exists? From my perspective, and building on Biesta's ideas about the role of the teacher, love is something that students must "give authority" to or find meaningful as a 'subjective truth.' It is not something that can be learned through reading a book or by listening to the teacher talk. It is not an objective truth. As such, teachers can never really know whether or not students feel loved in the process or experience of being taught. Biesta articulates this by saying: "Teachers can never fully control the 'impact' of their activities on their students. The experience of 'being taught' is about those situations in which something enters our being from the outside, as something that is fundamentally beyond the control of the learner. To be taught, to be open to receiving the gift of teaching – thus means being able to give such interruptions a place in one's understanding and one's being (2013, p. 459)." What are your thoughts about Biesta's ideas?

During our second conversation, which occurred after the arpillera-making, we spent time talking about your experience with the art-making project. I remember us starting our conversation by talking about why you didn't produce an arpillera. You shared that your physical disability prevented you from making an arpillera. At the time, I remember feeling uncomfortable because when I planned the arpillera-making project, I hadn't thought about the possibility that you or the other Nepalese pre-service teachers might be unable or uninterested in participating. Perhaps, this is because I have experienced the benefits of arts-based approaches both personally and pedagogically. Needless to say, I sensed that you were okay with

not having produced an arpillera. In fact, our conversation focused on the excitement and learning that you experienced during the arpillera-making. Here is an excerpt of what you shared with me, in response to the question, what was your experience making art?:

So excited. You can get everything, from practice. You can get by art and craft also. There is a knowledge – how we can express our thought and feelings. By this pictures we can express the teaching experiences. By art and craft we cannot express our thought by speaking. It is fix oneself and we can understand by pictures and materials.

During our conversation, we also chatted about your observations of your classmates' experiences producing arpilleras and your experience viewing their completed arpilleras.

The students are expressing - some students are different ideas. They have different ideas on each other and some friends are expressing their thoughts about teaching teachers – what kinds of ways of teaching we can adopting they are expressing by this pictures.” I cannot think they can have their own ideas about teaching field but yesterday I got this knowledge. They have also the knowledge of the teaching experience. One student told me teacher is the light of future. They can motivate the students to learn the topic and subject matter.

We also spent time talking about what you learned from viewing the arpilleras produced by the Canadian pre-service teachers and what you learned about an arts-based approach.

In your country, the students are advanced. They are expressing the students and their feelings. Students are expressing their knowledge by art- you can see here actually in pictures. The [images represent] difference of their own view and the teaching and learning activities. They are learning day by day by the help of the teachers. The teacher is a facilitator towards the students. Arts-based approach is very useful teaching method for the students. We can give the knowledge of subject matter by doing art and craft. I learned there is a vast difference between Canadian and Nepalese

students. They have own ideas in teaching too. Some are similar. I learned about subject matter, how we can teach to the students. We can use this type of method. It will be successful in teaching and learning activities. Teachers should have knowledge of this type of project. They can express subject matter their own way and the students can understand properly and can achieve their goal as well.

As you continue to learn and grow as a teacher, I want to encourage you to explore the possibilities that teaching affords for teachers and learners - whether it be through art and craft or through sharing of ideas.

Thank you for the gifts that you shared with me.

Yours in teaching,
Roselynn

*P.S. In case it is helpful, the themes that I heard in our conversations and that I tried to draw your attention to in the preceding letter included two of Biesta's conceptualizations of teaching (i.e. teaching as qualification, teaching as subjectification); facilitative teaching and preparation for the knowledge society (which are both part of teaching as qualification); relationships with self, others, and the world (which is part of teaching as subjectification); your experience exploring existential questions through art creation and exchange including enhanced awareness of what it means to be teacher and to teach.

6.9 Summary of the Letters

The preceding five letters included several themes and sub-themes that are summarized in Table 1 (see below). In alignment with the three research questions that framed and guided my study, five themes and eight sub-themes were woven into one or more of the preceding letters. The first three themes (i.e. Teaching as Qualification, Teaching as Socialization, and Teaching as

Subjectification) align with my first research question (i.e. What are pre-service teachers' understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach?). The fourth theme (i.e. Exploring Existential Questions through Art Creation and Exchange) aligns with my second research question (i.e. How are explorations of existential questions facilitated by an arts-based approach and an art exchange?). The fifth theme (i.e. Existential Possibilities for Teacher Education) aligns with my third research question (i.e. What possibilities might existentialism offer to pre-service teachers and teacher education programs?).

Some themes include sub-themes. The sub-themes represent nuances of the associated theme. For example, the first theme (i.e. Teaching as Qualification) includes two sub-themes (i.e. Facilitative teaching; Preparation for Knowledge Society). A description of each theme and sub-theme is included in the table, to assist readers in conceptualizing each theme and sub-theme. Lastly, the table denotes the themes and sub-themes that were included in each letter.

Table 1: Themes & Sub-Themes

Themes & Sub-Themes	Descriptions of Themes & Sub-Themes	Themes & Sub-Themes Evident in the Following Letters & Transcripts
1 Teaching as Qualification	Using Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as qualification, this theme includes ideas about teaching as qualifying learners and providing learners with the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions.	Carley, Shelley, Krishna, Madhu, <i>Sumita, Manisha, Tripti, Laura, Peter</i>
1(a) Facilitative Teaching	This sub-theme highlights teaching as a facilitative activity where teachers self-identify as facilitators of learning and engage in activities and practices in alignment with facilitating learning.	Carley, Shelley, Madhu, <i>Sumita, Peter, Laura,</i>

1(b) Preparation for Knowledge Society	This sub-theme highlights the importance of preparing learners to contribute to the knowledge society and to be lifelong learners. This includes the role of globalization and capitalism in shaping formal education systems.	Shelley, Krishna, Madhu, <i>Manisha, Tripti</i>
2 Teaching as Socialization	Using Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as socialization, this theme includes ideas about teaching as the ways learners become part of and engage with society's traditions.	Carley, Shelley, <i>Sumita</i>
3 Teaching as Subjectification	Using Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as subjectification, this theme includes ideas about teaching as supporting learners to have the freedom to become their own individuals and exist as subjects of their own lives.	Carley, Shelley, James, Krishna, Madhu, <i>Tripti, Laura, Peter</i>
3(a) Gift Giving	This sub-theme highlights teaching as an existential activity wherein teachers have the potential to important gifts, which can lead to interruptions in learners' self-understandings. This includes the concept of transcendence which is how newness is brought into the world.	Carley, Shelley, Krishna, <i>Tripti</i>
3(b) Teacher Centred and Student Centred- Approaches	This sub-theme highlights teaching as an existential activity that involves both teachers and learners and includes pre-service teachers' conceptualizations of teacher-centred approaches and student-centred approaches.	Carley, Krishna, <i>Laura, Tripti</i>
3(c) Relationships with Self, Others, and the World	This sub-theme highlights teaching as an existential activity that involves relationships with self, others, and the world.	Shelley, James, Madhu, <i>Peter</i>
4 Exploring Existential Questions through Art Creation and Exchange	This theme includes ideas about how explorations of existential questions about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, were facilitated by arpillera (art) making and art exchange.	Carley, Shelley, James, Krishna, Madhu, <i>Sumita, Tripti, Manisha, Laura, Peter</i>

4(a) Relationality between self, others, and the world	This sub-theme highlights arpillera (art) making and art exchange as providing opportunities for exploration of relationality between the self, others, and the world. This includes awareness of similarities and differences.	Carley, James, Krishna, <i>Manisha</i>
4(b) Enhanced awareness of what it means to be teacher and to teach	This sub-theme highlights arpillera (art) making and art exchange as providing opportunities for enhanced awareness of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. This includes the process of hearing about ideas from others.	Carley, Shelley, Madhu, <i>Laura, Tripti, Peter</i>
4(c) Bringing newness into the world	This sub-theme highlights the existential potential of arpillera (art) making and art exchange for bringing newness into the world.	James, Krishna, <i>Sumita</i>
5 Existential Possibilities for Teacher Education	This theme includes ideas about the possibilities that existentialism might offer to pre-service teacher and to teacher education programs. This includes embracing creativity and the role of certification.	James

6.10 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the four-stage approach that I used to analyze my study data. I also discussed my rationale for undertaking letter writing as both an analytical tool and representational form and I described the steps that I undertook to write the letters to the pre-service teacher participants. This chapter included five letters which contain key themes from my analysis, and a summary chart describing each theme and sub-theme.

Chapter 7: Possibility

“For Arendt, the potential that humans have by virtue of being born allows humans to have faith and hope for the world because new possibilities for action occur with each new birth (Arendt, 1958, as cited in Hayden, 2014, p. 32).”

7.1 Overview

In this concluding chapter, I discuss the themes which emerged from the analysis and share what I believe to be important outcomes. I use the concept of becoming to discuss ‘recommendations’ or what might be possible for children and for the world; for teacher education; and for the self (i.e. individuals) if teacher education embraces an existential perspective. I also present additional existential questions about teaching that can be explored (i.e. further research).

7.2 Introduction

When I set out to undertake this study, my thinking was shaped by three big questions including:

- 1) What are pre-service teachers’ understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach?
- 2) How are explorations of existential questions facilitated by an arts-based approach and an art exchange?
- 3) What possibilities might existentialism offer to pre-service teachers and teacher education programs?

These questions served as my guide as I navigated my way through the messiness of field research.

When I stand back and think about these questions, the first thing that I want to emphasize is the importance of context. It goes without saying that Canada and Nepal (countries located in the Global North and Global South) are very different, as are the realities of teaching and teacher

education, which means that my reflections and insights need to be considered in relation to context. One size does not fit all as it relates to teaching, and context plays a significant role in understanding the outcomes of this study for the way we think about teaching and learning locally, nationally, or internationally.

7.3 Pre-Service Teachers' Understandings of What it Means to be a Teacher and to Teach

As I reflect on the first big question that shaped my study (i.e. what are pre-service teachers' understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach), I'm struck by some of the similarities and nuanced differences that emerged through both the phenomenological interviews and arpillera-making with the pre-service teachers in Canada and Nepal.

The pre-service teachers that I worked with in Canada and Nepal both had individual understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach and these understandings were shaped by their personal experiences with schooling as well as their social location. In Nepal, an additional factor that shaped the pre-services teachers' understandings was their articulation of society's view and social positioning of teachers during our interactions. This was not something that was raised by the pre-service teachers in Canada, although undoubtedly they had perspectives that informed their views. This may have been because the role of a teacher is generally respected and understood in Canada and does not require additional articulation to underscore this role.

The pre-service teachers' understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach generally aligned with Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as involving three domains (i.e. qualification, socialization, and subjectification). Specifically, the pre-service teachers individually spoke about and/or artistically represented beliefs, intentions, and actions that aligned with one or more of Biesta's three domains. Examples are presented in the letters included in Chapter Six.

Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as subjectification which includes supporting learners to have the freedom to become their own individuals and to exist as subjects of their own lives, was present in the majority of the pre-service teachers' interviews and/or artwork. An aspect of teaching as subjectification that several pre-service teachers spoke about included gift-giving wherein teachers have the potential to impart gifts, which can lead to interruptions in learners' self-understandings. This is connected to the notion of transcendence, which is how newness is brought into the world. Although they didn't use the language of 'gifts' to discuss their ideas about what it means to be a teacher and to teach, some of the ideas they spoke about included curiosity, wonder (in the context of 'things about the world'), and teacher identity (as defined by students rather than teachers). The pre-service teachers also spoke about and/or visually represented relationships with the self, others, and the world. Some of these ideas included: love, care, to be 'woke,' and exploring the world. For Biesta, relationality and the interconnection between self, other, and the world is central to being in the world and to supporting learners to exist outside of the existing order (i.e. the actions of others, existing social/cultural practices) through their own initiative and responsibility.

In Canada, the pre-service teachers were strongly committed to the concept of student or learner-centred teaching and were able to explain and/or represent what student-centred teaching looks like in practice. In Nepal, the pre-service teachers generally aspired to be student-centred, but they felt their ability to implement this was constrained by both Nepal's socio-cultural-political context and institutional constraints.

Exposure to learner-centred teaching was different for these two research locations. The Canadian pre-service teachers spoke about being socialized through their own K-12 schooling experiences and through their teacher training, to believe that learner-centred teaching is the most appropriate way to teach. They were also able to articulate what a learner-centred classroom environment looks like, sounds like, and feels like. The Nepalese pre-service teachers spoke about having never experienced a learner or student-centred environment, but mentioned that they had read or heard about it through books and educators in their teacher education program. Similar to the Canadian pre-service teachers, they can articulate what a learner-centred environment looks like, sounds like, and feels like. The concept of teacher-centred and student-centred approaches to teaching and the involvement of both teachers and learners in teaching is an aspect of teaching for subjectification and is highlighted in the letters to the pre-service teachers.

Several of the pre-service teachers discussed and visually represented Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as qualification, which views teaching as qualifying learners and providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Sub-themes within this included facilitative teaching (where teachers self-identify as facilitators of learning and engage learners in activities

and practices in alignment with facilitation of learning) and preparation for the knowledge society where teachers prepare learners to be contributors and lifelong learners. Examples of some of the ideas shared that aligned with facilitative teaching include: the teacher selecting content to support student inquiries; the teacher facilitating learning; and the teacher as someone who is responsible for assisting students to demonstrate their learning. Examples of some of the ideas shared that aligned with preparing learners for the knowledge society included: students' learning the subject matter; "make their future," (i.e. gain employment), and the importance of English for securing employment. Ideas shared by the pre-service teachers in Nepal particularly aligned with this theme and sub-themes, which is not surprising given the socio-politico-cultural context of Nepal.

Biesta's conceptualization of teaching as socialization, which includes the ways learners become part of and engage with society's traditions and existing social, cultural, and political practices, was present in several interviews and included the following: knowledge as 'socialization' and 'educational studies,' and teaching as a process. Nuanced aspects (i.e. sub-themes) of this theme did not emerge. This may be because socializing learners is something that occurs through the very process of attending an educational institution or participating in schooling. As such, it may not be at the forefront of pre-service teachers' conceptualizations of what it means to be a teacher and to teach.

7.4 Facilitation of Existential Questions: The Role of an Arts-Based Approach & Exchange

My reflections on the second big question that framed my study (i.e. How are explorations of existential questions facilitated by an arts-based approach and an art exchange?) highlight the importance of context. Although the pre-service teachers in both contexts were presented with the same opportunities (i.e. to participate in phenomenological interviews, to create arpilleras, and to participate in an art exchange), the ways in which they conceptualized and engaged in arpillera-making were vastly different. In Canada, the arpillera-making provided an opportunity for the pre-service teachers to engage in reflection and to explore embodied understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. This was different from the numerous written opportunities that the pre-service teachers mentioned they have access to through their teacher education program to reflect on their ideas, thoughts, and experiences related to teaching.

In Nepal, the arpillera-making was the first opportunity that many, if not all, of the pre-service teachers had ever had to formally explore their beliefs about teaching and to engage in an arts-based approach. This was something that I had not anticipated. In hindsight, in preparation for my field work in Nepal and in consideration of contextual considerations, I could have discussed my art-making intentions and gathered feedback from the TU Nepalese educators on the most contextually appropriate way to approach art-making. Perhaps, this would have led to a more familiar experience for the Nepalese pre-service teachers. While the concept of arpilleras had meaning for the UBC pre-service teachers, given their prior knowledge of arts-based methods, the Nepalese pre-service teachers did not initially fully grasp the concept given that arts-based methods were new to them. In alignment with the difference between equality (providing the

same resources to everyone) and equity (providing the resources that people need), an equity-based approach would have provided the Nepalese pre-service teachers with different resources to explore their beliefs about teaching and to engage in an arts-based approach.

An arts-based approach provided an opportunity for the Canadian pre-service teachers to share personal stories and previous experiences with schooling. This extended the opportunity for sharing of their thoughts and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and the role of the teacher in addition to other discursive practices in teacher education. The Canadian pre-service teachers generally reacted positively to the opportunity to engage in art-making to explore their ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach and they had a variety of observations about the Nepalese pre-service teachers' arpilleras. Although the majority of the pre-service teachers were unfamiliar with Nepal and had not travelled to or been significantly exposed to the country through readings, coursework, etc. they were curious to learn more about schooling and teacher education in Nepal. In Nepal, the pre-service teachers generally reacted positively to the opportunity to engage in art-making to explore their ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach, but it was difficult to tell if this was because I was a foreigner/guest and was in an authoritative role as a guest teacher in the class. Although none of the pre-service teachers were familiar with Canada and had not travelled to or been exposed to the country through readings, coursework, etc. they were able to identify many of the Canadian pre-service teachers' ideas about teaching presented in their arpilleras.

Through interviews, several of the pre-service teachers from Canada and Nepal discussed the impact of creating an arpillera and/or participating in the art exchange. Specifically, some

participants highlighted how the experience led to an enhanced awareness of what it means to be a teacher and to teach; others highlighted relationality between self, others, and the world; and others mentioned bringing newness into the world. Examples of comments pertaining to an enhanced awareness of what it means to be a teacher and to teach included: gaining a “different perspective,” reflecting on one’s own practices by reflecting on others practices; and the value of art-making for self-expression. Examples of comments pertaining to relationality between self, others, and the world included: “it changed...some of my assumptions about what other places values in teaching;” “maybe in the global context...we should be considering global education more than just our own pocket of privilege;” and “by seeing these pictures, I realize that teaching and learning activities is vast difference between Nepal and Canada because Canada is more developed than Nepal.” Examples of comments focused on bringing newness into the world included: “other people might see our creation and see in it things that we ourselves don’t see as the author of our work;” and “they need to imagine themselves and present in paper and the art, their imagination.”

7.5 Existentialism: Possibilities for Pre-Service Teachers & Teacher Education Programs

My reflections on the third big question that shaped my study (i.e. what possibilities might existentialism offer to pre-service teachers and teacher education programs?), are exactly that – my reflections. They are tied to how I live in and experience the world and to my doctoral study. From my perspective, existentialism has a lot to offer pre-service teachers and teacher education programs.

An existential approach to teacher education requires the creation of space for pre-service teachers to reflect on and articulate their beliefs about a variety of aspects associated with being ‘a teacher’ including the act of teaching (what it is and isn’t), schooling, children, and how these aspects are connected to the larger world. Existentialism begs exploration of what it all means. In addition, the opportunity to engage in ongoing reflection may help ground pre-service teachers in a more wholistic understanding of teaching – one that moves beyond the notion of the teacher as facilitator, subject-matter expert, or classroom manager where subject-based knowledge and skills are things are merely things to be acquired for the role.

An existential approach to teacher education also brings with it the opportunity for pre-service teachers to explore the ‘ties that bind’ teachers, despite contextual, geographical, socio-cultural, linguistic, or other differences. Engaging in conversations about teaching and sharing ideas and beliefs about teaching is something that all pre-service teachers can do. Lastly and perhaps, most importantly, existentialism also brings the notion of possibility to teacher education, which I conceptualize as the possibility for teacher education to be different than what we currently know or understand it to be.

A comment from one of the Canadian pre-service teachers highlights his thoughts on why an existential approach to teacher education is needed:

For me, there was a clear move to being a formal teacher and that would mean being certified by the government or by the country so that you can actually go into a school and...be the traditional role of a teacher. [It] seems a little bit sad to me right now. This... abstract, beautiful thing of...teaching yourself and just exploring the world and

having curiosity and it seems like once it's packaged in a certain way, especially in this program, that it seems less beautiful unfortunately.

As I reflect on what an existential approach to teacher education might look like in practice, I am acutely aware that as an outsider to both the UBC Teacher Education Program and even more so to the Tribhuvan University teacher education program, it is challenging and perhaps even unethical, for me to articulate recommendations or suggestions for teacher education in a context where I don't live, work, or belong. That being said, some of the questions that I imagine administrators and educators considering in relation to an existential approach to teacher education include the following: What might it look like to create opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore existential questions about teaching? What might need to happen in society for this to be possible? Perhaps, inviting teacher education program applicants to articulate their beliefs about what it means to be a teacher and to teach prior to or as part of their admission to a program, might be useful. Although I don't have answers to these questions, I strongly believe that creating space for these kinds of questions to be taken up, is a starting point for moving towards an existential approach to teacher education.

7.6 On Doing Things Differently

When I stand back and reflect on my study (and the fieldwork in particular), there are several things that I can identify that I would have done differently. Although there is a plethora of literature on comparative studies and on conducting fieldwork in contexts within which does not belong, I offer these reflections as part of documenting my own learning and demonstrating my reflexivity as a researcher.

Firstly, given that I am not a native Nepali speaker and am not proficient in spoken Nepali, I made the decision to converse in English with the Nepalese pre-service teachers. I recognize that this is ethnocentric and that my decision required the Nepalese pre-service teachers to translate their thoughts from Nepali (i.e. their mother-tongue or second language) into English. This may have been challenging for some, if not all, of the Nepalese pre-service teachers and may have created a real or perceived barrier in conveying their ideas, thoughts, and experiences. In hindsight, it may have been a better choice to use a translator, to hopefully allow the pre-service teachers to freely express themselves and to increase the likelihood that there was shared understanding of key terminology that was used in our conversations.

Additionally, I would have liked to have spent more time familiarizing myself with the ‘inner-workings’ of TU, in order to develop a deeper understanding of teacher education at TU and more generally, in Nepal. Without lived experience within an organization such as a post-secondary institution, it can be challenging to understand the internal and external forces that shape the institution and the practices of those within the institution, including instructors and pre-service teachers. Although I had previously spent time working with UNESCO in Nepal and doing some teaching in a Nepalese post-secondary institution, my understanding of the specific context within which I conducted my research was limited to my observations, information that I received from those within the institution, readings, and anecdotal information. I have a similar sentiment towards my research at UBC; however, as a student, employee, and previous teaching assistant in the UBC Teacher Education program, I am much more aware of the organizational context within which I conducted my research in Canada. Another consideration was the limited amount of time that I was able to spend with the Nepalese pre-service teachers, due to my short

stay in Nepal and due to their busy class and work schedules. This made it challenging to fully immerse myself in their context and led to many unanswered questions about their teacher education program.

7.7 Possibilities for Future Research

Given my philosophical orientation as an existentialist, the question of ‘possibilities’ for future research is full of possibilities! When I think about the broad field of teacher education, I find myself curious to know more about what an existential approach might look like within a teacher education program? How might teacher inquiry, which is currently a significant component of the UBC Teacher Education program be used as an opening for exploring existentialism? In what ways, might an existential approach to teacher education alter schooling experiences for children in Nepal? How might this approach impact the larger socio-politico-cultural context in Nepal?

Within the context of reciprocity and knowledge mobilization, as I look ahead, I intend to engage with both the UBC Teacher Education Program and the Tribhuvan University Teacher Education Program to see how I might support both programs to engage with the findings from my research and the possibilities that existentialism offers for teacher education. Given my current role as a member of the UBC community, connecting with the UBC Teacher Education Program could happen through a variety of different ways including presentations to students in the required teacher inquiry courses; a presentation at the annual Faculty of Education Investigating our Practices Conference; and providing feedback on the upcoming review of the Teacher Education program. Although I am unsure of when my next trip to Nepal will be, I hope to provide a presentation to faculty and students involved in the Tribhuvan University Teacher Education

Program. There may also be the potential to offer additional training and/or workshops on using arts-based methods within teacher education, if this is of interest. If so, I would be keen to have Nepalese students and faculty integrate traditional Nepalese art forms into the workshop.

Finally, and not to be forgotten, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront the interconnectedness of the world. It has also led many individuals to reflect on and consider what is important in their lives, communities, and in the world. As an educator, the pandemic has led me to wonder how an existential approach to teaching might better prepare children, teachers, and the world for newness – a newness that is yet to come.

7.8 Contributions

This dissertation has served many purposes. Functionally, it has served as a training ground for me to hone my skills as an emergent researcher – to identify and explore questions of interest; to design and conduct fieldwork; to engage with and analyze data; to theorize; and to communicate. These are skills that I will continue to hone in my future work. This dissertation has also served as a space to relive my journey as a pre-service teacher and to give back (i.e. in the form of ideas shared in this dissertation) to a field (i.e. teacher education) that is ripe with possibilities.

By framing teaching as existential, my study has helped to present what might be possible for teacher education. Specifically, in using Biesta's conceptualization of teaching and teacher education as existential to theorize how pre-service teachers in Canada and Nepal understand what it means to be a teacher and to teach, I have highlighted possibilities for the children and the teachers of the world. The possibilities for pre-service teachers include the potential to

explore and uncover one's understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. The possibilities for teacher education include the potential to develop and revise curricula to interrupt the dominant craft skills notion of teacher education in order to create space for teacher education to be a place where progressive ideas about education can flourish. The possibilities for children include the potential to bring their newness into the world, as a result of learning in environments where their ability to bring this newness is welcomed, supported, and encouraged.

When I consider the possibilities above in relation to my own journey through pre-service teacher education, I am left with the following thought: If the teacher education program that I was enrolled in had conceptualized teaching as an existential activity, might I have still been teaching in a classroom today? Perhaps Miller (2013) was right when he said:

“One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things” (p. 25).

7.9 Summary

As the concluding chapter for my dissertation, I discussed the themes across the letters and shared what I noticed as being important, in relation to the three research questions that framed this study. I also presented some thoughts on what I would have done differently, included additional questions about teacher education that can be explored (i.e. further research), and shared some concluding thoughts.

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Appendices

Appendix A UBC Participant Consent Form

Study Title: *What Does it Mean to Teach? An Arts-based Exploration with Pre-service Teachers.*

Principal Investigator: Dr. Anthony Clarke, Professor
Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy
University of British Columbia

Co-Investigators: Dr. Shauna Butterwick, Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia

Roselynn Verwoord, MA
PhD Candidate, Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia

Research Purpose:

The purpose of the proposed study is to understand how an arts-based approach can facilitate exploration of existential questions about teaching, by providing opportunities for you (a pre-service teacher) to use arts-based approaches to make sense of your understandings about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. This research is part of Roselynn Verwoord's PhD in Educational Studies degree and will be included in her doctoral thesis (a public document available through cIRcle, UBC's institutional repository).

Research Procedure:

The co-investigator will make a presentation to all students enrolled in EDCP 301 Section 108, at the University of British Columbia, in order to provide an overview of the research study and to invite you to participate in the study. At this presentation, the co-investigator will answer questions as needed, and you will be presented with a contact letter to participate in the study, as well as a consent form. If you consent to participate in the study, you will be asked to return your signed consent form to the co-investigator by e-mail within a one-week period.

The co-investigator will select between 5 to 8 consenting participants aiming to have gender and cultural diversity. Students who are not selected for an interview will be informed that in order to limit the scope of the study, a small sample of students were selected, to represent the diversity of students in the corresponding class.

In this study, individual interviews, an arts-based project, and an art exchange will be employed to collect your understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. One interview will occur prior to the art-making project and one interview will occur after the culmination of the art-making project. During your first interview, you will be prompted to share your understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. During the art project (which is part of regular course activities) you will create a piece of visual art work representing your

understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. During the art exchange, **you will be invited to view images of art created by other pre-service teachers, who have consented to have their image shared.** During your second interview, you will be prompted to share your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, and then will be asked some specific questions about your experience.

If you consent to participate in the study and to have your interviews audio-recorded, you will be presented with a transcribed copy of your interviews and given the opportunity to make any revisions, additions, or corrections to your responses. If you consent to participate in the study but do not agree to have your interviews audio-recorded, you will be presented with the co-investigator's field notes from the interviews, in order to make any revisions, additions, or corrections to your stories or responses.

Following this, the co-investigator will analyze the revised interviews and data and identify emergent themes from your individual responses and from all participants' responses. The final results of the study will be made available to all participants and the UBC Teacher Education Office, in the form of a written thesis and various professional and academic articles. Your time commitment for the first interview should not exceed 60 minutes. Your time commitment to review the notes/transcription from your first individual interview is approximately 15 minutes. There is no time commitment for the art exchange. Your time commitment for the second interview should not exceed 45 minutes. Your time commitment to review the notes/transcription from your second individual interview is approximately 15 minutes.

Participation:

You will be given a one week period to decide whether you are interested in participating in any or all parts of this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.

Confidentiality:

Your responses in this study will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be deleted from the study, and a pseudonym (where applicable) will be used when reporting the findings. In accordance with UBC Policy #85, all data will be securely kept for five years after the date of publication. Paper files will be locked in a filing cabinet in the Principal Investigator's UBC office, and will be shredded after this time. Audio-tapes will be demagnetized and destroyed. All electronic files will be kept on a password protected computer and deleted after five years from the date of publication.

Contact:

If any aspect of the outlined study and procedure is unclear or if you have any questions or concerns, you are encouraged to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Anthony Clarke or either of the Co-investigators, Dr. Shauna Butterwick and Roselynn Verwoord.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in

the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent for Exchange of Visual Art Image:

In this study, an art exchange between EDCP 301 students and ED 315 students at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal, will be employed to share ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach.

I understand that my participation in this study (in full or in part) is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. I further understand that declining to participate or withdrawing from this study will in no way affect my position as a student at UBC.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this Consent Form for your own records and that you consent to sharing a digital image of your individual art work as described above.

Please circle whether or not you consent to having a digital image of your individual art work shared with ED 315 students at Tribhuvan University.

Digital image of my art work shared
one)

Digital image of my art work not shared (**circle**

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Consent for Interviews:

In this study, interviews will be employed to collect your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach. During your interviews, which will be conducted individually, you will be prompted to share your understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. You will also be asked some specific questions about your experience.

I understand that my participation in this study (in full or in part) is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. I further understand that declining to participate or withdrawing from this study will in no way affect my position as a student at UBC.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this Consent Form for your own records and that you consent to participate in the interviews as described above.

Please circle whether or not you give permission for your interviews to be audio-taped or not audio taped.

Interview #1: Audio-taped
one)

Not audio-taped

(please circle

Participant Signature

Date

Interview #2: Audio-taped
one)

Not audio-taped

(please circle

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Appendix B TU Participant Consent Form

Study Title: What Does it Mean to Teach? An Arts-based Exploration with Pre-service

Teachers.

Participant Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Dr. Anthony Clarke, Professor
Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy
University of British Columbia

Co-Investigators: Dr. Shauna Butterwick, Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia

Roselynn Verwoord, MA
PhD Candidate, Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia

Research Purpose:

The purpose of the proposed study is to understand how an arts-based approach can facilitate exploration of existential questions about teaching, by providing opportunities for you (a pre-service teacher) to use arts-based approaches to make sense of your understandings about what it means to be a teacher and to teach. This research is part of Roselynn Verwoord's PhD in Educational Studies degree and will be included in her doctoral thesis (a public document available through cIRcle, UBC's institutional repository).

Research Procedure:

The co-investigator will make a presentation to all students enrolled in ED 315, at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal, in order to provide an overview of the research study and to invite you to participate in the study. At this presentation, the co-investigator will answer questions as needed, and you will be presented with a contact letter to participate in the study, as well as a consent form. If you consent to participate in the study, you will be asked to return your signed consent form to the co-investigator by e-mail within a one-week period.

The co-investigator will select between 5 to 8 consenting participants aiming to have gender and cultural diversity. Students who are not selected for an interview will be informed that in order to limit the scope of the study, a small sample of students were selected, to represent the diversity of students in the corresponding class.

In this study, individual interviews, an arts-based project, and an art exchange will be employed to collect your understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. One interview will occur prior to the art-making project and one interview will occur after the culmination of the art-making project. During your first interview, you will be prompted to share your

understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. During the art project (which is part of regular course activities) you will create a piece of visual art work representing your understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. During the art exchange, **you will be invited to view images of art created by other pre-service teachers, who have consented to have their image shared.** During your second interview, you will be prompted to share your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, and then will be asked some specific questions about your experience.

If you consent to participate in the study and to have your interviews audio-recorded, you will be presented with a transcribed copy of your interviews and given the opportunity to make any revisions, additions, or corrections to your responses. If you consent to participate in the study but do not agree to have your interviews audio-recorded, you will be presented with the co-investigator's field notes from the interviews, in order to make any revisions, additions, or corrections to your stories or responses.

Following this, the co-investigator will analyze the revised interviews and data and identify emergent themes from your individual responses and from all participants' responses. The final results of the study will be made available to all participants and the TU Faculty of Education, in the form of a written thesis and various professional and academic articles. Your time commitment for the first interview should not exceed 60 minutes. Your time commitment to review the notes/transcription from your first individual interview is approximately 15 minutes. There is no time commitment for the art exchange. Your time commitment for the second interview should not exceed 45 minutes. Your time commitment to review the notes/transcription from your second individual interview is approximately 15 minutes.

Participation:

You will be given a one week period to decide whether you are interested in participating in any or all parts of this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.

Confidentiality:

Your responses in this study will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be deleted from the study, and a pseudonym (where applicable) will be used when reporting the findings. In accordance with the University of British Columbia policy, all data will be securely kept for a period of five years. Paper files will be locked in a filing cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office, and will be shredded after this time. Audio-tapes will be demagnetized and destroyed. All electronic files will be kept on a password protected computer and deleted after five years.

Contact:

If any aspect of the outlined study and procedure is unclear or if you have any questions or concerns, you are encouraged to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Anthony Clarke or either of the Co-investigators, Dr. Shauna Butterwick and Roselynn Verwoord.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics.

Consent for Exchange of Visual Art Image:

In this study, an art exchange between ED 315 students at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal and EDUC 452 students at the University of British Columbia will be employed to share ideas of what it means to be a teacher and to teach.

I understand that my participation in this study (in full or in part) is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. I further understand that declining to participate or withdrawing from this study will in no way affect my position as a student at TU.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this Consent Form for your own records and that you consent to sharing a digital image of your individual art work as described above.

Please circle whether or not you consent to having a digital image of your individual art work shared with EDUC 452 students at the University of British Columbia.

Digital image of my art work shared
one)

Digital image of my art work not shared (**circle**

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Consent for Interviews:

In this study, interviews will be employed to collect your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach. During your interviews, which will be conducted individually, you will be prompted to share your understandings of what it means to be a teacher and to teach. You will also be asked some specific questions about your experience.

I understand that my participation in this study (in full or in part) is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. I further understand that declining to participate or withdrawing from this study will in no way affect my position as a student at TU.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this Consent Form for your own records and that you consent to participate in the interviews as described above.

Please circle whether or not you give permission for your interviews to be audio-taped or not audio taped.

Interview #1: Audio-taped
one)

Not audio-taped

(please circle

Participant Signature

Date

Interview #2: Audio-taped
one)

Not audio-taped

(please circle

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Appendix C Pre-Art Project Participant Interview Questions

What is a teacher?

What does it mean to you, to be a teacher?

What interests you about being a teacher?

What does it mean to teach?

What does it mean to you, to teach?

Are your ideas about what it means to be a teacher and to teach new to you or have you thought about these ideas before? Please elaborate.

Is there anything else you would like to share with me that you haven't already had the opportunity to do so during this interview about what it means to be a teacher and to teach?

Do you have any questions for me?

*As the participant shares with the researcher their experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, the researcher, whenever necessary, will interject with open-ended questions intended to elicit and develop as much detail in relation to the participant's experience.

Appendix D Post Art-Project Participant Interview Questions

What was your experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach?

What can you share about the art that you created?

What are some of the interesting things that stand out for you from your art, in relation to what it means to be a teacher and to teach?

In what way are these ‘interesting’ for you?

What have you learned from this project about what it means to be a teacher and to teach?

After doing this project how do you think differently about what it means to be a teacher and to teach?

Are these ideas new to you or have you encountered these ideas before? Please elaborate.

Is there anything else you would like to share with me that you haven’t already had the opportunity to do so during this interview about what it means to be a teacher and to teach?

Do you have any questions for me?

*As the participant shares with the researcher their experience using an arts-based approach to explore what it means to be a teacher and to teach, the researcher, whenever necessary, will interject with open-ended questions intended to elicit and develop as much detail in relation to the participant’s experience.

Appendix E Art Project/Creation Lesson Plan (2 sessions)

Session 1: (2 hours)

1. Provide a short overview of arpilleras (patchwork pictures made using cloth scraps) and their historical significance. Discuss connections to Nepalese fabric art (15 mins).
2. Provide examples of arpilleras produced by children explain how to create an arpillera. (10 mins).
3. Explain prompts for creation of arpilleras: What does it mean to be a teacher and to teach? (5 mins.)
4. Pre-service teachers: In groups of six and seven, gather materials, threads, needles, etc. Discuss the prompt for creation of arpilleras; brainstorm ideas; begin planning/mapping out and thinking about their arpilleras (30 mins.).
5. Break (15 mins.)
6. Pre-service teachers: Continue to work and talk through their arpilleras (30 mins).
7. Pre-service teachers: Collect up their materials for continued work on Day 2 and clean up their desk and floor area. (15 mins.)

Session 2: (2 hours)

1. Welcome, ask students about any thoughts/insights emerging from Session 1 (15 mins)
2. Pre-service teachers: Continue with their arpilleras (45 mins.)
3. Break (15 mins.)
4. Pre-service teachers: Share their arpilleras (30 mins.)
5. Pre-service teachers: Clean up their desk and floor area. (10 mins.)

Appendix F Art Exchange Lesson Plan (1 session)

Session: (1 hour)

8. Welcome, Introductions (10 mins).
9. Overview of the art exchange between UBC and TU (10 mins.)
10. Share images produced by the consenting pre-service teachers (10 mins.)
 - a. Images in a PowerPoint presentation
11. Invite pre-service teachers to respond to themes from the images (20 mins.)
 - a. What themes stood out for you? Why?
12. Questions & Closing (10 mins.)