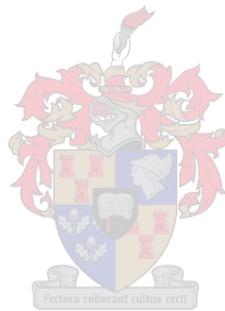


**Contemplative education as a response to the  
contradictions between neoliberalism and  
social justice in the Curriculum Assessment  
Policy Statement (CAPS)**



**By**

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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master in Education in the Department of Education Policy Studies in the  
Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch*

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**2020**

## **DECLARATION**

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March 2020

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Nuraan Davids, for encouraging me along every step of the way, and especially when the project at hand seemed most daunting. I am grateful for her expertise in guiding me through the relevant literature, for her thorough feedback on my writing, and for the immense enthusiasm she expressed over my chosen topic.

I would also like to thank the following people and institutions:

Stellenbosch University, and the postgraduate bursary office, for making all of this possible;

Jackie Viljoen, for working extremely hard and making this thesis bearable for anyone who will read it;

My parents, Petrus and Francilla Bekker; my siblings, John and Elmé, my friends; Axl, Cronjé, Premananda and Hari Vilasa Dasa; and my partner, Tiana. I am grateful for the unwavering support and encouragement;

Indradyumna Swami, Mahatma Prabhu, Kavi Karnapura Dasa, Saradiya Rasa Dasi, for their dedication to the teaching of values;

I am especially grateful for all of those who are to come, who will be interested in and carry the torch for an education beyond technical skills – an education of the body, mind and soul.

## ABSTRACT

South African educational policy after 1994, and in particular, the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), express a very ambitious and wide range of aims and goals, with some relating to education for economic progress, and others relating to education pertaining to human rights, responsible and 'good' citizenship, and social justice – what might be termed 'values education'. Of concern is the realisation that CAPS is unaware of and negligent about its strong neoliberal leanings – that is, it emphasises skills-oriented education, which stifles the implementation of values education. What follows is a report on a conceptual study of how neoliberalism, as espoused by CAPS, influences the ethical adeptness and enthusiasm of individuals and their ability to maintain a healthy relationality with the 'other'. It was found that neoliberalism leads to exclusionary identity formation, hyper-individuality and the avoidance of ethical responsibilities. As a response, I argue for a consideration of contemplative education, underscored by an ethics of care (both of which contain values like empathy, compassion and responsibility). In this regard, the study challenges the neoliberal tone of CAPS and makes suggestions for new roadmaps unto values education. Bringing contemplative education to stand against neoliberalism in the South African context represents a new area of study, and I make recommendations for further research.

Keywords: contemplative education, neoliberalism, values, values education, care ethics, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), South African educational policy

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANC – African National Congress

C2005 – Curriculum 2005

CAPS – Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CNE – Christian National Education

COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions

DoE – Department of Education

GDP – gross domestic product

NCS – National Curriculum Statement

NGO – non-profit organization

OBE – outcomes-based education

RNCS – Revised National Curriculum Statement

RSA – Republic of South Africa

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The post-apartheid education policy milieu of South Africa is tumultuous, demonstrating considerable reform in order to move away from the oppressive educational systems of apartheid South Africa. Some of the post-apartheid policies include the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education [DoE], 1995), the National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a), the RNCS (DoE, 2002a; 2002b) and the current national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DoE, 2011d). Upon analysing the above policies, it becomes clear that there is a wide range of expected goals. Some sets of goals (as included in the aforementioned policies) relate to economic progress, and are aimed at ensuring that learners acquire all the necessary skills to be self-actualised and contributing members of the South African economy (DoE, 1995; 1996; 1997; 2002b; 2011d; 2011b). Other sets of goals within the same policy documents relate to ethical matters, such as becoming a 'good' citizen, enacting social justice, caring for one's fellow human beings, and acting responsibly towards the environment, to name but a few (DoE, 2000; 2001; 2002b; 2011c; RSA, 1996a; 1996b). Certain school subjects, such as Life Orientation, have a particular interest in such ethical ambitions as encapsulated in the second set of goals mentioned above.

One of the questions, which arises from studying these policies, is whether the first set of policy goals (related to economic progress) might create tensions for the second set of policy goals (related to values education). Here enters the reason for the study and this thesis, which reflects an analysis of such tensions. The economic goals within these policy documents are suspected to operate under the ideology of neoliberalism. There is certainly nothing wrong with a country having economic aspirations and expressing them through their education policy, but when such aims are coated in and driven by a certain ideology, such as neoliberalism, there are many other consequences, beyond the realm of economic progress. Neoliberalism creates a certain mentality and atmosphere that moves beyond mere economics, and can come to influence areas, such as ethics and values education. Therefore, I turn to the not-too-well-known contemplative education, as a field that can be introduced to overcome some of the tension that might arise between neoliberalism and core ethical values. Contemplative education provides a way for permeating the entirety of an educational context with ethical values, such as compassion, empathy and responsibility (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Pulkki, Saari & Dahlin, 2015). It operates by directly counteracting each of the ways in which neoliberalism undermines values education. To my knowledge, no

research has yet been conducted regarding the effect of neoliberalism on values education in South Africa, nor regarding contemplative education in South Africa (most of the recent developments in the field of contemplative education have taken place in the United States of America).

## **1.2 Research motivations**

Having spent nineteen years in different South African educational systems (among these, a public primary school, a public high school and a public university), as well as being actively involved with public university students and learning of their struggles by means of a particular university society over the last nine years, I am filled with an ever-growing worry about the absence of values education in such institutions. I am reminded of the plethora of times when teachers warned me of how tough the job market is, and so my instrumental approach to my education was formed. It is the same for millions of others in South Africa, and I shudder to think of the effects this has on the country and on the prospect of good citizenship.

Some might argue that the responsibility of values education lies with parents and other personal caretakers. However, if children and young adults spend a considerable part of their formative years within the walls of educational institutions, is it not, in the very least, worth investigating why values education is almost entirely absent from curriculums or why there is a strong disconnect between its presence in policy versus its presence in reality? This preoccupation with economic skills and training within education has led me to consider to what extent there exists a naivety within the policy documents, such as the CAPS, and those crucial in the formation of CAPS. I am driven to consider the gaps that lie at the heart of such policy, making it difficult for ethical values and values education to truly flourish. It is here that I came upon the field of contemplative education (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Forbes, 2016; Komjathy, 2017; Pulkki, Saari & Dahlin, 2015; Roeser & Peck, 2009; Zajonc, 2006), which is as old as education itself; yet, only resurging recently within modern education.

Contemplative education seems to represent everything that is remedial to neoliberalism and its effects on education. Furthermore, contemplative education could act effortlessly as a complementary element in education, meaning that it does not have to, in any way, threaten or lessen the economic and skills-oriented education of the modern, globalised world. Deepening environmental degradation and social inequalities are the realities of the contemporary world, and I feel that our ability to overcome such challenges is directly related to the introduction of progressive modes of values education. This holds for the world at large, and for the specific South African context. It is certainly true that economic growth can help to push technological advances and other progressions, but this does not come close to

compensating for the innumerable hidden costs of today's way of life (Araghi, 2009; von Weizsacker, 2018). Consequently, I am interested in an exploration of the role which contemplative education could play in fostering a passion and desire for active participation in social justice. A contemplative dimension to education can permeate the curriculum and evoke qualities of contemplation, self-discipline, introspection, empathy, compassion, and responsibility, which are prerequisites for being a significant participant in social justice and ethical modes of being (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Gilligan, 1977; Forbes, 2016; Komjathy, 2017; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Pulkki, Saari & Dahlin, 2015; Roeser & Peck, 2009; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016; Zajonc, 2006).

South African education policy reflects the aspirations of a fresh and enthusiastic democracy (see, for instance, DoE, 1995; RSA, 1996c), and it is my sincere desire that such aspirations might come to fruition. However, it is necessary for policymakers to reflect on whether or not there is enough attention and care being directed at those policy aims that relate to good citizenship and ethical and moral conduct, which lie beyond the dimensions of economic prosperity.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

One of the goals of the South African educational system is to cultivate citizens who are concerned with issues of social justice and ethical and moral conduct (DoE, 2000; 2001; 2002b; 2011d; RSA, 1996a; 1996b). Furthermore, Life Orientation as a school subject is a well-suited medium for this task (Rooth, 2005) and places more emphasis on such issues, compared to other subjects. However, schools are under pressure to fulfil economic goals, and neoliberal motivations leave very little room for education for social justice or values education (Hyslop-Margison & Ramirez, 2016). The neoliberal mood that permeates most of the world's educational systems, including that of South Africa (Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Hill, 2003; Hill & Kumar, 2009; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), breeds an every-man-for-himself mentality within learners (Clarke, 2005; Newson, 2004). Even Life Orientation is not exempt from this neoliberal obsession with preparing learners for the economic world (Rooth, 2005). It seems there is a great need for a mode of education that can directly counter the neoliberal mood of self-interest, isolation and an instrumental approach to education, and which can revivify the presence of values education within the South African educational context.

## 1.4 Research questions

The main research question is:

Can contemplative education respond to the tension between neoliberalism and values education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)?

The sub-questions serve to elaborate upon the main research question. There are many philosophical and conceptual elements tied up in the main research question, and the sub-questions represent the further investigation of these different elements. The sub-questions are as follows:

- What are the inherent values contained in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement?
- How might neoliberalism undermine ethical values?
- What are the inherent values of contemplative education?
- How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?
- What might contemplative education contribute to the values education goals of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and the policies that informed it?

Furthermore, the research questions aimed to query the assumptions held within various fields and the accompanying literature. For example, when thinking of neoliberalism, I interpret it as an ideology, meaning that there are deep-seated assumptions and beliefs tied to it. My research questions represented the desire to explore the problem statement at a very foundational level and to formulate new assumptions and new theories or ways of wrestling with a problem. This is in line with the suggestions of Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), who argue that research questions that aim at an investigation of assumptions can provide a much more potent study than research questions that focus only on addressing gaps in existing literature and theories. My research questions also challenged the assumption that current attempts at values education are successful.

As this study involved ethics and values, and investigated such topics by looking at the relational and the social interactions between the members within a society, I also drew inspiration from qualitative researchers, who are always interested in the motivations and beliefs held by people. Such researchers (see, for instance, Agee, 2009: 434) argue for research questions that “invite a process of exploration”, as opposed to questions that can simply be answered by a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’. The five sub-questions all start with ‘what’ or ‘how’ and certainly encouraged and facilitated such explorative motivations.

## **1.5 Purpose statement**

If we want to make certain that we educate good citizens, then it is becoming increasingly clear that there are limits to the near-exclusive focus on skill-oriented education meant to help the individual find their place in the workforce. I am of the opinion that, in our modern educational system, with its neoliberal undertones, there is too little room left for progressive values education. There is a popularized assumption that the overdriven focus on economic development will act as a panacea which will relieve many social issues, but the deepening of environmental degradation and social inequalities paints a different scenario. It is certainly true that economic growth can help to push technological advances and other progressions, but this does not come close to compensating for the innumerable hidden costs of today's way of life. Consequently, the author is interested in an exploration of the role which contemplative education can play in fostering a passion and desire for active participation in values education and a development of an involved relationality and sympathy with the 'other'. A contemplative dimension to education can permeate the curriculum and evoke qualities of contemplation, self-discipline, responsibility, and compassion, which would form a broadminded version of values education much needed in the current century.

I aim to:

- Investigate the neoliberal elements within CAPS
- Find a moral framework to counteract neoliberalism within the empathetic and relational realm of care ethics
- See if contemplative education can represent a lived and realized incarnation of such a relational moral framework

## **1.6 Methodology**

The following section gives an overview of the research methodology utilised for this study.

### **1.6.1 Research design**

Since there is no abundance of research on the effects of neoliberalism on values education, or of contemplative education on learners' sense of ethics, I employed an exploratory design. This design makes it possible for one to clarify existing concepts and to gain a clear picture of a progressive area of investigation (Christoph, 2010). However, this approach can prove to be unstructured, and can place a limit on one's findings. An exploratory design is unclear on which methods are to be used for investigation, since the best methods are yet to be established (Christoph, 2010: 372–374).

Furthermore, the current study made use of a conceptual framework and conceptual design, and included a thorough analysis of policy and of various areas of academic literature in order to construct the conceptual framework.

### **1.6.2 Research methods**

This thesis is a conceptual study, which made use of conceptual research, by looking, firstly, at various ideological narratives and how we uphold them through our daily lifestyles, habits and beliefs (neoliberalism), and, secondly, at philosophies, theories and schools of thought that can provide new lifestyles, habits and beliefs (contemplative education). This approach made sense, because large parts of the areas investigated were philosophically dense and highly theoretical. As Botes (2002: 23) explains, “concept analysis is associated with the research design of philosophical inquiry” and “the purpose of philosophical inquiry is to perform research using intellectual analysis to clarify meaning”. In other words, conceptual analysis and conceptual research are concerned with an intellectual exploration of different philosophical concepts and theoretical structures and the meanings they hold (Botes, 2002: 23). Furthermore, because the study made use of various South African policy documents, and aimed to evaluate the values that are present within them, I made use of what is called “document analysis” (see Bowen, 2009) as a qualitative research method. Document analysis is efficient, inexpensive, stable, exact and readily available; however, it can, at times, provide insufficient detail and has to be combined with other research methods in order to answer a research question properly (Bowen, 2009).

As this thesis progresses, each bit of conceptual research informs the chapters that follow. The study thus comprised an organic process of analysis and comparison of various theoretical frameworks to arrive at the most significant conceptual framework that might address the problem statement. I used different areas of literature to complement and build upon one another and, ultimately, the findings and conclusions are based on the overall narrative, which the literature created.

Without a doubt, it is best to proceed with a conceptual study, as the nature of the thesis is such that many philosophical concepts need to be assessed. The golden thread that runs throughout the thesis is the concept of relationality – how one positions oneself towards and relates with others. The thesis can be explained as a way of looking at values education through the lens of relationality. I assess the relationality inherent in neoliberalism, in care ethics and in contemplative education. This involves breaking down the philosophical and conceptual building blocks that make up the ideology of neoliberalism, the philosophical school

of care ethics and the educational movement known as contemplative education. Each one of these has its own sense of relationality. Some approach it through economic obsession, hyper-individuality, competitiveness etc. (neoliberalism). Some approach it through empathy, care, community, etc. (care ethics). Finally, contemplative education takes the approach of care ethics and runs even further with it by adding a more thorough lived and practiced dimension in the form of contemplative practices. These three schools of thought and the ways in which they form a type of relationality represent a massive collection of concepts and philosophical perspectives. Thus, a conceptual study is needed.

### **1.7 Research context**

As the main research question indicates, this study explored issues related to South African education policy, and the research context was, therefore, the South African schools to which such policy documents relate. That being said, the previous section (1.5.2) indicated that this was a conceptual study, which employed conceptual research. This necessitated the exploration of contexts outside of South Africa, especially since such a large body of work relevant to the conceptual research has been generated in external contexts. However, since the research in question was of a conceptual nature, the external contexts became less problematic, as the findings took on a universal form, which is applicable to the South African context. Nevertheless, wherever possible, when discussing topics of a highly philosophical and conceptual nature, I have tried to include examples from literature that are directly related to the South African context.

The chapters that deal with neoliberalism (Chapter 3) and with ethical values (Chapter 4) include sections that report on these topics in the South African context. Whenever this is done, it must be noted that it does not contribute as strongly to the conceptual research on a philosophical level as the sections that are based in external contexts. Ultimately, although there is much conceptual research that drew from literature from across the world, the current study aspired to contribute to the South African educational context and its policy.

### **1.8 An outline of the chapters**

Chapter 1 provided a background to the thesis, and included my own motivations for undertaking this study. It also reflected a formal problem statement and discussed the main research question, the sub-questions, and the reasoning behind the form these sub-questions took on. Thereafter, I elucidated the methodology, focusing on the research design and the research methods, and explained how the specific choices supported the decision to make

this a conceptual study with conceptual research. Finally, I explained the research context, making it clear that, despite strong conceptual themes, the study remained an investigation into South African education policy.

Chapter 2 marks the beginning of the literature review, and includes a thorough exploration of the post-apartheid South African education policy (i.e. after 1994). It begins with a theoretical basis for understanding policy and a brief history of education in South Africa (before and after apartheid) before giving a detailed analysis of the different aims and goals of the post-apartheid policy documents, culminating in the document that dictates the current curriculum, the CAPS. The chapter highlights the fact that there are both economic aims and values and aims and values relating to values education found within these documents. The chapter further starts to show a growing suspicion that policymakers might not be aware of how these different sets of aims might create tensions for one another – a suspicion bolstered by the fact that further policy documents were created specifically for values, a possible sign that there is a growing understanding that values education is not finding sufficient implementation. These value-oriented policy documents were also studied. The chapter ends with highlighting some of the disparities related to teaching values in the South African context.

Chapter 3 is a literature review acting as an analysis and assessment of neoliberalism. It shows that neoliberalism is an ideology, and highlights some of its main supporters. Thereafter, I draw from the literature to show how neoliberalism has a significant influence on our ethical conduct through its influence on the identities we form and the way such identities change the ways in which we relate to one another. This involves an analysis of the hyper-individualism and asocial relationality that neoliberalism proliferates. The chapter includes an analysis on the effects of neoliberalism on education and educational institutions, before ending with a look at what the literature reveals about neoliberalism and education in the South African context.

Chapter 4 continues the literature review, and further reflects the starts of my analysis of the concept of ethical values. I chose to include a thorough study of care ethics, to act as a forerunner to my study of contemplative education. This decision was made because care ethics provides a philosophical understanding of ethics and values such as empathy, compassion and responsibility in relational terms (see Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016). Care ethics proposes that ethics is always relational. This is relevant because relationality is seen as an area strongly affected by neoliberalism. Care ethics becomes even more relevant when one considers that contemplative education also facilitates ethical values and values education by way of relationality. Care ethics and contemplative education are, thus, very similar, but care ethics provides a much more sophisticated philosophical theory for values education and ethical

modes of being (see Author, date). The chapter includes a study of responsibility (another important ethical value) from the viewpoint of relationality. Finally, it looks at the literature of South African authors concerning the difficulty experienced when the teaching of values struggles amidst the multicultural aspects of South Africa.

Chapter 5 is the final part of the combined literature review, and entails a detailed analysis of contemplative education. It starts with a brief overview and history of the school, before entering into a deeper analysis of the contents thereof. The chapter points out to what extent contemplative education moves forward with the theme of relational ethics, transforming what was given by care ethics into newer and more concrete forms of ethical behaviour by way of practice and habit over and above mere theory. It is shown how the richly developed notion of compassion, as an ethical value, springs from a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of being. Thereafter, the chapter ends with a look at some areas of concern for the field of contemplative education.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter. It gives a summary of the research findings, reflects upon the scholarly contributions of the study (in terms of South African education policy and the broader society), discusses the limitations of the study, and makes recommendations for further research.

## **1.9 Summary**

This chapter served as an introduction to the study, and commenced with the sketching of the background. Various points added to the background for the study, such as a gap in policies, in the form of a naive unawareness of some of the tensions that exist between neoliberalism and values education, the ideology of neoliberalism itself, and, finally, contemplative education as a proposed solution for the difficulties faced by values education. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted my personal motivations for the study, presented the problem statement, the main research question and sub-questions, the methodology that was followed, and the research context, and, ended with an outline of what each coming chapter will contain and strive to achieve. The task that followed was to analyse the post-apartheid education policy documents in Chapter 2, to verify my assertions about the policy, before conducting a literature review, across Chapters 3, 4 and 5, in order to establish decent theoretical and conceptual frameworks for both an analysis and assessment of neoliberalism and an exposure of its effects on values education, and the construction of new, progressive approaches to values education, based on contemplative education.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW – POST-APARTHEID POLICY AND VALUES

### 2.1 Introduction

This study identified a significant problem within South African education policies. The main research question was: Can contemplative education respond to the tension between neoliberalism and values education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)? In other words, there is a tension or a shortcoming found within CAPS – namely that neoliberalism hampers the safeguarding of core values. The core values that I am referring to are those that relate to social justice, to empathy and responsibility, and to the general concern for one's fellow human beings. Neoliberalism, this study argued, subverts such core values and preoccupies the citizen with a self-absorbed, overly economic outlook, which leaves no room for the pursuit of core ethical values.

Therefore, I aimed to investigate the policy documents that arose from the post-apartheid South African landscape. This included not only the CAPS, but also the key policies, which led up to it. It behoved me to assess to what extent these documents attempt to strike an awkward balance between neoliberal goals and social justice-oriented ethical goals, which, respectively, pull the policies in opposite directions. However, it is of utmost importance that I make it clear that I am not against a country striving for economic progress. The extent to which this study was critical of neoliberalism was not criticism against economic aims, but criticism against the effect a neoliberal mentality has on ethical values, such as empathy, compassion and responsibility. This is a very important distinction. In other words, the contribution of this study is to remind one that education policy, which aims for a wide range of results, must be vigilant and form an understanding of how some of the moods and cultures created by the manner in which some of those ends are pursued might clash with the moods and cultures necessary for the pursuit of the other aims. Hence, neoliberalism might very well clash with the culture and values needed for the ethics of empathy, care, compassion and responsibility. This chapter reports on aims to identify the wide range of goals within the policy documents, and the extent to which the policymakers are aware of the potential tension between neoliberalism and core ethical values, as identified by the main research question.

The first order of business was to give an overview of the research context. In other words, what were the conditions surrounding and leading up to the creation of CAPS? To understand this historical context, I begin by reporting briefly on the educational situation during apartheid. Thereafter, I provide an in-depth look at outcomes-based education (OBE) in order to understand what informed CAPS.

After having given some attention to the South African historical context, section 2.3.1 reports on the values promoted by some key education policies of post-apartheid South Africa, such as the National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (DoE, 2002a; 2002b) and the CAPS (DoE, 2011d). This is where sub-question 1 of this thesis was investigated further:

What are the inherent values contained in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement?

Thereafter, I report on three key documents specifically on values in education, namely –

- *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000);
- *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001); and
- *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* (DoE, 2011a).

It is also important to mention that, in my analysis of the different policy documents, the core values that they hold and advocate will come to the fore. Therefore, although my own deeper exposition on core values will follow in Chapter 3, it is inevitable that I will take a brief look at the values on which the said documents focus.

## **2.2. An overview of the research context and policies**

Before looking at the different post-apartheid education policy documents, it is important to gain a good overview of both the research context as well as the concept of policy.

### **2.2.1 A theoretical basis for understanding policy**

Before looking at the specific South African education policies, I wanted to get an idea of what policy is and what it ought to achieve. I turned to the work of Stephen Ball, who explains that education policy either “contributes to or interrupts processes of social reproduction” (Ball, 2011:n.p.). Within this short phrase, there is a considerable amount to consider. It implies that, although policy is supposed to work towards the advancement of social justice, it can just as easily impede upon or hinder it. The words of Ball above serve as a further motivation (an endorsement, if you will) for the scepticism with which I already approached South African policy, as I noted that there were neoliberal tendencies, which stood against the social yearnings found in other parts of the policy documents.

Above is a short discussion of what policy can and should bring about or which role it plays, but what about what it is, the shape it takes, its form and inner workings? Ball formulates a

definition in terms of “policy as text and policy as discourse” (Ball, 1993: 10). The key idea is that policies are not only objects, rigid and clearly defined as we would hope, but “also processes and outcomes” (Ball, 1993: 10).

Ball (1993: 11) elaborates upon this idea when speaking of policy as text by asserting that policies are tied in with the real-world histories and trajectories of the policy writers, readers, and all who respond to it. What is more, the same inequalities that are felt between different classes of citizens, infiltrate the domain of policy, and lead to different levels of access to said policies (Ball, 1993: 12). From this inconsistency in terms of how policies are shaped and interacted with, one could glean that the true functioning of policy is not to provide exact and perfectly defined instructions, but rather to construct a perimeter or space within which one should try to limit or adjust one’s approach regarding the policy issues (Ball, 1993: 12). Policies can even exist in opposition to or cause tension for other policies (Ball, 1993: 13), and while Ball ascertains that it is one text that could contradict or counteract another text, this study found that such counter-productive tendencies could even exist within the same policy document (CAPS, in this case). As a final word on policy as text, Ball (1993: 13) wants one to realise that the ultimate outcomes or effects of policy are not something directly read off from a text, but they come about because of the interaction between different groups and their distinct desires and interests, as it all plays out within a real-world milieu. There is a strong limitation upon the power that a policy document wields, and it is almost as if it enters into pre-established power dynamics (Ball, 1993: 13), joining an already existing game for which the rules have long since been drawn up.

As for policy as discourse, Ball (1993: 14) wants one to take a step back and take up a vantage point from which one can see the broader narratives that shape not only the contents of a certain policy, but also the very voices and languages used to communicate the content. In other words, apart from looking at the details of a text, one must become aware of the discourses that control the limits of the possible contents and details thereof. He suggests that the very languages we speak work through us rather than us working through them (Ball, 1993: 14). This reminds me of Jordan Peterson (2016:n.p.) who speaks about being “ideologically possessed”. Although Peterson speaks in most of his contexts about the idea of the dogmatic narratives that have entered universities, the main argument holds the same, whether it is in the academe or policymaking, our strings are often pulled by the ideologies and languages to which we ascribe – after all, the academe has a key role to play in much of the policy debates and formulations. Ball wants his readers to be aware that the dominant discourses, of which he specifically mentions neoliberalism (Ball, 1993: 15), limit our ability to create policies and to react and respond to policies in a truly objective and balanced manner (Ball, 1993: 14).

Furthermore, Ball also proposes that education policy ideas, in our modern setting, flow quite easily between countries and groups and can be “identifiable as global educational policy” (Ball, 2011:n.p.).

Vidovich (2007) expands upon the ideas of Ball and argues for a new understanding of policy where the classroom context is just as important and considered equally to the governmental aspects of policy. He aims to remove policy from the “pedestal”, the macro vantage point upon which it has long remained seated, and to redirect one’s attention to the micro elements (classroom contexts) (2007: 295). He argues that “hybridized [policy] models” offer the most accurate insights and can open up the door, through more active participation of all the different actors of all levels of educational policy, to a more democratic and empowering form of policy engagement (Vidovich, 2007: 295). Teachers, especially, can receive a renewed empowerment and step away from the “top down, state control” version of policy that is so common (Vidovich, 2007: 295).

Now that I have given some attention to the work of Ball (1993; 2011) and Vidovich (2007), the reader is better equipped to understand the South African setting, the arena where policies are made and shaped. This analysis provides a theoretical structure through which the shortcomings of the policies under discussion are better appreciated and expected.

### **2.2.2 A brief history of education in South Africa**

One must be aware of the specific historical context of education in South Africa. The country is not yet far into the post-apartheid era, with the legacy of apartheid still firmly felt. If we want to be able to make suggestions regarding issues of core values, assessing the past is valuable. As Badat and Sayed (2014: 128) say, “a critical analysis and understanding of the trajectory of post-apartheid South African education policy are important in the quest for a new educational order predicated on social justice” – and social justice, as shall be shown, is one of many core values, which are espoused by the different policy documents I studied. Of course, if one wants to understand the challenges faced by the current educational systems, history demands paying attention to apartheid-dictated policies and laws, which ensured the oppression and disenfranchisement of people who were not white.

That legacy includes the questionable entities known as ‘Christian National Education’ (CNE) and ‘Bantu Education’. In short, CNE represented the white citizens’ desire, enacted through the state, for an educational system, which resonated not only with the religious sentiments of the white Afrikaner, but with many other facets of that white subculture (Van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005: 179). Not only that, but as CNE moved towards a more secular version of itself, it became more closely associated with white Afrikaner Nationalism (Hofmeyr, 2015: i).

This underlying narrative was incredibly disadvantageous, alienating and disrespectful towards the many other cultures that were existing and participating in this one-dimensional educational undercurrent (Van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005: 180). However, CNE paved the way for Bantu Education (Hofmeyr, 2015: i), the next iteration of an oppressive educational system, which was even more openly discriminatory.

As a brief but necessary piece of historical context, it is important to understand that for the entirety of the nineteenth century and almost half of the twentieth century, the education of black South Africans was undertaken and overseen by churches and missionaries initiatives (Hofmeyr, 2015: 7). However, when the National Party came to power in 1948, it was highly dissatisfied with the situation, where they had to help fund an education of blacks that was firmly in the hands of a set of liberal missionaries (Hofmeyr, 2015: 35). It set to work to instate the Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953 (RSA, 1953), through which it forced Africans to study in a manner it saw as more closely aligned with their own culture (Van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005: 180). Little did the ruling white Afrikaners care how the black population felt. Black South Africans felt as if they were being cut off and excluded from a more modern educational format, which could help them with their struggle amidst an ever-growing and changing global economic system (Hofmeyr, 2015: 45). For the black population, education was supposed to help them cope with a system being imposed on them, an economic struggle within which their languages and uses would not mean much. It is not a conspiracy or unfounded speculation to claim that white Afrikaner power attempted to suppress blacks through education. In the words of the then Minister of Native Affairs, Verwoerd (responsible for the education of black South Africans):

I will reform [education] so that Natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them ... racial relations cannot improve if the wrong type of education is given to Natives. They cannot improve if the result of Native education is the creation of a frustrated people who ... have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilled (Verwoerd, 1953, cited in Reagan, 1987: 302).

It is also important to note that the teachers who worked in the pre-Bantu Education Act schools were predominantly ascribing to an integrationist view of the world (see Christie & Collins, 1982: 60), meaning that they always encouraged their black learners to see themselves as having a fair place in the world, accompanied by fair and equal rights (see Christie & Collins, 1982: 60). Needless to say, this more uplifting scenario was completely undermined by the introduction of the Bantu Education Act (No. 47 of 1953) (Christie & Collins, 1982: 60). With the coming of the Act, “the Nationalists are seen as emphasising an inferior and somewhat more ‘vocational’ education for the purpose of producing inferior non-threatening and tribalistic Africans” (Christie & Collins, 1982: 74).

These developments were not only dehumanising and economically crippling for blacks in the long term by way of an inferior education, but logistical issues surfaced as well. Prior to the Bantu Education Act (No. 47 of 1953), the quality of education provided to black communities was much higher in terms of the financial and logistical resources made available compared to what was provided after the implementation of the act (Mokhaba, 2005: 76). This is because the government retracted large parts of its financial support for churches and other forms of missionary teachers who had previously taken charge of the education for black communities (Mokhaba, 2005: 27). Without the previous financial support that used to come streaming in from the government, the churches often shut down the schools they had been running (Mokhaba, 2005: 27). There was a decline in the money allocated to education for blacks, which led to dire and regressive circumstances, such as fewer available teachers and an increase in the number of black learners per classroom (Mokhaba, 2005: 28).

With the end of apartheid, there was a great hope that these oppressive structures could be disassembled and transformed. The period immediately after 1994 was filled with high expectations for the social and economic progress of the country in general, which translated and still translates strongly into high expectations for educational reform. There has been a “wide array of ‘transformation’-oriented initiatives” (Badat & Sayed, 2014: 128). When the government of the new South Africa finally had an opportunity to rectify this imbalance, they wasted no time.

### **2.2.3 The first changes**

One of the first major developments was the White Paper on Education and Training (No. 196 of 1995) (DoE, 1995). It was one of the first foundational changes to the national curriculum, helping to start the move in a democratic direction. The document made an effort to study the new South African constitution and the way it relates to education, especially when it comes to fundamental human rights (DoE, 1995). The White Paper showed a considerable level of ambition, in expressing the desire for free and compulsory education to all (DoE, 1995: 73), and focused on integrating “education” and “training”, the latter referring to more technical skills and physical work (DoE, 1995: 15). The division that had previously existed between “education” and “training” within the apartheid system served to perpetuate economic and social inequalities set up along racial lines, and the above White Paper on Education and Training made it clear that it wished to address this issue and develop the field of “training” so as not to be a storehouse of underpaid and exploited labourers (DoE, 1995: 15:n.p.).

In 1996, the Department of Education released a report of the ministerial committee, which saw some of the first official references to OBE (DoE, 1996). In general, this period saw an

abolition of the elements of the old curriculum, which were most discriminatory, out-dated and exclusionary (Jansen, 1998: 321). Thereafter, one saw the full-fledged employment of OBE.

#### **2.2.4 Outcomes-based education (OBE)**

OBE – which originated through what was termed ‘Curriculum 2005’ (C2005) (DoE, 1997) – was chosen in large part for its philosophical and not its curricular elements. Specifically, it was chosen for its easy integration with democratic philosophy, as it seemed to fit the desire for a democratic sentiment perfectly. It placed great emphasis on learner-centred classroom experiences, as opposed to teacher-centred ones (Chisholm, 2003; Mokhaba, 2005: 28), and the proponents of OBE remained vocal about its ability to grant freedom to the learner in the educational environment. The OBE movement is linked to William Spady (1994). In Spady’s works, one finds a clear indication of a call for a more free and flexible classroom environment. He analysed and assessed the traditional approach to education (Spady, 1994), indicating that it is rigid and not accommodating of the differences in learning abilities of individual learners. Furthermore, he argues that there is not much scope for communal or interactive education in such traditional forms of education (Spady, 1994). Spady (1994: 9) subsequently outlined the two main purposes of OBE:

- ensuring that all learners are equipped with the knowledge, competence and qualities needed to be successful after they exit their educational system; and
- structuring and operating schools so that those outcomes can be achieved and maximised for all learners.

However, to what extent does the kind of post-education success mentioned in the first of the two purposes above gravitate towards an exclusively economic version of success? These are the types of ambiguous elements of South African education policy against which the current study cautions. As I attempted to show in the next chapter on neoliberalism (see 3.3.1), it seems to be the case that success is defined in very hyper-individualist terms, putting strain on ethical goals. Killen (1999: 4–5) takes the above purposes outlined by Spady (1994) and infers from them the following set of philosophical assumptions underlying OBE:

- all learners are talented, and it is the duty of schools to develop their talents;
- the role of schools is to find ways for learners to succeed, rather than finding ways for learners to fail;
- mutual trust drives all good outcomes-based schools;
- excellence is for every learner and not only for a limited number;
- by preparing learners daily for success the following day, the need for corrective measures is reduced;

- learners collaborate in learning, rather than competing with each other;
- as far as possible, no learner is excluded from an activity in a school; and
- a positive attitude is essential.

Beyond the democratic semblances in OBE, it is also popularly known for its focus on the outcomes of education, as opposed to merely the content (Spady, 1994). In Spady's (1994: 1) own words, it means "clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences". Others, however, are quick to point out that there were numerous examples of innovative teachers in the older South Africa (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997: 27) and that the concept of OBE is not a new one at all (Kudlas, 1994: 32).

For the purpose of sketching the research context, it is highly relevant to study those questions raised in response to OBE, which offer a deeper analysis of its political appeal. Many writers noticed that this philosophical contact point OBE has with democracy came to be used as a political tool (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Jansen, 1998; Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997). Van der Horst and McDonald (1997: 6) make it clear that OBE is often used by policymakers and politicians when there is a need for large-scale educational reformations during a period of political reform. Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008: 196) argue that the learner-centeredness of OBE found clear resonance with "local histories of resistance to colonialism". Furthermore, OBE was "ambiguous enough" to be seen as a medium for, not educational, but social, political and economic reform (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 196). One of their main arguments is that "reforms have focused less on what is feasible in contexts of implementation than on the economic, social and political goals to be achieved" (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 196). The authors provide an analysis on the various actors converging to influence the country in such an economic, social and political way. Four main "developments" have been identified:

[G]lobalisation, the changed focus of international aid agencies toward development assistance, the adaptation of sub-Saharan African countries to the new world order with its new political emphases, and the spilling over of new pedagogical ideas from the USA and Europe into sub-Saharan Africa (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 198).

Furthermore, the child-centred approach to education had been pushed for many years, even in the apartheid years, by UNICEF, UNESCO, donor agencies and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 198). Of course, these actors were not directly involved in the educational system of the apartheid government, which was most definitely not child-centred (see Naicker, 2000), but their peripheral influence was simmering along and gaining traction. The Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 198) provided another democratic inspiration with allures of

social, political and economic upliftment. Additionally, South African liberation movements found inspiration for alternative education in neighbouring countries (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 199). These early educational ideas were thus formed in situations where “strands of Africanism, social-democratic and various forms of Marxist socialism, and non-racialism” were all strewn together (Morrow, Maaba & Pulumani, 2002, cited in Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 200). When it was finally becoming clear that apartheid might be overthrown, in the time close to the 1994 elections –

Close links between the trade union movement, COSATU [Congress of South African Trade Unions], the National Training Board and individual curriculum developers in the run-up to elections in 1994 ensured that a mix of ideas linked to integration, competency and outcomes-based education were adopted from Australia and translated into the schooling terrain (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 201).

These various historical points made by Chisholm and Leyendecker make it clear that the decision to implement OBE was, to an extreme extent, politically driven.

Jansen (1998: 321), when speaking of OBE, describes it as “primarily a political response to apartheid schooling, rather than one which is concerned with the modalities of change at the classroom level”. He argues that many of these early post-apartheid reformatory policies served as mere political symbolism, rather than having any serious implementation to show. Such early policies, such as C2005, were used by an insecure state as a mechanism for ensuring legitimacy (Jansen, 1998: 330). “[T]he national syllabus revision process (1995) was driven almost exclusively by official attempts to demonstrate to constituencies that at least some action was forthcoming from the Ministry of Education in the period immediately following the elections” (Jansen, 1998: 330). When any kind of implementation was to be noted, it “was not an advanced planning tool, but something improvised even as policy was being introduced to teachers” (Jansen, 1998: 203).

Perhaps it was this preoccupation and fixation with political ends that led to various problems – hence, criticisms and revision were to follow.

### **2.2.5 Criticisms and revisions**

Not long after the implementation of OBE did the criticisms and subsequent revisions pour in (Chisholm, 2005a). Not only the curriculum, but also the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of South Africa was criticised and revised (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008, p. 201). In *A South African curriculum for the twenty first century* (Chisholm et al., 2005) provided some possible reasons for the failure of the first stages of attempted curriculum change and implementation in post-apartheid South Africa:

- skewed curriculum structure and design;
- lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy;
- inadequate orientation, training and development of teachers;
- learning support materials that are variable in quality, often unavailable and not sufficiently used in classrooms;
- policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms;
- shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005; and
- inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments.

It has also been argued that there was considerable confusion about the meanings of some of the key terms as well as what was meant by certain stated goals and ambitions (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 202). Eventually, it was the historically white and advantaged schools, which needed the changes the least, which adopted OBE the easiest, whereas black schools, in dire need of such changes, struggled with the implementation (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008: 202).

Jansen (1998: 323–329) provided a thorough set of criticisms – a list of ten causes of failure within OBE.

- The language used to communicate the OBE system was overly complex and confusing (Jansen, 1998: 323).
- There were premature presuppositions regarding a connection between OBE and the broader society, in terms of its ability to influence the economy positively (Jansen, 1998: 323).
- OBE and its advocates were rather naive about the classroom situations and competence of the available teachers (Jansen, 1998: 325).
- OBE was instrumentalist in its philosophy, which was in stark opposition to how knowledge is garnered in some disciplines and subjects (Jansen, 1998: 326).
- OBE is against the proclaimed political ideals of the ANC (African National Congress), because “there is something fundamentally questionable about a focus on ends as final outcomes when much of the educational and political struggle of the 1980s valued the processes of learning and teaching as ends in themselves” (Jansen, 1998: 327).
- The instrumentalist approach of OBE left much to be desired in terms of the discussion surrounding values in education (Jansen, 1998: 327);
- Studies have shown that OBE placed much administrative pressure on teachers (Jansen, 1998: 328).
- OBE belittles curriculum content, and there is the threat of “serious losses with respect to building a multicultural curriculum which both moves beyond ethnicity while

simultaneously engaging with the historicity of such concepts and ideals in the context of apartheid South Africa” (Jansen, 1998: 328). Furthermore, OBE can appear to be so narrow in its approach to curriculum content, that it underestimates the “cross-curricular and inter-disciplinary demands encountered in learning a complex task” (Jansen, 1998: 328).

- OBE requires drastic improvements in terms of teachers, assessment methods and strategies, management, learning resources and more – and all such improvements must converge for OBE to be successful (Jansen, 1998: 328). In Jansen’s own words, “an entire re-engineering of the education system is required to support the innovation” (Jansen, 1998: 328).
- OBE was not able to inspire the overhaul in assessment that it needs in order to function properly, the proof being “the powerful interests insisting on the assessment status quo with respect to the matriculation examination” (Jansen, 1998: 329).

When giving their opinions on the arguably failed educational reforms in post-apartheid South Africa, Cross, Mungadi and Rouhani (2002) write about the large gap between lofty ideas and ideals, on the one hand, and practicality and implementation, on the other, “[g]rand philosophies and high ideals are all very well. The devil of the detail requires great technical and political skills” (Malcolm, 2000, cited in Cross, et al., 2002: 171).

Another criticism, as highlighted in section 2.2.4, argues that most educational reforms in post-apartheid South Africa are seen by most analysts as politically concerned and motivated (Pretorius, 1998, cited in Du Plessis, 2005: 17). Malcolm (1999, cited in Du Plessis, 2005: 23) adds to this argument by reminding one that the decisions made by policymakers, in terms of which versions of OBE to focus on, clearly reflect that there is major historical, political and interest group pressure involved.

The first wave of C2005 revision took shape under the RNCS (Chisholm, 2003). It aimed to improve upon its predecessor through “conceptual coherence [...] a clear structure and [...] clear language” (Chisholm, 2003: 4) and the RNCS became official policy in the beginning of 2002 (Chisholm, 2003: 4). However, yet again, the revisionary movements were cumbersome, as there was, yet again, much political energy involved. The Minister of Education at the time, Kader Asmal, as well as a review committee relatively independent from the ANC spearheaded the review (Chisholm, 2003: 4). On the other side of the fence, there were teachers unions and various bureaucratic figures from the education department, to whom Chisholm (2003: 5) refers as “footsoldiers of C2005”. This second camp was heavily invested in C2005, as they had been closely involved with its formation and attempted implementation. Any proposed changes to C2005 were perceived by this group as a direct threat to OBE and, quite dramatically, to everything that was achieved in the overthrowing of apartheid. They saw

the proposed revisions as a regressive move back towards the direction of the old apartheid system and were not too welcoming thereof (Chisholm, 2003: 5). Those in this second, opposition camp saw the recommendations for a re-emphasising of more traditional and vocational subjects, such as science and mathematics, as mirroring the way of thinking of the past. However, a cabinet decision ultimately determined that occupational foundations in the revisionary recommendations were of unquestionable importance and would be kept (Chisholm, 2003: 5).

Chisholm (2003: 12) provides a concise summary of the different actors and their decisions during the formation of the RNCS:

The dominant players were the ANC, the teacher unions and university-based intellectuals. The ANC introduced a modernising, liberal humanist, pragmatic approach to reform. The teacher unions on the one hand reasserted the importance of outcomes-based education as foundational philosophy for the post-apartheid curriculum, and on the other established the necessity for a workable and implementable curriculum. They united around the need for a secular, liberal humanist, rights-based curriculum that recognises the diversity of South Africans. Radical intellectuals, by contrast, were critical in creating the context for democratic debate and discussion of the post-apartheid curriculum and for providing the theoretical and empirical climate for reform of the curriculum. These were the dominant influences on the curriculum.

Finally, I consider and discuss the latest version of South Africa's school curriculum – the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (referred to as 'CAPS'), which was implemented across South African schools between 2012 and 2014 (Du Plessis & Marais, 2015: 117). Preceding CAPS was C2005 in 1998 (DoE, 1997), the RNCS in 2004 (DoE, 2002a; 2002b), and the NCS in 2007 (DoE, 2011b). An interesting point to take into consideration is that CAPS was a new and improved curriculum, which reacted to the very descriptive nature of OBE with its own, more prescriptive approach (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul & Armstrong, 2011). CAPS has been credited with administering a more desirable "macro pacing of the curriculum" along with more prescriptive textbooks, which provide "the scaffolding for accurate monitoring of curriculum coverage" (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul & Armstrong, 2011: 10). 'Macro pacing' refers to the practice by which the teacher ensures that there is proper planning in terms of which parts of the curriculum are covered over a longer time frame, such as a year – and that the coverage of the curriculum is well paced, to ensure that all the desired worked will indeed be covered within the given time (Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul & Armstrong, 2011). Some are not enthusiastic about this prescriptive element, as stated by Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel and Tlale (2015: 3):

Although recent curriculum transformation has integrated the principle of inclusive education, which by implication means that curriculum implementation should be flexible with regard to teaching methods,

assessment, pace of teaching and the development of learning material (DoE, 2001), the current CAPS do not support the requirements of a flexible curriculum as stated in Education White Paper 6 [of 2001] (DoE, 2001; Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013).

In summary, the different reforms related mostly to the cumbersome technicalities and impracticalities of certain policies, and newer versions of policy served to simplify and streamline implementation, and to formulate a more realistic plan more in line with the capabilities of teachers (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2002; Jansen, 1998). Other criticisms served to refocus attention on the primary importance of key subjects, such as mathematics and science. As for the CAPS, it remains to be seen whether any serious criticism or reform lies ahead.

### **2.3. On values**

Sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.5 aimed to give a brief overview and history of the policy documents that arose out of the post-apartheid reform period. Now I would like to turn my attention to values as they appear within the different policy documents. Of course, the current study took a keen interest in values, as I ultimately aimed to study the contradictory values that exist between the neoliberal and the ethical areas within CAPS. However, before continuing, I bring to the reader's attention that the notion of values is alluded to in different ways and to various degrees within the different South African education policy documents. For the sake of structure and logic, I have decided to separate the discussion into two categories. First, I discuss those documents which mention values, but which were not specifically designed to address the topic, and, secondly, those documents specifically engineered to be a study of values within the South African educational system. It is not my intention to imply that the discussions around values found within the first set of more 'general' policy documents are in any way less relevant, meaningful or influential, but it is important for me to make the reader aware that the latter documents were specifically intended to address the notion of values.

#### **2.3.1 On values – general policy documents**

While the abovementioned criticisms and revisions of different curriculum policies were taking place, and seemed to focus especially on the technical aspects, and content and form of the curriculum, there remained the question of values. What follows is a summary of how the issue of values was discussed in various documents. The reader is reminded, however, that this is merely an overview account for the sake of sketching the research context. My own, deeper exposition on the topic of values follows in Chapters 4 and 5.

In the Preamble to the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996b), the Constitution is described as a supreme law with the purpose to “establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights” (section 1(a)). Similarly, the National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a, section A-4:n.p.), describes one of the purposes of education to be to “contribute to the full personal development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes”

The National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996 is one of the original flagships for the expression of the Constitution within education (RSA, 1996a). In the above quote, there is a call for the moral, social, cultural and political development of the nation (among other types of development). This is a vast task that is outlined. The list of social justice values and core values one can derive from the above quote can be near endless. Such a quote and the values it implies provide an ample foothold from which to argue for the advocating of core values amongst learners. The above quote references the need for education to contribute to the “personal development of each student” (RSA, 1996a:n.p.). Then it goes on to refer to the “moral, social, cultural [and] political [...] development of the nation at large” (RSA, 1996a:n.p.). Such development translates into encouraging learners to be responsible citizens, to take matters of social justice into their own hands and to adopt core values of empathy, compassion and responsibility. The current study, through exposing the drawbacks and moral limitations of neoliberalism (Chapter 3), found that such an ambitious “moral, social, cultural, political [...] development of the nation at large” (RSA, 1996a:n.p.) can only take place if we are aware of the dangers inherent in an immature and hastily considered approach to the “economic developments” (RSA, 1996a:n.p.). This study argued that the policy is not aware of the extent of its own ambitions, the difficulty in balancing an economic focus with an ethical focus, and the ethical frameworks necessary to ensure that both aims can operate harmoniously along one another. The fostering of conscientious learners – the transformation of learners from an imbalanced neoliberal vantage point to responsible, mature and compassionate young adults – is what will be explored in future chapters as the necessary antidote for the tension between neoliberalism and moral core values.

The National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996 states its goal as “the democratic transformation of the national system of education into one which serves the needs and interests of all of the people of South Africa and upholds their fundamental rights” (RSA, 1996a:n.p.).

One can look at the above quotation and realise that there are different potential agents for this democratic transformation. Many of the education policies of post-apartheid South Africa

attempt to affect the transformation through institutional and administrative measures, such as rules and restrictions brought into schools through policy, or changes in the curriculum, and do not focus in too much detail on the learners as agents of this transformation. This study, however implied that a bureaucratic and armchair-philosophy approach to teaching values might not be as valuable as more interactive and engaging methods that would help the learners to truly incorporate moral development into their lives. The policy track record of post-apartheid South Africa is not too good (Jansen, 1998; 2002) and, therefore, I propose that it is valuable to understand to what extent democratic transformation based on democratic values, core values, social justice and fundamental human rights can be supported by learners themselves and through the moral growth they can achieve in a practical and 'lived' manner during their time at school. Of course, I expand upon these arguments in future chapters.

It is also worthwhile to look at the values contained in the RNCS, a document which largely informed CAPS. Msila (2007:151) (referring to the DoE, 2002) writes:

This system [informed by the RNCS] is based on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which provides the basis for curriculum transformation in South Africa. Education and the curriculum have a crucial role to play in realising the aims of developing the full potential of learners as citizens of a democratic South Africa.

There is an emphasis on values within the RNCS and the "promotion [thereof] is important not only for the sake of personal development but also to ensure that a national South African identity is built on values very different from those that underpinned apartheid education" (DoE, 2002, as cited in Msila, 2007: 151). The type of learner that is envisaged as a product of this policy document is one who is:

Inspired by these values, and who will act in the interests of the society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. The curriculum seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen (DoE, 2002, as cited in Msila, 2007: 151).

Once again, the aims expressed are filled with the values of compassion, empathy, responsibility and general ethical conduct towards the 'other' and the environment we inhabit.

The next document is the CAPS. Under the CAPS, all subjects have their own policy documents, while there are general policies that underlie all subjects (DoE, 2011b). CAPS is reinforced and informed by the RNCS, which means that it espouses values that are directly in line with the South African Constitution.

From within the pages of CAPS, its aims and goals are clearly expressed, and it is stated that CAPS (DoE, 2011b:n.p.)

- “serves the purpose of equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country”; as well as
- “providing access to higher education; facilitating the transition of learners from education institutions to the workplace; and providing employers with a sufficient profile of a learner’s competences”.

From the onset, it is clear that CAPS aims to fulfil both the economic needs of learners as well as the need for responsible citizens who care about social justice and core values. The above quotations represent, as a sort of summary, everything around which the current study revolved, as it highlighted the tension exposed by the research question – between neoliberalism and values of compassion and empathy. It is not that the two quotations, when read side by side, provide any clear evidence of a contradiction, but as future chapters reveal, the concerns in the second bullet point above (economic) far overshadow and undermine the “values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society” (DoE, 2011b:n.p.) mentioned by the first bullet point. In other words, when looking at how education policies play out, it is the neoliberal positioning - represented by how a learner must prove him- or herself competent before his or her future employer - that weighs more heavily than any attention given to meaningful (social and ethical) participation in society. This point is argued further, with reference to the relevant literature, in Chapter 3. It speaks volumes of the naivety of the CAPS document in thinking that this tension would not arise and in not adequately preparing for it – or, in the very least, in not in any way speaking about the potential emergence of such a tension.

The ethical aims of CAPS are further highlighted by another section, which indicates that CAPS is “based on the following principles” (DoE, 2011b:n.p.):

- social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population;
- active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths;
- high knowledge and high skills: the minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved in each grade are specified and high, achievable standards are set in all subjects;
- progression: content and context of each grade show progression from simple to complex;

- human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The NCS Grades R–12 is sensitive to issues of diversity, such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors;
- valuing indigenous knowledge systems: acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution; and
- credibility, quality and efficiency: providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries.

The above list reveals a broad range of principles, and includes both the economic goals of the country as well as the goals pertaining to core values. It is clear that core values of compassion and empathy are supported. The fifth and sixth points above speak of human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice, issues of diversity, indigenous knowledge systems and nurturing the values contained in the Constitution. Such concerns are the very definition of what it entails to be a responsible and compassionate citizen.

The seven principles listed above are the general principles promoted through CAPS. In Life Orientation, however, there is a specific focus on the development of good citizens. The current study took special interest in the subject of Life Orientation as an area where change and transformation in the direction of values of compassion and empathy can be spearheaded. According to the CAPS policy document for Life Orientation (DoE, 2011c: 8), “it is a unique subject in that it applies a holistic approach to the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners”, which “encourages the development of a balanced and confident learner who can contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all.”

Furthermore, “the subject contains the following six topics in Grades 10 to 12” (DoE, 2011c: 8):

- Development of the self in society;
- Social and environmental responsibility;
- Democracy and human rights;
- Careers and career choices;
- Study skills; and
- Physical Education.

Although the focus on economic incentives is still present, there is large scope within the subject, Life Orientation, for the development of core values.

In the academic literature there are some who notice the neoliberal elements within CAPS. It is quite difficult to find academic writing specifically on the neoliberalism inherent in CAPS, but I have tried my best to assemble some sources below:

My own feelings are perhaps best captured by Maistry (2014: 66), who states (in reference to CAPS):

While the document also makes reference to social justice issues, these are captured in a single point under the purpose of education. The strong market agenda for education in SA is alarmingly explicit but appears as an unassuming, innocent and noble will of the people. Its disturbing undertones are eloquently masked by the social justice rhetoric that permeates the policy document – another perplexing instance of the ‘talk left, walk right’ tendency already alluded to.

Another study criticises that same neoliberalism through looking at textbooks and their subtexts (Maistry and David, 2018). Most textbooks, and economic textbooks in particular, normalise and promote the ideology of neoliberalism and there is almost no investigation into such problematic subtexts. Maistry and David (2018: 33) uncover:

the tensions inherent in what masquerades as innocent, neutral economics content knowledge particularly with regard to the representations of the discourses of globalisation in school economics textbooks. As a consequence, in this article we offer a sober assessment of the extent to which Africanisation and decolonisation debates have infused school curriculum policy and the extent to which the official NCS(CAPS) in particular might present as a major obstacle to this agenda.

Now that I have provided an overview into the motivation for OBE in relation to post-apartheid curriculum reform, and have paid particular attention to CAPS, I continue by taking a look at the documents that were drawn up specifically for the sake of focusing attention on and strategising the teaching of democratic citizenship and values. Needless to say, these were of even more relevance to the current study.

### **2.3.2 On values – policy documents dedicated specifically to values**

In the discussion that follows, I explore three policy documents: *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000), the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001) and *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* (DoE, 2011a). These documents took shape in response to a realisation that values had been somewhat neglected in previous curriculum

policy documents, and that, as previously mentioned (see sections 2.2.5 and 2.3), any statements made about values had been rather general and vague. In other words, this is an opportune moment to reflect on how the very existence of these three policy documents attest to the admittance, on the part of policymakers, that core values – such as compassion and empathy – were struggling to find a home within the actual South African educational setting and needed a stronger strategy of implementation. Of course, one will not find the policy documents referencing their own neoliberal tendencies, but, as Chapter 3 will elucidate, whenever core values – such as empathy and compassion, and the attempt at a meaningful and ethical dimension at schooling – seem to be struggling to materialise, it is very often a sign of a very neoliberal symptom, a sign of an environment where economic drives are not easily leaving room for or – more accurately – allowing the right soil for other, more relational and ethical ambitions to flourish.

### **2.3.2.1 Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education**

As *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000: 2) states, Professor Kader Asmal, the Minister of Education at the time, formed a working group on values in education. Their report serves as “a starting point in what ought to become a national debate on the appropriate values South Africa ought to embrace in its primary and secondary educational institutions” (DoE, 2000: 2).

The report summarises the following recommendations at the outset of the document (DoE, 2000: 6):

- The Report is emphatic about the responsibility of schools to develop the intellectual abilities of all learners.
- The Report is insistent that discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of race, gender and culture are profoundly harmful to learning and to the development of the self-worth of individuals.
- The authors of the Report believe that schools should provide learners with the tools to solve the problems that come with being human, throughout the cycle of life.
- [The Report] affirm[s] the policy of giving priority to schools located in the most disadvantaged areas of our country, where the majority of our population live, for investment in infrastructure and teaching quality.
- The value of tolerance would be best promoted by deepening our understanding of the origins, evolution and achievements of humanity, on the one hand, and through the

exploration and celebration of that which is common and diverse in our cultural heritage, on the other.

- Regarding multilingualism, [the Report proposes] that, as a medium of instruction, learners use the mother tongue or the mother tongue and English.
- The Report notes the lack of a strong reading and debating culture in our country and our schools. A key value that ought to be promoted is a thirst for knowledge and a receptiveness to new ideas, the value of openness.
- The shift from apartheid education to education for democracy requires a move from the value of authoritarian discipline to the value of accountability. In this respect the Report underlines the importance of teaching as a vocation and not just a job.
- The final value is social honour. This is about cultivating a sense of honour and identity as South Africans. It is about a process where individuals are comfortable with both a local or cultural identity and a national South African one (DoE, 2000: 6).

The report sets out to identify practical solutions to the implementation and teaching of values. The nine points mentioned above reach deep into the curriculum and into classroom activities, and it seems the intention is to move beyond mere ideas about values towards further steps of enactment.

The report highlights how the values identified relate to the broader South Africa and have a far-reaching and long-lasting impact: “They [values] are important for the personal, intellectual and emotional development of the individual. They are also influential in determining the quality of national character to which we as a people in a democracy aspire” (DoE, 2000: 6).

This imperative nature of values is emphasised a second time:

In a democracy, public education is one of the major vehicles by which the values of a people are acquired by the children and young adults who make up our schools’ population. It goes without saying that today’s children and young adults are tomorrow’s adults and leaders” (DoE, 2000: 10).

It is near impossible to over-emphasise the extensive positive and transformative effect that values could have on an entire country. It is of utmost importance, first of all, to realise the incalculable significance of values and, thereafter, to realise that the role that the educational system should play in teaching and imparting such values is significant.

The Working Group report (DoE, 2000: 10) is quick to point out that a study of values in schools is historically situated and “does not occur in a vacuum”. The apartheid era guaranteed that a corrupted set of values were fostered, for the regime was based on principles which “denied the humanity of the majority of our population” (DoE, 2000: 10). In fact, the project of identifying a satisfying set of values is at the core of establishing “an educational philosophy of a

democracy” (DoE, 2000: 11), since we are finding these values in the milieu immediately after erecting our Constitution and Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996a). It is all the more important, then, to create and facilitate documents such as this report, which help us move deeper into our study of values and their enactment.

In order to construct the framework for the recommendations in general, the Working Group report states that there are “three key elements to an educational philosophy” (DoE, 2000: 11). The first key element “is to develop the intellectual abilities and critical faculties among all of the children and young adults in our schools” (DoE, 2000: 11). This is already a challenge, since the type of thinking prevalent during apartheid fed on “conformity, obedience to rules and the suspension of intelligence” (DoE, 2000: 11). The second key element is inclusiveness. The third key element is to “provide learners with the tools to solve the many problems that come with being human, throughout the life cycle” (DoE, 2000: 11). To this end, the report notes that one needs an approach similar to the one used in science, where knowledge and rationality arm us to face challenges. However, beyond that, one needs “will and courage” which come not only from science, but from the “spirituality of humanity that defines our attitude to life” (DoE, 2000: 12).

The section thereafter focuses on equity and the disproportionate access to education that followed apartheid (DoE, 2000: 16). A third section of the report, titled “tolerance”, urges one to consider the importance of having a diverse range of learners at school. For this, one would need to establish the value of tolerance (DoE, 2000: 22). This necessitates not only “a truthfulness about the failures and successes of the human past but [also] the active and deliberate incorporation of differences in the moral traditions, arts, culture, religions and sporting activity in the ethos and life of a school” (DoE, 2000: 22).

Under the section on tolerance, the report mentions the subject of history – a reminder of the successes and failures of humankind (DoE, 2000: 23). From the study of history, we can reassess our moral stances and find a more tolerant foundation. Furthermore, we can open ourselves to the study of three highly important areas that support us in our sentiments of tolerance. Firstly, we can study the consolidating findings within the scientific and evolutionary fields for the lack of importance of outward appearance amongst human beings (DoE, 2000: 24). Secondly, we can study the different histories of the different residents of South Africa, with their origins in Africa, Europe and Asia (DoE, 2000: 24). From this we can generate “knowledge of the other” and further our levels of tolerance (DoE, 2000: 24). Thirdly, we can study examples of past human rights violations and be as shielded as possible from repeating such mistakes (DoE, 2000: 24).

The report also mentions the worth of extra-curricular activities (for the sake of promoting tolerance and making learners comfortable with diversity). This includes performing arts at school and team-based sports (DoE, 2000: 25). It is recommended that “provincial departments of education interact with arts and culture bodies to develop diversity programmes in these areas” (DoE, 2000: 25.).

The final point raised with regard to tolerance concerns “discriminatory practices” (DoE, 2000: 26). It is recommended that there be much less lenience with such practices. The report warns that certain practices which “masquerade under the pretensions of culture” will be more engrained in the traditions of schools and pose a challenge (DoE, 2000: 26). An example given is that of initiation ceremonies at schools (where young learners are forced to participate in unpleasant activities and rituals before being welcomed into the broader group) (DoE, 2000: 26).

The next section in the report focuses on multilingualism. Apartheid had as its result the “furthering of Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu as so-called tribal oral languages and English and Afrikaans as official, state supported, languages of communication, record and business” (DoE, 2000: 30). The report suggests that each learner should be able to study in his or her own home language (DoE, 2000: 31).

The section thereafter is termed “openness”. This segment explains that, although problem solving is linked to literacy and numeracy, there is another realm of problem solving, which depends on the ability to open one’s self up to the world around one (DoE, 2000: 39). The report itself admits that it is “one of the most difficult qualities to define”, but explains it as –

[T]he value of being open and receptive to new ideas; with developing the ability to ask good and penetrating questions; with insisting on good evidence for arguments; and with being willing to debate ideas in order to arrive at quality decisions (DoE, 2000: 39).

To this end, a recommendation is made for the introduction of debating societies in schools (DoE, 2000: 39).

The next section of the report deals with accountability. South African teachers have been burdened with unfair levels of blame; yet, their educational role is nothing less than a vocation with a “responsibility [that] requires a strong sense of commitment to some core norms of behaviour and conduct” (DoE, 2000: 42). Too often, we do not respect this compelling position within which teachers are. We fail to understand how dynamic and personal their role and contributions are. To see the educational experience as a market phenomenon is to miss the invaluable process of “individual growth”, which learners undergo (DoE, 2000: 42). Furthermore, children grow best in stable environments that are well structured. For this

reason, it is suggested that, although they have been at the receiving end of unwarranted criticism, teachers be punctual and scrutinise and monitor homework regularly (DoE, 2000: 43). There must, at least, remain such a standard of accountability for teachers. Finally, governing bodies run by parents should be reassessed so as to reinforce the synergy and cooperation between teachers and parents (DoE, 2000: 43).

The final section of the report is titled “honour”. Apartheid saw a country without any symbols which all could support. There were nothing more than the symbols of the white minority (DoE, 2000: 48). This left the country cautious when it came to the politically charged act of building a national identity (DoE, 2000: 49). Rather, South Africans have been urged to “reconcile” and find the “common ground” rather than “to aggressively assert our South African-ness against outsiders and the ‘other’” (DoE, 2000: 49). Notwithstanding, the report suggests that the national anthem, the national flag and a pledge of allegiance to remind of “the fundamental values to which South Africans in a democracy aspire” can be some of the items, which could surcharge schools with a growing atmosphere of national identity (DoE, 2000: 50).

A report such as this one is an invaluable contribution to South African education policy. The fact that the report envisions all the values as they are situated in a classroom and curricular context, speaks volumes of the understanding on the part of the policymakers of the necessity to move from purely theoretical discussions into the realm of implementation. However, I remain sceptical about whether or not the suggestions made in the report can penetrate deep enough into the internal world of learners. However, I digress, the section on contemplative education shall, hopefully, give us a renewed perspective on how to share and teach values in a more penetrating manner than what the abovementioned policy documents can facilitate.

### **2.3.2.2 Manifesto on values, education, and democracy**

*Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000) was directly followed by the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001). The document was born from the idea to “[mould] a people from diverse origins, cultural practices, languages, into one, within a framework democratic in character, that can absorb, accommodate and mediate conflicts and adversarial interests without oppression and injustice” (DoE, 2001: 1). The present day holds its own set of challenges, such as “HIV/AIDS, unemployment, globalisation and the maintenance of national unity” and it is strongly suggested that “education is an essential part of meeting these challenges” (DoE, 2001: 1). Beyond the six qualities identified as essential by *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour), the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* goes a

step further –

[A]nd explores the ideals and concepts of democracy, social justice, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, Ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), the rule of law, respect, and reconciliation in a way that suggests how the Constitution can be taught, as part of the curriculum, and brought to life in the classroom, as well as applied practically in programmes and policy making by educators, administrators, governing bodies and officials (DoE, 2001: 2).

In other words, these are the ten main values which the manifesto identifies as essential values found in the Constitution.

The manifesto highlights a set of educational strategies used to instil the values it wants to promote (DoE, 2001: 4). Specific strategies are used, because “values cannot be legislated” (DoE, 2001: 4). In other words, the manifesto is implying that we must be wary of disseminating values in a formulaic and abstracted manner. Values are complex sets of ideas and lifestyle characteristics, which need to be understood deeply by any child and which should be taught through example.

Allow me to now share the strategies suggested by the manifesto:

- “Nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools”  
This entails the creation of dialogue between parents, learners and staff (DoE, 2001: 4) and would have the “effect of enabling young South Africans to become open, curious and empowered citizens” (DoE, 2001: 18).
- “Role-modelling: promoting commitment as well as competence among educators”  
Staff members have to be committed to their craft because everything they do will be absorbed by learners who are prone to follow whatever example is in front of them (DoE, 2001: 20). This implies that teachers have to move beyond competence and have a sense of commitment as well – through an understanding of the values contained in the Constitution (DoE, 2001: 21).
- “Ensuring that every South African is able to read, write, count and think”  
We must first acknowledge and, thereafter, tackle the immense shortcomings in terms of these essential skills (DoE, 2001: 22).
- “Infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights”  
We must ensure that all children, regardless of race, gender or class, are treated equally and fairly (DoE, 2001: 26).
- “Making arts and culture part of the curriculum”  
The manifesto speaks about “liberating the imagination” and how this is of equal

importance as “mastery of numbers and natural laws in the school setting” (DoE, 2001: 27). Furthermore, arts and culture can act as a vessel through which learners absorb the “values of equality, non-racism, non-sexism, *ubuntu*, openness, reconciliation and respect” (DoE, 2001: 28).

- “Putting history back into the curriculum”  
History can act as an exercise in interrogation, through which we interrogate “the values and morality that, in the past, were the product of political expedience, habit, and convention” (DoE, 2001: 29). It gives a context to values when they are set against a narrative backdrop (DoE, 2001: 30).
- “Introducing religion education into schools”  
The different religious traditions and systems act as some of the most potent conveyers of values known to us. Religion is a powerful path unto compassion, care and general mature awareness of others (DoE, 2001: 32). Therefore, to study various religions, without promoting one at the expense of others, is a great asset to learners.
- “Making multilingualism happen”  
Learners have shown to be much more receptive and effective at school if they can be taught in their mother tongue (DoE, 2001: 34). Furthermore, it is vital that South Africans become adept at using the English language, as it is the foremost international language, used for tourism, business, cultural exchanges and more (DoE, 2001: 34).
- “Using sport to shape social bonds and nurture nation building at schools”  
Through sport, children can learn to channel their various energies in ways that help to curtail prejudice and promote unity in diversity (DoE, 2001: 37).
- “Ensuring equal access to education”  
The various values we are trying to instil will not travel far if there is not a fair and open level of access to them (DoE, 2001: 39).
- “Promoting anti-racism in schools”  
This entails making sure that not only grosser forms of racism, but also subtle forms, such as devaluing another’s culture, are stopped (DoE, 2001: 42).
- “Freeing the potential of girls as well as boys”  
Much of what a girl takes herself to be is dictated by the social construct that is gender. And, often, it ends in a narrow and limiting definition for such girls (DoE, 2001: 44). Girls are discouraged from pursuing areas of science, business and mathematics that are seen as more masculine (DoE, 2001: 45). Girls are also kept away from school because of other, unwarranted expectations such as domestic chores and childcare

(DoE, 2001: 45). Then there is a range of physical and sexual abuse to contend with (DoE, 2001: 45). All of these obstacles need to be addressed if we are to free the potential of girls.

- “Dealing with HIV/AIDS and nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility”  
In order to combat HIV and AIDS successfully, we need to arm ourselves with values such as “respect, responsibility, the ability to think, say and act the same thing – integrity” (DoE, 2001: 47). Each year, young people are having their first sexual encounters at younger and younger ages (DoE, 2001: 47). We need to draw upon the constitutional values of respect, responsibility, openness and communication if we wish to help young people to protect themselves (DoE, 2001: 49). Furthermore, values such as “social justice, equality and Ubuntu” will help us to avoid stigmatising and discriminating against victims of HIV and AIDS (DoE, 2001: 49).
- “Making schools safe to learn and teach in and ensuring the rule of law”  
It is impossible to teach values in an environment that is neither safe nor stable. One cannot teach values if those very values are being undermined by those who are supposed to absorb and express them (DoE, 2001: 51).
- “Ethics and the environment”  
We should advocate a sustainable and responsible way of life, where one considers the impact of each of one’s actions on one’s surroundings. After all, there is no possibility of a healthy life without a healthy environment (DoE, 2001: 54). The manifesto states, “when the Constitution was adopted it linked environmental issues to values underpinned by human rights and social responsibilities” (DoE, 2001: 54). The proper management of the natural environment requires deeply realised values, because such management calls for limiting measures in the areas of “the production processes, employment practices, legislation on conservation, local government law and, ultimately, the habits of living of individual citizens” (DoE, 2001: 55).
- “Nurturing the new patriotism, or affirming our common citizenship”  
The manifesto recommends that we, as a country, embrace “a shared sense of pride in commonly held values – and in the symbols of those commonly held values”, because, through this process, “a common identity is forged, and a loyalty to this common identity is established” (DoE, 2001: 57). And this sense of pride should be very far from the “narrow patriotism of the past, predicated upon, and perpetrating, the subjugation or denial of others” (DoE, 2001: 57). The point is, schools can play a considerable role in the creation of a sense of national pride, which can drive the adoption of the many values under discussion.

### **2.3.2.3 Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers ('the guide')**

The third document on values, *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* ('the guide') (DoE, 2011a, is, to my mind, the most relevant of the three (from here on out I will refer to it as 'the guide'). This is because the document recognises that values and democratic rights are near meaningless concepts without being joined to the idea of responsibility. From the outset, the document cites the necessity of respect (DoE, 2011a: 2). It is indeed interesting that the document looks critically at how rights can be approached from a self-motivated position (DoE, 2011a: 4). In doing so, the guide expects a new level of self-reflection from learners, not seen in the previously discussed policy documents. The guide recalls the concept of *ubuntu* and reflects on the individual's inescapable integration with his or her community. Indeed, "individual freedoms cannot really be separated from the freedoms of the whole community" (DoE, 2011a: 4). It goes on to show that the idea of responsibility is, in fact, grounded in legislation under the "Bill of Responsibilities" (DoE, 2011a: 4). This Bill of Responsibilities (see RSA, 2008) is a reminder to the learners of South Africa that our "rights like equality, respect, dignity and life" cannot be carried very far unless we "take responsibility to act in ways that protect, ensure and uphold these rights" (DoE, 2011a: 4). The Bill can help South Africans to break away from the illusion that "freedom means doing what I like", and it encourages citizens to give back to their communities (DoE, 2011a: 4).

The DoE (2011a: 6) had research conducted, which indicated that there are two values whose absence is felt most – respect and dialogue. The guide reminds us that "respect is an essential precondition for communication, for teamwork, for productivity" (DoE, 2011a: 6).

Within the guide one finds a set of rights along with the accompanying responsibilities to ensure that those rights can be upheld for all (DoE, 2011a: 6). This includes the rights to equality, human dignity, life, family or parental care, education, work, freedom and security of the person, own property, freedom of religion, belief and opinion, living in a safe environment, citizenship and freedom of expression (DoE, 2011a: 9). I will not go into the details, but for each of these, the guide makes it clear that one cannot fairly make a claim to such rights if one is not taking the necessary steps in ensuring that these rights are maintained for others (DoE, 2011a). In other words, one should take up some responsibility and be focused on other persons and their needs, instead of being exclusively focused on one's self. Beyond helping others to live out such rights, one should also be grateful for anything that is provided by one's country or fellow citizens, and engage with such resources and initiatives with utmost respect and appreciation. Together, such attitudes mark a learner who has begun to understand that rights always need to be accompanied by thorough responsibility (DoE, 2011a).

The guide gives ideas on “including responsibilities in school norms”, through the use of a code of conduct (DoE, 2011a: 15). Such a code of conduct should ensure that the right to education is upheld for all (through school culture), that human rights are integrated into school life through classroom activities and the choosing of class leaders, and should “ensure that human relationships within the school community are based on the values of equality, dignity, respect and responsibility” (DoE, 2011a: 15).

Thereafter, the guide turns to the issue of discipline, a necessary ingredient for a code of conduct and responsible behaviour. It denounces the use of “sarcasm, hitting or other forms of punitive punishment”, pointing out that it is “unlikely to produce meaningful results for anybody” (DoE, 2011a: 21). Corporal punishment will not go far in helping the child to develop a sense of responsibility in a balanced way; rather, one must find a system of discipline which is “educationally sound” and which can “provide opportunities for children to make right what they have done (based on the principle of restorative justice)” (DoE, 2011a: 21).

The guide mentions four acts, which are against corporal punishment:

- the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996);
- the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996);
- the Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act (No. 33 of 1997); and
- the Regulations Promulgated Under the Child Care Act (No. 74 of 1983 amended 1998) (DoE, 2011a: 24).

In other words, discipline is best constructed through a harmonious process between both teachers and learners, where the learners can arrive at an internally originating sense of discipline that is built from core values, which are centred on respect and responsibility.

The guide also emphasises the importance of weaving the education about rights and responsibilities into the curriculum, through:

- the management of the classroom;
- the way the learning environment is set up;
- the relationships in the classroom – learner to learner and teacher to learner; and
- the activities and strategies developed for learning and teaching (DoE, 2011a: 27).

Thereafter, the guide moves to pre-existing policy documents, and notes that “[t]he framework established by the Constitution, Bill of Rights, Law and Policies for education in South Africa supports teaching and learning for democracy, human rights and peace quite directly” (DoE, 2011a: 30). It mentions “the critical and developmental outcomes”, which “are a list of outcomes informed by the Constitution” and which “describe the kind of citizen it is hoped will emerge from the education and training system and underpin all teaching and learning processes” (DoE, 2011a: 30). In other words, we hope to have – as a result of our education

– a group of young adults armed with “core life skills for learners, such as communication, critical thinking, activity and information management, group and community work.” (DoE, 2011a: 30). Eventually, these outcomes aim to enable learners to “learn effectively and become responsible, sensitive and productive citizens” (DoE, 2011a: 30).

In the post-apartheid era, the curriculum was revised, with a specific emphasis being placed on human rights and responsibilities, for “the power of education to create social cohesion and to transform values and social cultures” was recognised (DoE, 2011a: 31). The NCS strives to “infuse and integrate [outcomes for human rights and responsibilities] across the whole curriculum” instead of forcing it into or relegating it to a specific Learning Area (DoE, 2011a: 31). The implication is quite profound, for now it falls upon each teacher to teach “for and about human rights and human responsibility” (DoE, 2011a: 31). This section of the guide, showing how the need for responsibility (as a counterpart to rights) is firmly grounded in the previous policy documents and their outcomes, is a further legitimisation of the entire guide.

At this juncture, I must profess that I am incredibly excited by this guide. The three policy documents that have been explored in this section focus exclusively on values, and, therefore, are different to those explored before them. This final ‘guide’ (*Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers*) was the most important document for my purposes, as it honed in on the most essential concept of responsibility.

This focused discussion and investigation of responsibility as a sustainer of important values is an important contribution to the literature on values. It shows, once more, that the policy documents are in support of the core values of compassion and empathy, because the focus on responsibility runs parallel with an awareness of and concern for other human beings. The main thrust of the guide argues that rights are not something we merely grab for ourselves, without any consideration of being responsible for the well-being of others.

A further consideration of the value of responsibility and possible philosophical underpinnings for the concept will be reported on in the next chapter. For now, I simply say that ‘the guide’ is a special document. The topic of responsibility is a well-timed one and I feel it will become increasingly important as the various challenges we face converge worldwide.

In light of the above policy documents, it is clear that there is full support from the various post-apartheid policy documents for the cultivation of learners who are deeply concerned with core values of compassion, empathy and responsibility. The documents emphasise the cultivation of different values and practices, which can see a democratic and fair South Africa emerge – one that takes human rights seriously. The documents also make it clear that core values of compassion, empathy and responsibility (not to mention others) are a necessary foundation for this task.

However, I have one piece of criticism that might constitute the most important finding of this chapter. One should carefully note that *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000) and the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001) (the policymakers' first real response to the lack of implementation of values education) merely identify different values, without having any specific strategy or step-by-step action plan on how to implement the teaching and representation of values. The third document on values to appear, 'the guide' (DoE, 2011a: 37), does include what it terms "[p]hase by phase ideas for learning and teaching about responsibilities at school", but the recommendations within this section of the document remain rather unstructured. 'The guide' has the feeling of serving as a friendly reminder to teachers of how they might include some values education in their teaching. It serves as a collection of (hopefully) stimulating ideas, and certainly does not represent any solid, clearly outlined and centralised action plan for implementation.

Thus, it is clear that there is a significant gap in this piece of policy, as with most others I have looked at. Ethical values and values education consistently give the impression of an afterthought, and I simply cannot imagine Mathematics, Accounting, Natural Science or any other skills-oriented and economically important subjects receiving such vague outlines for implementation within the curriculum. This speaks volumes of how the approach towards implementation is not realistic – in fact, there is hardly any structured approach – although the notion of values is strongly present throughout all the policy documents I studied. I propose that it is part of the effect of the strong presence of neoliberalism in education that leads to such oversights, but more on that in the next chapter.

## **2.4 Disparities in the teaching of values**

It is important to draw the reader's attention briefly to the way in which different disparities in the South African context influence the teaching of values.

There are disparities in terms of language, whereby the learning process is made exceedingly difficult for (especially) indigenous African children, who have to switch from their indigenous tongues to English as a language of instruction (Macdonald, 1990). There are further disparities brought about by economic inequalities. Even though government attempted to balance the learner–teacher ratio across different socio-economic areas, better-resourced schools can draw from a larger pool of school fees to hire additional staff, and poorer schools sometimes strain to find enough teachers to fulfil the most basic needs of the school (Van der Berg, 2008: 10). There are disparities (in terms of infrastructure and resources) brought about by ecological factors (Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013). Other disparities are brought about by

constraining influences, such as “child abuse and violence, HIV and AIDS and a lack of access to services, as well as the fragmentation of the family unit, the loss of caregivers and unsafe environments” (Children’s Institute, 2003, cited in Rooth, 2005: 3). These disparities give rise to another disparity – the digital divide. The digital divide refers to the major gap in terms of opportunities between those with access to information and communication technology (ICT) services and those without access to it. This disparity is most definitely relevant in the South African context (Mutula, 2005; Oyedemi & Mogano, 2018).

The point is that the South African curriculum is influenced by many variables. There are many groups of people, with different needs and interests. The same holds true for any discussion about values. One must remain cautious when expectations are constructed for teaching a set of universal values to diverse groups of people. Therefore, the various disparities have been mentioned in order to remind the reader of the complex setting against which the current research question (see section 2.1) was posed. However, the issue of varied and deep disparities lay beyond the scope of the current research project. My aim was not to attempt to grapple with such disparities but to offer, amidst the disparities, an argument for the ability of contemplative education to teach values of compassion and empathy in a manner that is flexible and mindful of the different disparities. In future chapters, I will argue that contemplative education can be presented in an adaptive way, calling not so much for physical resources or practical advantages as for a paradigm shift on behalf of those who try to teach contemplative education and those to whom it is taught.

Furthermore, in thinking of policies, it is essential to meditate upon the overall inadequacy of pages and pages and chapters and chapters of policy ideas if such ideas are met with a learner base that is entirely apathetic, detached, uninspired and not at all equipped with the right hypotheses and methods for feeling themselves involved in the world they inhabit. This is what I aimed to gain from care ethics and, to a larger extent, from contemplative education – the pedagogical approach, the techniques, the mind-set, the worldview that urges students to feel responsible and empathetic.

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter focused on the education policies of post-apartheid South Africa. When asking whether contemplative education can respond to the contradiction between neoliberalism and core values in CAPS, it becomes necessary to assess the policy documents that led up to CAPS. After looking at a theoretical understanding of the concept of education policy itself, and a brief history of education in South Africa under apartheid and the negative effects it had on people of colour, I turned to the policy documents of the post-apartheid era.

A chronological account of each main policy document revealed the different goals and values found within such documents. Furthermore, I looked at the criticisms levelled against the policy documents. Thereafter, considerable time was allocated to specific policy documents, which do not express values in an indirect manner while focusing on other concerns, but which were specifically drawn up to focus on values. It was important for this study, which had a primarily philosophical drive, to be grounded in a specific South African context, and this was achieved through a proper investigation of the policies, as reported on in this chapter. Finally, I feel it necessary to mention once again the key overall finding – the policy documents are clearly highly ambitious (as a newly formed democracy should be), while, at the same time, they do not take into account the precautions and awareness necessary in order to make these various aims realise.

Other authors, as touched upon in this chapter, have noted that this naivety has shown itself through the poor implementation of the policies. This study found such naivety by exposing the tension between neoliberalism and ethical core values that are both present in the policy documents. There is no clear indication that the policies are aware of the potential threat of this tension. I showed that there was a definite awareness of the need to improve policy on values (*Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000), the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001) and *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* ('the guide') (DoE, 2011a)], but one is yet to see a similar awareness towards the role neoliberalism plays in undermining ethical values. The next chapter will continue the discussion of the presence of a neoliberal mentality in these documents.

## CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW – NEOLIBERALISM

### 3.1 Introduction

The problem statement asked whether the tensions found in CAPS between the desired core values and the desired neoliberalist goals could be bridged by contemplative education (see section 1.4). However, in order to understand such a question fully, it is clear that the concepts of neoliberalism, values and contemplative education need some clarification and understanding.

Sub-question 2 reads:

How might neoliberalism undermine ethical values?

The first parts of this chapter (3.2) sketch a brief overview of neoliberalism, and mention some of its ardent supporters. Thereafter, I report on the writings of the critics of neoliberalism (3.3), in order to answer sub-question 4. The findings quickly lead to the premise that the ways in which neoliberalism shapes our identity, and the ways in which such identities shape how we relate to others, offer the best answer to the question regarding how neoliberalism undermines ethical values (see 3.3). This topic will show how our identities are formed around a consumerist and neoliberalist model, which stifles our relationship with the 'other' and obfuscates a chance of developing many of the ethical values praised by the ethics of care and by contemplative education.

Relationality is a topic that surfaces within the works of the care ethicists and the works of those writing about contemplative education (after all, ethics is largely about how we relate to others), but it is equally important to find authors writing about the influence neoliberalism has on relationality, because such literature would necessarily show a greater understanding of the ethical implications of neoliberalism. After this analysis follows a section that looks at the specific effects neoliberalism has on educational institutions (see 3.3.4).

Finally, it should also be mentioned that, although this latter section on educational institutions is included in the chapter, it is not immediately clear how much of the work preceding it is related to education or, for that matter, to the South African educational context. However, this does not mean that the current study did not ultimately focus on the South African context. I urge the reader to consider how this chapter serves as a conceptual framework for understanding neoliberalism. All the findings have a bearing on the South African educational context, for they cast a light on the lives of learners beyond just the classroom. It can be argued that the life learners live outside the walls of a classroom is what they bring with them to the classroom, and this has repercussions for all areas of their education. In other words, before

being able to make accurate claims about how one should proceed with a learner's education, one must first know something about the learner in question. That is the rationale behind a conceptual approach, and in order to follow such a way of investigation, one needs to assess the international literature. I have also attempted to include, near the end of the chapter, a discussion of important writings by South African authors regarding neoliberalism in the South African context.

### **3.2. Neoliberalism – a quick summary and a look at its supporters**

Neoliberalism has become the main authority on how society is organised, both in the United States and the rest of the world (Harvey, 2005). What we now have is a society that has taken its economic rationality into other spheres of politics and social culture, which has transformed the citizen into an “autonomous economic actor” (Saunders, 2010: 42) and taken away large parts of state support systems (Baez, 2007; Lemke, 2001; Turner, 2008). Even social and political institutions have come to define their approaches based on economic measures (Apple, 2001; Aronowitz, 2000; Giroux, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), such as “commodification, commercialization, and marketization, as well as the extension of market logic and the prioritization of economic outcomes” (Saunders, 2010: 42). In addition, even though, unemployment, inequality and personal debt have skyrocketed since the inception of neoliberalism, and power has moved from the hands of government to multinational organisations and financial institutions, the loyalty to this theory remains firm (Dumenil & Levy, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Palley, 2005; Przeworski, 1992; Springer, Birch & MacLeavy, 2016).

The way in which neoliberalism differs from classical liberalism is the way in which it adapted to meet the economic threats of the 1970s (Lemke, 2001). This adaptation is significant, because the economic rationale subsequently extended past mere economics and into other areas of life (Lemke, 2001). Everything done by an individual in the modern era is done as an economic decision-making process, with concern for the maximisation of “human capital” (Baez, 2007: 7). Today's citizen has a rooted belief in the strength of the economy to bring prosperity to all (Shaikh, 2005; Springer, Birch & MacLeavy, 2016). Whenever the system seems to malfunction, it is claimed that such failure is due to interference with the working of the market (Harman, 2008). Inequalities are not possible when the market is completely free, argues the neoliberalist, because when self-regulated, the market will ensure that wealth is distributed adequately (Turner, 2008). For some of the pioneering writers of neoliberalism (Hayek, 1962), it is always possible for an individual to work hard and pull him- or herself out of a situation of poverty or inequality. These early neoliberalist writers also claim that there

exists a trickle-down effect, whereby the further prosperity of rich portions of society translates into the prosperity of all (Friedman, 1962).

Many writers (Apple, 2004; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Eagleton, 1991, in Saunders, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Munck, 2005) also elaborate on how neoliberalism has managed to become so deeply engrained in the modern world. It should be understood for what it is – an ideology. As Eagleton (1991, in Saunders, 2010: 49) states, this ideology is maintained and promoted by “excluding alternatives and rival forms of thought, legitimizing the neoliberal structure and outcomes, [and] obfuscating the impacts of neoliberalism”. The staunch proponents of neoliberalism (politicians and the general public) claim it as the only viable option in terms of an overarching economic plan (Harvey, 2005). One only needs to look at a figure like Margaret Thatcher, who frequently used the expression “[t]here is no alternative” (Apple, 2004: xi; Saunders, 2010: 49).

The fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) served as another nail in the coffin for the narrative of alternatives (Munck, 2005). Davies and Bansel (2007: 253) remind one that, despite the many calamities brought about by neoliberal governments (George, 1999; Saul, 2005), “neoliberalism is still accepted as the only possible economic and social order that is available to us” (Davies & Bansel, 2007: 253), and “it is taken without question as true that future security and prosperity are linked to market solutions which solidify cooperation between economically interdependent nations” (Davies & Bansel, 2007: 253). According to Eagleton (1991, in Saunders, 2010: 49), an important method for imbedding the ideology of neoliberalism is to obfuscate its negative social and economic footprint. Such a “fragmented truth” (Saunders, 2010: 50) allows for the ease of sustained support from the citizens. Some theorists hold that the media and schools are used to obscure the real drawbacks of neoliberalism (Aronowitz, 2000; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 2004).

As an ideology, neoliberalism has no shortage of support in today’s world. However, it is important to note that this support comes almost exclusively from economists, corporations and politicians. Of course, there is, firstly, the support coming from the originators, in the writings of figures such as Milton Friedman (1962) and Frederick Hayek (1962). Furthermore, one could argue that neoliberalism comes from a momentum of thought that is older – from the liberalism that predates it (see Smith, 2019) – but Friedman and Hayek gave it its unique form. Then there are the modern economists, who either furiously defend the merits of neoliberalism (such as Smith, 2017; Sumner, 2016) or who eagerly restate their allegiance to the doctrine (see Bowman, 2016; Williams, 2017). Many of these articles come from think-tanks – a popular modern political force. Many of the aforementioned articles are available on think-tank websites. The massive influence that such groups have on policy decisions is shown by the fact that they are sometimes referred to as policy institutes. Slater (2016: 372)

reminds one that these groups, which are “never subject to democratic accountability”, have an enormous effect on the workings of the state. Wacquant (2010, cited in Slater, 2016: 379) puts it even more strongly by saying that think tanks have “irrevocably altered the institutional matrix through which policy knowledge percolates”. The bottom line is that these think tanks act as a very powerful way through which the supporters of neoliberalism channel their influence.

### **3.3. Neoliberal values antithetical to ethical values**

After taking a brief look at an overview of neoliberalism and its supporters, I now turn to the writings of the critics, to consider some of the contestation and controversy surrounding neoliberal ideology, to see whether there are any areas where I disagree with the critics. This section is where sub-question 4 – “How does neoliberalism undermine ethical values?” – receives its due attention. Therefore, this section will show the different values, formed through the ideology of neoliberalism, which are in many ways antithetical to ethical values such as empathy, compassion and responsibility for one’s fellow human being.

#### **3.3.1 The neoliberal identity – individualism and economic decision-making**

Writing about neoliberalism, Baez (2007) shows extensively how our economic predisposition has filtered into the different areas of life, such as relationships and social institutions, of which schools form an invaluable part. Saunders (2010: 53) argues that the “pervasiveness of economic rationality into all aspects of life” is what contributes most to establishing the dominance of neoliberalism. Perhaps the most powerful effect of neoliberalism is the extent to which the individual is now defined by and identifies with economic incentives. All the non-economic parts of the individual’s life are approached using a similar cost–benefit analysis (Lemke, 2001).

In fact, within neoliberalism, there is such a great focus on the individual and his or her pursuance of an economically defined maximisation of ‘returns’, that social measures for the eradication of injustice are seen as something impeding upon individual autonomy (Saunders, 2010). Therefore, these analyses of how citizens become economically minded in all areas of life were of great importance to this study, as one began to see why neoliberalism blocks one’s ability to be engaged with core values of empathy and responsibility. Critics of neoliberalism would rightly claim that neoliberalism benefits the rich at the expense of the poor and makes use of structural inequalities to benefit business (Chomsky, 1998; Giroux, 2005). It is, therefore, hard to argue that an educational system which is so preoccupied with a neoliberal

mode of life can be considered ethical. Neoliberalism does not bode well for our capacity to assimilate and live through values of empathy, compassion and responsibility. Davies and Bansel (2007: 252) note that this increased individualism brings about the “shrugging off of collective responsibility for the vulnerable and marginalized”.

Apple (2004) also explains how neoliberalism has become so enmeshed with our beliefs and ways of thinking that we would be unable to consider it objectively as something for which there might be alternatives. When we use economic thinking to inform each aspect of our life, such thinking is seen as a natural part of being a human being. Hayek (1962) accepts economic thinking as a necessary ingredient of the free world (Saunders, 2010). Hofstadter (1992) writes how social Darwinism (see Hofstadter, 1941) has filtered into our way of thinking and mode of living. Competition is the norm (Hofstadter, 1992). Neoliberalism is also reinforced by the tendency to accept cost–benefit analysis and rational choice as mind-sets of which all human beings make use at all times (Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Munro, 2004).

An article entitled “Neoliberalism and education” by Davies and Bansel (2007) also provides significant insights. The authors argue that neoliberalism as an ideology is a planned system, pushed by those with interests to pursue and gains to make. Work on this point has been done by George (1999) and Saul (2005). It is Foucault who notes that those in power “structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault, 1994: 341). Davies and Bansel (2007: 248) state, “[it is] primarily this reconfiguration of subjects as economic entrepreneurs, and of institutions capable of producing them, which is central to understanding the structuring of possible fields of action that has been taking place with the installation of neoliberal modes of governance”.

Davies and Bansel (2007: 248) then note that schools play a central role in helping this structuring of society along through the production of “highly individualized, responsabilized subjects”. The work of Rose (1999) shows how individuals become passive and submissive, and give up their freedom while thinking that they are gaining more and more of it. Davies and Bansel (2007: 249) further suggest that individuals are “seduced by their own perceived powers of freedom” while also having “let go of significant collective powers” like the “erosion of union power”. Individualism is, then, something seen as a sign of newfound freedom, while it is actually nothing but an opportunity for corporations to permeate increased competition. The result of this is nothing but more risk for the individual rather than the government, which harms not only the individual, but the state as well (Saul, 2005). Ironically, the very freedom that we seek, being so economically defined and dependent, is a freedom now even more at the mercy of the state, which shapes the economy through what it “desires, demands and enables” (Davies & Bansel, 2007: 250).

The ways in which individuals are brought to take on more personal risk and to invest themselves wholeheartedly in a neoliberal mode are subtle, yet effective. Economic efficiency, or, better yet, survival, is presented as a “moral absolute” (Davies & Bansel, 2007: 251) and the usual avenues of democratic discussion are pushed to the side (Mouffe, 2005). Yet another way in which neoliberalism gains popularity in a covert way is through the use of “piecemeal functionalism” (Davies & Bansel, 2007: 251), which refers to the country-wide influences of large corporations and technocrats on policy, whereby there is a greatly “lessen[ed] chance people will grasp the overall [neoliberal] scheme and organize resistance” (Sklar, 1980: 21). Yet again, it is through discussions of globalisation and inevitability that people are eager to compete in a global market, and thus adopt such functionalist ideas (Davies & Bansel, 2007). And, as shown previously in this section this functionalism further increases (ironically) the control that government has over people’s lives – “[p]olitics must actively intervene in order to create the organisational and subjective conditions for entrepreneurship” (Rose, 1999: 144).

Davies and Bansel (2007: 253) further show how the individual is identified as an entrepreneurial actor:

Central to the imagined possibility of entrepreneurial success is the millionaire, or now multimillion dollar hero: even the most ordinary person can envisage for him/herself a life of extravagant consumption and a spectacular lifestyle. This fantasy is both produced and made tangible through the public circulation of celebrity lifestyles, cosmetic surgery and fashion tips. These, along with reality television home renovation, cooking and gardening programmes, locate media viewers within practices of consumption through which they come to understand that whatever they have is not enough, and that more is always better. Further, ambitions to wealth are modelled by corporate heroes and savvy entrepreneurs, and brought within reach through the promise of lotteries and ‘get rich quick schemes’. Practices of consumption, attached to a discourse of lifestyle, install desire within subjects in such a way as to consolidate their embeddedness in discourses of success as material, as involving economic ambitions and desires above all else. In this way, the market, as a model of entrepreneurship, is firmly installed in the desire of each subject to ‘be’ and to ‘become’.

The current section has also mentioned the focus on “rational choice” inherent in neoliberalism. This type of ‘rationality-obsession’ begins with economics at the theoretical level, and then travels further to our broader cultural narratives. Economists are usually under the sway of a syndrome one can term ‘pure theory delusion’. In other words, economists do not seem to distinguish very often between straightforward mathematical theories and complex realities (Bourdieu, 2002). Economists, according to Bourdieu (2002:n.p.), have their minds formed in a “purely abstract, bookish, and theoretical” manner. Yet, although they are so detached from reality, economists “contribute decisively to the production and reproduction

of belief” (Bourdieu, 2002:n.p.). Some use the term “economism” to refer to this tendency of modern economists to believe (naively) that economics can be separated and divorced from the political sphere (Brohman, 1995: 297; De Goede, 2003: 80). It is with the same oversimplified reductionist stroke that we conceive of individuals as rational choice-makers, forgetting the multitude of variables related to culture, history and emotional motivation. As Brohman (1995: 315) states, “if development concerns processes of human action and interaction rather than just goods and resources, it is important to deepen our understanding of what it is to be human”.

I agree strongly with these writers that the predominance of economic thought – without it being interwoven and balanced with the social and political realities of the modern world – is a dangerous position, which sustains an uncritical pursuance of our contemporary model of progression (regression). It would seem that economists are, generally, not interested in anything other than what makes an economy prosper in a very narrowly defined and gross domestic product- (GDP)-oriented manner. Then it becomes very easy to “cloak with mathematical reason” (Bourdieu, 2002:n.p.) the obvious destructive elements of our global neoliberal system. Whatever the cause of the economists’ limited vision, are those the types of people that should be carrying the greatest weight in policymaking? I find myself firmly placed within the other camp – those who consider the ideology of neoliberalism to be an obstacle on the path of ethical human progress (see Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Edwards, 2000; Rhodes, 2013). As will be show in the next two chapters, the tendency to try to reinterpret complex, daily ethical situations, and pervert them into abstract versions of their former selves, does not create a good platform for progressive ethical thinking (see Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Edwards, 2000; Rhodes, 2013).

### **3.3.2 A potential gap in the critical literature**

Thus far, within this section (3.3.1), I have shown that there are many authors who highlight the hyper-individuality and economically-driven, hyper-rationalised decision-making that results from neoliberal ideology. However, I feel the analysis has not answered sub-question 2 – “How might neoliberalism undermine ethical values?” sufficiently. We saw, for example, how one piece of literature (Davies & Bansel 2007: 252) noticed the “shrugging off of collective responsibility for the vulnerable and marginalized”. However, there is no further investigation or explanation and no deeper analysis of exactly how this came to be. The theorists referred to in the previous section (Apple, 2004; Baez, 2007; Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Hofstadter, 1992; Lemke, 2001; Munro, 2004; Saunders, 2010) made mention of how actors become more economically minded and individualised, but the overall analysis remains

broad and there is no discussion of the underlying processes that lead to such a situation. It is in the midst of such broad analyses that some (such as O'Neill & Weller, 2016; Venugopal, 2015, cited in Macrine, 2016) feel obliged to point out the unsystematic nature of the literature critical of neoliberalism. O'Neill and Weller (2016: 84) aim to investigate whether "neoliberalism's power to shape contemporary societies is overstated", feeling that neoliberalism has been defined so broadly that its threat is exaggerated. While there are those who insist that neoliberalism should not be too tightly defined (such as Springer, 2015, cited in O'Neill & Weller, 2016: 85), others feel it is not wise to bestow such a "mercurial position" on something that is said to be of such critical significance (O'Neill & Weller, 2016: 85). Venugopal (2015, cited in Macrine, 2016: 310) sees 'neoliberalism' as a "deeply problematic and incoherent term that has multiple and contradictory meanings, and thus has diminished analytical value". Then again, others would argue that neoliberalism is so malleable because it always exists as a leechlike entity that needs to infiltrate and merge with other systems (see Peck, 2013, cited in Macrine, 2016: 311). While I cannot agree with those who claim the dangers of neoliberalism might be overstated (such as O'Neill & Weller, 2016: 84), I do think their concerns stem from them sensing a real problem, even if misidentified. For example, O'Neill and Weller (2016: 91) state:

[E]ffective political activism must target actual events and occurrences that affect ordinary people's lives, and engage in ways that mobilize their interests, preferably in opposition to solid things that you can metaphorically throw a rock at, not imaginary things that defy definition.

In other words, what lies at the heart of the frustrations of writers such as O'Neill and Weller is the difficulty in mobilising citizens against neoliberalism. They express that neoliberalism, that which one attempts to oppose, is like an undefined, unidentified mist that cannot be grabbed or struck at. It is at this juncture that I want to voice my biggest concern regarding the literature critical of neoliberalism and offer some insights unique to this study. My concern is that there is not enough detail when analysing the behavioural patterns and ethical beliefs of the individual. By 'beliefs' I specifically mean the ways in which we view, think about and interact with other people. The fourth sub-question of this study was: "How does neoliberalism undermine ethical values?" I feel one needs a completely different type of analysis to answer this question – different from the macro-level analysis just mentioned. I want to bring to the reader's attention a more micro-level analysis.

Whereas the literature reviewed thus far might have spoken in political, economic or sociological terms, this study emphasised a more psychological or contemplative direction. After all, the main research question was, "Can contemplative education respond to the tension between neoliberalism and values education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)?" With this question, I am already implying that I feel optimistic about the

counteractive effect of contemplative education against neoliberalism (when speaking of values). This has, in large part, to do with the ability of contemplative education to make one aware of the modes and patterns of thinking that have control over us (see 5.3.1). Contemplative education is, thus, quite psychological and introspective and it is this nuanced exploration of the internal world of the individual that offers a detailed roadmap for countering potentially unethical neoliberal tendencies (see 5.3.1 and 5.3.2). Contemplative education (Chapter 5) as well as the care ethics discussed in the next chapter (as a precursor to contemplative education) both share an emphasis on social structures at micro level – the decisions and judgements we make about others and how we relate to them.

Of course, I will delve into these aspects of care ethics and contemplative education in more detail in the relevant chapters, but it is necessary to mention briefly this preoccupation with the microanalysis of the individual and his or her beliefs, identities, perceptions and patterns of behaviour, that shape both schools of thought. This is because this attention to the micro-level details makes these two schools of thought unique in their power to deconstruct and counteract neoliberalism. If that which counteracts neoliberalism were best understood in terms of a micro-level analysis of the individual, then it would have done this study well to find criticisms of neoliberalism, which understand the relevance of such a micro-level analysis. That is the role the next section and the upcoming chapters, in my humble opinion, succeeded with. This was, in my estimation, the best way to answer the question of which values contained in neoliberalism stand opposed to ethical values.

When asking about which values drive us toward a continued absorption in neoliberal ideology, the general idea is that people function as a “reserve army of employees rendered docile by these social processes that make their situations precarious” (Bourdieu, 2002:n.p.). In other words, it is growing job insecurities and economic austerity that serve as our excuse for doubling down on economics as our saviour. I am not convinced that such an analysis cuts deep enough. What is this culture of desires, the shallow values that have become the norm, which have led us so easily down that road? This is the more intimate level at which I wanted to investigate the values contained within neoliberalism. Macrine (2016: 313) blames the streams of knowledge to which we are exposed for our obsession with neoliberalism and claims, “naming the various pedagogies of neoliberalism can help to expose the insipid logic of the neoliberal regimes and expose how these predatory practices teach us to accept our oppression”. However, even a pedagogical explanation, is not, I fear, self-reflective enough. It is for this reason that I wanted to find answers that dig deeper.

Therefore, the choice of care ethics and contemplative education was a very specific one, for these are the schools of thought where values are intertwined with one’s relationship with the other in such manner that one must remain constantly vigilant of one’s decisions and the way

in which they affect one's environment and one's fellow human beings. However, as I mentioned, before moving to care ethics or to contemplative education, I had to identify criticisms of neoliberalism that move from a macro-oriented to a micro-oriented analysis. Such areas of criticism against neoliberalism could prove essential for the momentum of this study. One such area included writings on identity and relationality. These critics (Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Edwards, 2000; Rhodes, 2013) place the responsibility for the continuing flourishing of neoliberalism more firmly within the lap of the individual. They make clear that there are identities we accept and relational behaviours we imbibe, which make our neglect of the other and infatuation with neoliberalism seamless (Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Edwards, 2000; Rhodes, 2013). This is the type of introspective and self-critical direction in which the literature on neoliberalism might as well move. I remind the reader that when I say I have identified a gap in the literature, I am not claiming that this area of (micro-level) criticism does not exist (I provide the necessary examples and cite the authors). I am merely expressing that it is an underrepresented area within the literature. Perhaps that only shows that our entire academic world lacks a contemplative and self-reflective element. Furthermore, my unique contribution will be to show how writings such as what follows align perfectly with what has been said within care ethics and contemplative education, making myself part of the growing but small group of persons who feel that contemplative education is an apt counter to the negative effects of neoliberalism on education.

### **3.3.3 The neoliberal identity and relationality**

As I have attempted to explain, as an expansion of the criticism of neoliberalism, some writers study the way in which we form identities, for ourselves and others, and how such identities influence the way in which we relate to the 'other'. As will be clear in future chapters, values of empathy, compassion and responsibility require a mature sense of relating with and caring for the 'other'. Various writers (such as Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Edwards, 2000; Rhodes, 2013) have shown that neoliberalism fails miserably in this regard. This section is, thus, the most important part of my response to sub-question 2 of this thesis: "How might neoliberalism undermine ethical values?"

Rhodes (2013: 37) is troubled by the "neoliberal subject position [with its] assumed allegiance to capital rather than to other human beings or the quality of life". He refers to the work of Peterson (2006) to remind us of how neoliberalism results in the "literal destruction of the public space" (Rhodes, 2013: 37) and "its marketization and commodification of relationships" (Rhodes, 2013: 37). In a neoliberal framework, responsibility is a very individual concern. We simply need to "avoid or weather any economic or personal misfortune" (Rhodes, 2013: 39).

The effect is that any thoughts on values of empathy and responsibility become what Rhodes calls “asocial” (Rhodes, 2013: 39). My question is how effective our core ethical values will be if we are so impersonal in the ways in which we relate. Lister (2010: 243, cited in Rhodes, 2013: 40) wonders what the effect of our attempts at social justice would be if we forget that it is grounded in “social and political relations ... and involves dimensions of recognition, respect, discrimination, representation, voice, domination and oppression”.

We must view social justice as a “relational issue” (Rhodes, 2013: 41). Then we will be able to see that there is a “constitutive relationship between the individual and [his or her] social surroundings” and that “the individual and the broader collective are [...] dependent upon each other” (Rhodes, 2013: 41). Rhodes goes on to warn that our obsession with a personal version of responsibility leads to the minimisation of “systemic concerns” (Rhodes, 2013: 42). He mentions the idea of “ethical consumerism” (Rhodes, 2013: 43) as an example of our impersonal approach to social justice.

Marginson (2006: 207) shows how our neoliberalist attitude, even when concerning matters of ethics and social justice (empathy and responsibility), has a “superficial discursive fit with the desires for commodified consumption now central to daily life”. As Žižek (2009, cited in Rhodes, 2013: 45) explains, it is as if one purchases ethical satisfaction and success, the pacification of one’s conscience, as if it were another product on the market. Žižek (2009, cited in Rhodes, 2013: 45) is quite adamant in his stance on social justice, arguing that an attempt at social justice that does not look at systemic issues only “perpetuates an unjust system by minimizing the misery level of the byproducts of that very system (poverty, homelessness, entrenched social hierarchies) such that the system itself continues to be tolerated”. Rhodes’ general message (2013: 46) is that we should be careful to accept a social justice that caters to our “individualized, privatized, personalized, and commodified consumer-choice oriented framework”.

Biesta (2007) reminds us that all the uncertainty that surrounds us (of which strangers form a part) is an inescapable part of life. Therefore, avoiding this uncertainty is a key ingredient of our submission to the ideologies that weaken our sense of empathy, compassion and responsibility. Once we can admit that uncertainty is a “permanent condition of life” (Bauman, 1994: 36), and face it, we can realise that we cannot have an ethical system without this “world of otherness” (Biesta, 2007: 54). Thinking in terms of education, we must know that teachers cannot force learners to find solutions to these uncertainties, but they can create “opportunities within education to meet and encounter what is different, strange, and other” (Bauman, 2007: 69). Consequently, we shall find that “difference, plurality and uncertainty is not a challenge to endure, overcome or tolerate; it is the condition from which individuals can collectively realize shared concerns” (Rhodes, 2013: 50). Clarke (2008) also remarks how it is impossible to find

the fully integrated and rational self for which we yearn so much in our contemporary academic milieu – and that teachers have a chance to facilitate a more pragmatic identity discovery for learners. The work of Gunzenhauser (2008) also covers the notion of self-reflection and the formation of an identity based upon one's relation to the other, as opposed to the more ambitious and self-satisfied, yet, arguably, false sense of identity for which we are usually striving. Gunzenhauser calls it the “subjectivity formed in day-to-day life” (2008: 2235). Trend (2007: 7) gives the same message: “underexamined aspects of daily existence can provide insights into larger issues that affect who we are”.

Rhodes (2013) adds how we, in the modern, neoliberal world, form our identity primarily through the act of consumption, “[s]cholars suggest that consumption is now more significant than production as a cultural force that shapes individuals and society and deserves, for all its conceptual messiness, to be studied” (Rhodes, 2013: 75). He quotes Sassatelli (2007: 6):

[T]o consume is to act as consumers, that is to put on a particular, contested kind of identity and to deal with its contradictions. In this light, consumer culture is more than commoditization and affluence, more than conspicuous consumption and the democratization of luxuries. Consumer culture also produces consumers.

Consumer identity is so deeply engrained within our culture that the act of consumption can be seen as patriotic (Soper, 2008). Sassatelli (2007: 11) says our society “requires a process of learning whereby social actors are practically trained to perform (and enjoy) their roles as consumers”.

For theorists such as Sassatelli (2007) and Campbell (1987), it is highly important to acknowledge the role individualism plays in forming the consumer identity. This individualism leads to the possibility to “create and express an identity through [...] acts of consumption” (Rhodes, 2013: 76).

Rhodes (2013) draws from postmodern writers (Baudrillard, 1998; Campbell, 2004; Featherstone, 1991; Gottdiener, 2000) to show how our identity is formed through the signifying power a product and its ability to bestow meaning. The inherent or practical value of the product becomes secondary. Baudrillard (1998) shows how our consumption becomes our proud projection of our most cherished identity. Similarly, Sassatelli (2007: 155) echoes, “[o]ur world calls us to positively demonstrate our capacity to choose” and this is how we try and convince others and ourselves that we are “sovereigns of [our]selves” (Sassatelli, 2007: 155).

Getting back to the ideas of relationality, Edwards (2000) reminds us that consumption specifically also fulfils the role of creating divisions – inclusion and exclusion – in service of our identity formation. Bauman (2007) and Barber (2008) are concerned about the fate of the

integrity of our ethics and our sense of empathy and responsibility. As Rhodes (2013: 85) says, “[b]oth Bauman (2007) and Barber (2008) fear a world filled with apolitical individuals who have little sense of connection or responsibility to one another.”

Turning to the article entitled “The self in a consumer society” (Bauman, 1999), one gains more insight into the construction of this consumerist identity and the implication for values of empathy and responsibility. Bauman (1999: 37) shows how the neoliberalist consumer identity is built on the premise that “nothing should be embraced by a consumer firmly, nothing should command a commitment forever”, envisaging our overall struggle with commitment (as, for example, with a commitment towards ‘the other’). Furthermore, “consumers must never be left to rest, [but should] be constantly exposed to new temptations” (Bauman, 1999: 38). Is this model realistic? Not quite, for, although “everybody may wish to be a consumer and indulge in the opportunities which that mode of life holds [...] not everybody can be a consumer” (Bauman, 1999: 40). In other words, there are clear economic limitations to this neoliberal lifestyle that almost all seem to pursue fervently.

Another important article by Bauman (2007) is “Collateral casualties of consumerism”. Bauman investigates the concept of collateral damage and to what extent it really is only a “denial of responsibility – moral responsibility as well as legal” (2007: 25), explaining that “what the invoking of the ‘unintentionality’ argument intends to deny or exonerate is ethical blindness – conditioned or deliberate” (Bauman, 2007: 26). Bauman goes on to focus on how the spirit of denial and the argument of collateral damage are found in the form of our economic pursuits (Bauman, 2007: 27), finding the highest expression in “commoditization of human life” (Bauman, 2007: 28). The high pressures of our modern work environment create problems at home, where a cycle of reduction in social proficiency and lessened enthusiasm for maintaining homely relations unfolds. In Bauman’s (2007: 29) words:

The search for individual pleasures articulated by the currently offered commodities, a search guided and constantly redirected and refocused by the successive advertising campaigns, provides the sole acceptable – indeed badly needed and welcome – substitute for both the uplifting solidarity of work-mates and the glowing warmth of caring-for-and-being-cared-by the near and dear inside the family home and its immediate neighbourhood.

Bauman is eager to challenge politicians who claim to be worried about the family unit to admit the consumerist cause behind the “wilting of social solidarity inside workplaces and the fading of the caring–sharing impulse inside family homes” (2007: 29).

Bauman looks at the concept of the ‘underclass’<sup>1</sup> and how it denotes persons who are outside “all classes and the class hierarchy itself, with little chance and no need of readmission” (2007:

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<sup>1</sup> Underclass: the lowest social stratum in a country or community, consisting of the poor and unemployed.

30). This is because the “defining mark of sovereignty is the prerogative to exempt and exclude” (Bauman, 2007: 30). He goes as far as to remind us of the classifications Jews received in Nazi Germany. In consumer society, people are judged by their “commodity value” (Bauman, 2007: 31). Those without market value are isolated, not only physically, but also through “mental separation, resulting in the poor being banished from the universe of moral empathy” (Bauman, 2007: 34). From here, there is more scope for avoiding our ethical roles. To make us think critically about the identities we place upon those who form part of the ‘underclass’, Bauman reminds us that “threats are projections of a society’s own inner ambivalence and ambivalence-born anxieties about its own ways and means” (Bauman, 2007: 35). In other words, we often classify as a threat whatever is nothing but a product of our own shortcomings, as we do with our contributions to systemic inequality. And whereas there was once a sense of collective responsibility for what was seen as “a collectively caused blight” (Bauman, 2007: 39), we now view it as individual problems caused by individuals – “[t]he dangerous (because potentially rebellious) classes are thereby redefined as collections of dangerous (because potentially criminal) individuals” (Bauman, 2007: 39). One finds one’s self in the underclass because of one’s own actions (Bauman, 2007: 41).

We have come as far as to remove the problem of our underclass from issues of poverty, and thereby we have managed to “deny the people assigned to the underclass the right to press charges and ‘claim damages’ by presenting themselves as victims (or even ‘collateral’ only victims) of societal malfunction or wrongdoing” (Bauman, 2007: 43). If the downtrodden want any compensation, “it is they who would have to shoulder the burden of proof” (Bauman, 2007: 43). Even more importantly, as a result of all the emphasis on the underclass and its depravity, the blame is shifted away from the issue of poverty. Actually, “the abnormality of the underclass normalized the presence of poverty” (Bauman, 2007: 43). Bauman (2007: 45) refers to Mead (1992) as an example of a writer who helps to convince us that we have done all we can to help the poor, and we have provided all the chances, yet “they are [still] irresponsible, they indecently refuse to take them” (Bauman, 2007: 45).

As neoliberalism pushes for fewer and fewer public services, the family unit has become the expected safety net (Hochschild, 2003, cited in Bauman, 2007: 45). Yet, our consumerist mentalities “strip the families of their social-ethical skills and resources” (Bauman, 2007: 45). Bauman refers to the “modernizing” goals of neoliberalism as the cause of “the continuing decomposition and crumbling of social bonds and communal cohesion” (Bauman, 2007: 50). All the while, we wonder where the benefits are that were promised by the invisible hand mechanism, a concept that is now even further “beyond the reach of the available instruments of political/popular/democratic intervention” (Bauman, 2007: 50). Similar sentiments are

expressed by Manne (2005: 5), according to whom “the New Right’s market fundamentalism eroded the foundations of the basic human associations – community, family, marriage.”

The work of these writers proves exceedingly useful, as it sheds light on some of the values found in neoliberalism – values such as hyper-individualism and hyper-rationalism (Baez, 2007; Bordieu, 2002; Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Lemke, 2001; Munro, 2004; Saunders, 2010), strong desires for commodities (Baudrillard, 1998; Marginson, 2006; Rhodes, 2013; Sassatelli, 2007; Soper, 2008), the avoidance of strong commitments (Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Edwards, 2000; Rhodes, 2013) and exclusionary identity formation (Bauman, 2007; Edwards, 2000). These values lead to a weakened sense of the family network and care, asocial functioning and a disregard for the plight of the ‘other’. The analysis above gives an account of the negative values inherent in neoliberalism, because this analysis does not simply relate of which broader social systems and structures a learner forms part, but looks at the inner workings of the learner, the behaviour and patterns that exist within him or her, that make it easier for such learner to slot into the said systems (schooling and social). In other words, the above analysis gives a thorough account of the culture and ideas to which the child or young adult is subjected, even beyond the boundaries of schools or universities. Thus, when thinking of learners in a classroom, this section is important because when teaching a child, one teaches a child who has formed an identity and a specific mode of relationality. This is why it is not as effective, I argue, to teach them about the values inherent within neoliberalism as an ideology (something external to themselves), as it would be to challenge the patterns of thought and behaviour that that are present within them as neoliberal values.

The topics of neoliberalism, consumer identity and relationality magnify very specific psychological, ethical and private pitfalls of neoliberalism, which will help one to have a fuller grasp of the significance of care ethics and contemplative education when one realises exactly how well these schools of thought counter the said pitfalls (because they also address very specific, personal and psychological drives within the individual).

### **3.3.4 Neoliberalism and education**

As was clear in section 3.3.1, educational systems are used to spread neoliberalism. The role that schools play in solidifying this ideology of neoliberalism was mentioned by a few writers (Baez, 2007; Davies & Bansel, 2007), who strengthen the premise and motivation of this thesis – that the South African curriculum, its neoliberalist leanings, and the effect those leanings have on the ethical functioning of a child, deserve investigation, criticism and transformation. The next section, i.e. 3.4, will elaborate further upon the effects of neoliberalism on education.

There is no doubt that these neoliberal tendencies have spilled over into the realm of education.

Tertiary institutions have had to focus on maximising earnings and acquiring private funding in the wake of decreased government funding (Alexander & Arceneaux, 2018; Giroux, 2005b; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Hill, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The economic focus has led to the focus on hiring part-time staff (Alexander & Arceneaux, 2018; Aronowitz, 2000; Giroux, 2005; McLaren, 2005; Rhoades, 2006). The organisational side of the institutions have also undergone change, taking on a hierarchical form, rather than the older model of shared governance (Currie, 1998; Eckel, 2000; Gumpert, 1993; Hadley, 2014). Even the research generated by a faculty has become geared towards commercialisation and application (Alexander, 2001; Clark, 1998; Sibanda, 2019; Slaughter, 1998; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), while tenures are criticised as economically inefficient (Horowitz, 2004; Tierney, 1998). Learners are also more focused on the instrumental value of their education rather than the inner satisfaction and deeper lessons they can gain from it (Astin, 1998; Bowl, 2017; Kopnina, 2014). The learner is now re-identified as a customer for whom the education is a product (Chaffee, 1998; Swagler, 1978; Wellen, 2005).

There are numerous studies on how a learner sees him- or herself as a customer (Apple, 2004; Aronowitz, 2000; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Previously, there was a much richer sense of identity in terms of learning and development (Winston, 1999). Saunders (2010) remarks how society continues to identify with learners as customers (also see Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), even when many writers have shown that learners can never be equated with customers (e.g. Swagler, 1978; Winston, 1999) and that there are negative results owing to this misidentification (e.g. Newson, 2004; Wellen, 2005).

The neoliberal influence on educational institutions has not only taken root in America, where it has been researched in North and South America (Torres & Schugurensky, 2002), but also in Western Europe (Hill, 2003), Australia and New Zealand (Marginson, 2004), and other parts of the world (Hill & Kumar, 2009; Olssen & Peters, 2005). The next section (3.4) will show the study of neoliberalism in South Africa.

Saunders (2010: 55) relates how Bowles and Gintis (1976) “chronicle the vocalization of the curriculum, corporatization of governing boards, and the focus on marketable technologies and meeting the needs of capital beginning over a hundred years before the rise of neoliberalism”. Saunders (2010: 55) elaborates by specifying what the unique contributions of neoliberalism are to the educational system. Although schools had already begun to be economically oriented, with the advent of neoliberalism one sees an increase in the “scope and extent of these profit-driven, corporate ends, as well as how many students, faculty,

administrators, and policy makers explicitly support and embrace these capitalistic goals and priorities” (Saunders, 2010: 55).

Neoliberalism has created an atmosphere of competition (Clarke, 2005), which has come to influence learners in schools and at university. Gone is the sense of community, as it was replaced by ‘customers’ who are focused on their own human capital (Newson, 2004).

According to Davies and Bansel (2007: 254), “public institutions, such as schools and hospitals, previously supported as essential to collective well-being, were reconstituted under neoliberalism as part of the market”, creating the idea that “there is nothing distinctive or special about education or health; they are services and products like any other, to be traded in the marketplace” (Peters, 1999: 2). For Davies and Bansel (2007: 254), schools are “early targets” of such neoliberal ideology, which use “management technologies [that include] increased exposure to competition, increased accountability measures and the implementation of performance goals in the contracts of management”.

To summarise this brief analysis of neoliberalism and education, all of these findings make it clear that the effect of the neoliberal ideology on school learners and university students (and those who manage schools) is to instil in them a preoccupation with economic hankerings (Chaffee, 1998; Swagler, 1978; Wellen, 2005). The learner’s way of moving through life is seen as an economic actor using economic rationality to make choices (Apple, 2004; Aronowitz, 2000; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Their school experience has instrumental value and learners see themselves as consumers of a product – which undermines their potential to be community-oriented (Astin, 1998; Bowl, 2017; Kopnina, 2014).

All of the above makes me wonder to what extent the neoliberal ideology affects the ability of a growing learner to care about and cultivate values of empathy and responsibility. To engage in ethical education, as future chapters will show, one requires a contemplative approach, and an environment that stimulates reflective and introspective attitudes. The fast-paced, competitive and profit-driven nature of neoliberal education does not bode well for the above requirements. Finally, seeing education in such extreme instrumental terms is quite antithetical to how one should view one’s education if one were to gain ethical training from it.

### **3.4 Neoliberalism and South Africa**

Finally, as the last section on neoliberalism, I consider some of the literature indicative of the presence of neoliberalism in South Africa.

In the previous chapter, I have introduced many post-apartheid education policies (see 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). It is important to study some of them and to assess to what extent they are wrapped in neoliberal ideology. I draw upon the authors mentioned in the previous chapter, who analysed and assessed the policy documents and implementation. Jonathan Jansen has written extensively on the political mood of, especially, the first few phases of post-apartheid policies. Outcomes-based education (OBE) was the first serious move on the part of the post-apartheid government to enact educational reform. However, as I referenced in the previous chapter (see 2.2.4), Jansen (1998) points out that it was to be a series of policies, which served as mere political symbolism, rather than having any serious implementation to show. This is a response from government, which seems to be not much more than “a political response to apartheid schooling, rather than one which is concerned with the modalities of change at the classroom” (Jansen, 1998: 321). These early policies also strived to assure legitimacy for the new state (Jansen, 1998: 330). Jansen (1998: 330) argues, “the national syllabus revision process (1995) was driven almost exclusively by official attempts to demonstrate to constituencies that at least some action was forthcoming from the Ministry of Education in the period immediately following the elections”.

Jansen makes similar arguments elsewhere, and says that when any kind of implementation was to be noted, it “was not an advanced planning tool, but something improvised even as policy was being introduced to teachers” (Jansen, 2002: 203). Chisholm (2003; 2005) and Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) argued likewise about the education policies being steeped in political agendas. The framework of OBE has informed all post-apartheid education policies and has been an attempt to place the learner at the centre of the educational process (Chisholm, 2003). However, this learner-centredness can be argued to be nothing but a front for economic incentives. Jansen (1998: 324) points to the economic incentives, which drove these early reforms, noting that, “among advocates, OBE policy claims in South Africa are either associated with, stated as prerequisite for or sometimes offered as a solution to economic growth”.

Yet, Jansen (1998: 324) also points out, “[there] is not a shred of evidence in almost 80 years of curriculum change literature to suggest that altering the curriculum of schools leads to or is associated with changes in national economies”. Even studies done by the World Bank in Colombia and Tanzania (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985) show “there is simply no evidence from experimental research that curriculum diversification, i.e. an attempt to make curriculum responsive to economic conditions, has ‘significant’ social or private benefits” (Jansen, 1998: 324). Chisholm (2003; 2005) and Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) argue likewise about the economic agendas that have always laid behind the post-apartheid education policies. Chisholm (2005: 198) writes about the pressures by lobby groups for South

Africa to focus on “integration into a global world on the basis of markets and advanced technology”.

Jansen (1998: 327) also accuses OBE-based policies of avoiding the issue of values by focusing on instrumentalism and specified outcomes, and never on the deeper purposes of education. The only value statement he feels is identifiable is the phrase ‘participate actively in promoting a sustainable, just and equitable society’ from the report of the Learning Area Committee for Human and Social Sciences (1996, cited in Jansen, 1998: 327). He calls this phrase one of many “bland and decontextualised global statements” (Jansen, 1998: 327). I have already discussed how an instrumental approach to education places significant barriers between a learner and his or her capacity to cultivate values of empathy and responsibility (see 3.3.4). There seems to be little awareness amongst members of government of how a focus on economic goals is often to the exclusion of empathetic and responsibility-driven values, for the contradictory sets of goals are always found, side by side, in the different education policy documents.

Baatjies (2005) provides a detailed analysis of how the corporatisation of education under neoliberal ideology, as discussed in section 3.3.4, is present in South African education. Peet (2002: 71) points out that neoliberalism has been deeply rooted in the ANC (the ruling party in South Africa since 1994). Other authors, such as Brock-Utne (2003), provide a detailed analysis of the strong neoliberal influences on education across sub-Saharan Africa.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter aimed to answer the sub-question related to neoliberalism: “How might neoliberalism undermine ethical values?”. The first part of the chapter provided an overview of neoliberalism, and looked at some of its supporters. Thereafter, I attempted to answer the question of the values contained within neoliberalism and which counteract or undermine other ethical values. To answer this question, I showed how neoliberalism leads to identities based on a type of hyper-individualism and economic decision-making. However, I did not feel that the authors referred to in this sub-section could answer the sub-question adequately. Therefore, I aimed to find literature that offered a deeper analysis. This was found in the form of work done on neoliberal identities and relationality (see 3.3.3).

The choice of these writers relates to how they make a deeper and more detailed study of the beliefs we hold (especially regarding other people and how we relate to them) when we are saturated with neoliberalism. This is a very introspective and detailed account of some of the values fostered by neoliberalism. The choice of focusing on the work of these writers also made sense because it placed the reader in the right frame of reference for future chapters

that centre on care ethics and contemplative education. I use the term 'micro-level analysis' to explain the kind of vision I believe is best suited for unveiling the values contained within neoliberalism at core level – in psychology, in the hearts and minds of the people that make up the modern, neoliberal system. The final section of the chapter brought the reader's attention back to the South African context and showed what has been written regarding neoliberalism in South African education.

## CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW – CARE ETHICS

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I report on my attempt to understand the values of compassion and empathy through a care ethics lens. A short section at the end also considers responsibility as a value (see 4.5). Compassion, empathy (these two are sometimes understood in synonymous terms) and responsibility are all identified as values espoused by the South African education policy documents. The main premise of this study was that contemplative education could act as the defender of these values whereas neoliberalism would lead to their minimisation. Sub-question 3 asked, “What are the inherent values of contemplative education?” and this led to question 4, “How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?” This chapter, then, reports on the project of understanding the values within contemplative education.

Care ethics serves as a useful conceptual framework through which to understand some of the ideas found in contemplative education better, especially those related to contemplative education and compassionate, ethical living. Ultimately, I was more interested in contemplative education than I was in care ethics, for reasons that will be explained in the next chapter, but care ethics offers a foundation for understanding, in a conceptual and philosophical manner, what is most lacking, in terms of empathy, compassion and responsibility, in a neoliberalist world. This is because care ethics is, arguably, a solid philosophical school, that focuses exclusively on ethics and ethical conduct between human beings (see Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016), and, as I will attempt to show, allows for a thorough conceptual challenge levelled at neoliberalism. If I had focused on contemplative education alone, the arguments constructed against neoliberalism would not have been nearly as well formulated and philosophically grounded. Beyond that, care ethics also contains many arguments and concepts found within contemplative education and, thus, helps one to understand the thrust of contemplative education ideas.

Therefore, this chapter reports on some of the concepts and arguments introduced by care ethicists, and provides accounts of these base arguments as iterated by different authors, as well as more arguments brought forth by single authors, and, of course, the criticisms against these authors and against care ethics in general. The concept of values is central to the realm of ethics in general (Pojman, 1995), and, therefore, forms part of a considerable network of philosophical debates and conversations. It was necessary for me to be clear on the specific conversation within which I aimed to locate myself – and the choice of writers came from the

relevance of their writings with regard to the tension between neoliberalism and the values of CAPS. It was also important to consider what has been written about the challenges regarding the implementation of values in the South African context, and such literature was considered, in order to broaden the understanding of the concept of values in a way that is applicable to the setting where this study was situated.

#### **4.2 An overview of the ethics of care**

Care ethics, as a school of thought, evolved from the idea that we need an alternative to the justice-based theories of modern human rights theory. For the care ethicists (Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016), such justice- and rights-based morality, through its emphasis on principles, involves an abstraction of reality and, consequently, allows human beings to become more asocial and less directly involved and responsible in the lives of their fellow human beings. This was argued in the second half of the previous chapter, and will become more obvious during this chapter. Instead, care ethics (Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016) places primary emphasis on a very interpersonal type of involvement in the ethical struggles of those around us, and urges us to build empathetic relationships with them.

Although some (such as Sander-Staudt, n.d.) would say that care ethics as it exists today was influenced by much earlier feminist figures and writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine and Harriet Beecher, and Charlotte Perkins, it took form as its own theory with writers Carol Gilligan (1977) and Nel Noddings (2013) during the 1980s. A major subsequent contributor, in my mind, is Michael Slote (2001; 2007; 2016), although there are many other important contributors, such as Joan Tronto (1993) and Virginia Held (1993; 2006). In 4.3, I explain some of the main tenets of care ethics, as well as how they contrast with the justice- and principle-based morality of the modern, neoliberalist world.

#### **4.3 The contents of the theory**

In this subsection, I turn to the contents of the theory of care ethics, looking at where Gilligan (1977), Noddings (2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013) and Slote (2001; 2007; 2016) are in agreement, and in which areas Noddings and Slote developed their own, further theories, with nuanced changes or details.

### 4.3.1 Dichotomies between principle-based morality and care ethics

I begin with the work of Carol Gilligan (1977), who is, arguably, the founder of care ethics. In “In a different voice: Women’s conceptions of self and of morality”, Gilligan (1977) reports on some of the long-held assumptions in Psychology. She focuses on how our ideas of the perfection of personal and moral development have been constructed around male traits and behaviour. This study came from a personal point of view, as she had been working alongside the prominent developmental psychologists, Erik Erikson (1994a; 1994b) and Lawrence Kohlberg (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969). Gilligan (1977) observed that Kohlberg’s studies were exclusively revolving around boys. From the psychological inclinations of the boys, the psychological standards within Kohlberg’s work were constructed. The effect is that the pinnacle of moral development is seen as “increasing differentiation of self from other and a progressive freeing of thought from contextual constraints”, as well as, “the rejection of a self defined by others [in favour of] the assertive boldness of ‘Here I stand’” (Gilligan, 1977: 481). Immediately one can see the emergence of what was to become a main trait of care ethics – the rejection of the false notion that one can stand completely independent from one’s environment and from other people.

The “developmental challenges of adolescence” have come to be framed by “Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg”, who claim that, ideally, an individual “thinks formally, proceeding from theory to fact, and defines both the self and the moral autonomously, that is, apart from the identification and conventions that had comprised the particulars of his childhood world” (Gilligan, 1977: 481). In other words, moral development is apparently perfected through the male traits of cold logic and uninvolved, objective engagement with the world. However, those who have understood moral development in such traditional ways know not what to make of the anomaly of women, “whose perception of self is so much more tenaciously embedded in relationships with others and whose moral dilemmas hold them in a mode of judgment that is insistently contextual” (Gilligan, 1977: 481). The reaction or explanation has been to “consider women as either deviant or deficient in their development” (Gilligan, 1977: 481). Immediately Gilligan’s work creates many themes that would run throughout all of care ethics. There is the highlighting of different dichotomies – the generalised abstraction versus the particular, contextualised reality, and the independent versus the interdependent – the former of each pair of categories being linked to men and the latter to women.

Furthermore, this dichotomy between independence and interdependence is reinforced through a “splitting of love and work” (Gilligan, 1977: 482), with the former allocated to women and the latter to men. Yet, this splitting itself portrays a false version of adulthood and moral development, which is not well balanced (Gilligan, 1977: 482). This version favours “the separateness of the individual self over its connection to others and [leans] more toward an

autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care” (Gilligan, 1977: 482). Gilligan (1977: 482) sets out to establish a position for women, whereby the traits of care and empathy represent a different approach to morality, rather than a shortcoming in terms of psychological and moral development. Indeed, what has been pointed out thus far reflects a very narrow-minded, rigid and impersonal type of morality and its accompanying lifestyle. The analysis of neoliberalism, especially the section on identity and relationality, made it clear that it is through this false and disconnected disposition – this arguably imbalanced type of ethical position (which dominates the modern world) – that we come to a state of being so lacking in empathy and responsibility. I urge the reader to take careful note of how the ‘every man for himself’ theme within neoliberalism, which implies that any person’s suffering is due to his or her own doing, and which makes it so easy to feel indifferent towards the plights of others, lines up neatly with the abstracted, independent and uninvolved man and his abstracted morals, as identified by Gilligan (1977).

Nel Noddings (2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013) built upon the work of Gilligan, and was part of the school of care ethics. The very same dichotomies can be found in her work. In *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education*, Noddings (2013: 30) notes that empathy, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is “the power of projecting one’s personality into, and so fully understanding, the object of contemplation”. This definition has an overly rational and masculine mood to it (Noddings, 2013: 30). In other words, what one can notice is that, from the very onset of her work, Noddings (2013) uses the same framework as Gilligan (1977) in that she highlights the stark contrast between the abstracted and general masculine ethics and the fluid, practical, particular and lived feminine ethics that she wishes to construct.

Noddings calls for an understanding of empathy where “I set aside my temptation to analyse and to plan” and, instead, “I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other” (Noddings, 2013: 30). This is a “receptive state” (Noddings, 2013: 30), without which no deep state of empathy can be achieved. She expounds upon this receptive feeling by referring to a mother responding to the cries of an infant. Such a mother does not analyse and objectively interpret the negative experiences and needs of the infant, but feels with the infant in order to respond best (Noddings, 2013: 30). This analogy of a mother and her infant expands upon the thoughts of Gilligan regarding the interdependent nature of the interactions between moral actors, and offers a further study thereof. What better image of interdependent love, affection and care can one conjure than a mother and her infant?

Furthermore, this relationship is also found within the classroom, and in care ethics, there is an acknowledgement of the interdependent nature of the interaction between child and carer (Noddings, 2002b: 208). Teachers should let the learners know that they are bringing fulfilment to the teachers by being an integral part of a shared experience (Noddings, 2002b: 208).

Moreover, learners should become accustomed to the notion of interdependence in the “wider world” by “[seeing] that salespeople, service workers, and all other legitimate workers should be treated with courtesy and, when appropriate, with gratitude for their contributions” (Noddings, 2002b: 208). Again, this is exactly the emphasis on interdependence one sees emphasised in contemplative education, and it acts as the perfect counter-measure to the asocial, falsely independent neoliberal.

This interdependence is also represented by family values and family settings. Noddings emphasises the fact that women’s roles, usually associated with the home, have been largely ignored and undervalued both in academic contexts and in society at large (Noddings, 2002b: 27). Moreover, political and moral discussions are framed in terms of the public sphere, laws, formalities, principles of justice and many other male-associated undertakings (Noddings, 2002b: 27). In care theory, the “emphasis is reversed”, because “our most treasured human capacities are nurtured in families or homelike groups” (Noddings, 2002b: 27). Again, if we can remember, the contents of the previous chapter made it clear that neoliberalism, through its focus on commodities and the pursuit thereof, strongly disrupts family cohesion and the ability of individuals to meet their emotional needs within the realm of their family life. In other words, care ethics shows itself, yet again, to provide a perfect counter-measure to the negative effects brought about by neoliberalism.

Noddings adds to the discussion of the dichotomy between the abstract and the particular. In *Starting at home: Caring and social policy* (Noddings, 2002b: 20), she enters into a discussion of the goals of care ethics. She concludes that care is ultimately about developing and encouraging growth in a child or learner (Noddings, 2002b: 20). Very important to note, is that ‘growth’ is a dynamic and context-specific concept. Fittingly, then, Noddings (2002b: 20) reminds us that the “objective of care shifts with the situation and also with the recipient, [because] two students in the same class are, roughly, in the same situation, but they may need very different forms of care from their teacher”.

Noddings continues, “Science and philosophy have concentrated on generalization and universalization, and this concentration has been accompanied by an almost exclusive emphasis on method in science and the agent-as-method in ethics” (Noddings, 2002b: 20). She claims that even virtue ethics, from which she wants to separate herself and her care ethics, places too much emphasis on the agent, the one making the moral decision, and not enough on the ‘other’, the recipient of whatever empathy or care is required (Noddings, 2002b: 20). In other words, she argues for the necessity of a greater understanding of the relationships that we all share and the relationships and interconnectedness that are at play as we try to navigate the world in an ethical manner. Noddings (2002b: 23) feels that academics and politicians become trapped in an ongoing cycle of defending and revising

elaborate moral theories. She also expresses concern for how this obsession with a theoretical paradigm might affect how we feel about on-the-ground moral behaviour, leading us to belittle or become alienated from the very real and unpredictable practical realm of actual ethical behaviour, “[w]hen the tendency to theorize is celebrated, caring-about may brush aside caring-for as too immediate, personal, parochial, or emotional to be widely effective” (Noddings, 2002b: 23).

The different dichotomies I have identified are also highlighted by Slote (2001; 2007; 2016). The writings of Michael Slote are not often mentioned when the main contributors within care ethics are discussed. However, I find his contributions to be highly relevant. For my purposes, Slote provides considerable material for understanding the different values in which this study was interested. When it comes to the dichotomy of the abstract and autonomous moral actor of the principle-based system of ethics versus the practically engaged and interdependent moral actor who moves with care, Slote makes unique contributions (2016). He expands upon both sides of the dichotomy by adding a deeper analysis. In *From enlightenment to receptivity: Rethinking our values*, Slote (2016: x) speaks about receptivity. He explains that Western philosophy has given precedence to “activity, rationality, autonomy, [and] control” when it comes to the conversation about values (Slote, 2016: x). Nonetheless, he does not wish to do away with these “traditionally favoured ideals”, but sees receptivity, the foundation of empathy and care, as a “touchstone for other values” (Slote, 2016: x).

Slote (2016: 225) makes it clear that he is not against the virtue of autonomy, “habitually thinking and acting for oneself”, which is such a driving force behind Western civilisation – as long as we are not so overcome by an autonomous mode of living that we are completely out of touch with the reality of a life that is undeniably interconnected with the ‘other’ around us. We need to have a receptivity and empathy towards the lives of others. Slote is concerned about the way in which “traditional rationalist thinking about autonomy either denies this in one way or another or ignores it” (Slote, 2016: 225). It is a matter of being able to view the world in a balanced way. In fact, Slote (2016: 226) uses the word “counterbalance” when referring to the role receptivity plays in relation to autonomy and rationality.

I have already mentioned that this study did not aim to topple the entire epistemological hierarchy of philosophy and ethics, branding reason as useless and counterproductive. I merely align myself with writers and movements that notice how reason paired with empathy and care, with contemplation, or, as Slote (2016) terms it, ‘receptivity’, created an overall stronger moral framework. Reason remains intact, just as the right amount of salt added to a meal brings the entire experience to new heights without disturbing any of the existing flavours. That being said, Slote (2016: 226) sets out to show that reason and rationality do not necessarily reign supreme in all spheres of philosophy and morality, as thinkers have been

accepting. He uses the term “Faustian” to refer to the manner in which we, through our masculine leanings, are willing to forego “higher values” in exchange for “power, curiosity, and material gain” (2016: xi). This is, of course, based on the character in Von Goethe’s work (Faust, 1998). Through receptivity, we can learn to allow higher values, such as empathy, care and responsibility, to exist and function, and not be pushed aside by our desires to control and dominate (Slote, 2016: xi). This renewed conception of values is attributed to “feminism”, “the green movement”, “the horrors of war and genocide that dominated the international landscape of the twentieth century”, and analytical philosophy and its resistance to the moral relativism and scepticism of postmodern thinking (Slote, 2016: 1).

For Slote (2016: 4), the Enlightenment period (1685-1815) is one of many examples of the obsession of Western civilisations with activeness and activity. This obsession is something deep ecologists have noted as expressed through our domination of nature, and which feminists have noted as expressed through some men’s desire to dominate women. In his book, Slote (2016: 4) argues that receptivity (a foundational character trait for empathy) is a value that is underexplored and absent in our post-enlightenment Western world. Slote (2016: 8) also pays homage to his care ethics affiliation, mentioning the important contributions of Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013), and then enters into a discussion on empathy. He is emphatic in pointing out that “empathy is a crucial factor in making caring possible”, but says that it has been largely neglected by Western academia (Slote, 2016: 8). Slote (2016: 9) refers to the work of Martin Hoffman (2000), who, in *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice*, reports on his investigation, from a psychological point of view, of the role empathy plays in moral development.

#### **4.3.2 Questionable sacrifices**

The latter part of the previous section referred to Slote’s (2016) remarks on the environmental destruction and the abuse of women, which resulted from the masculine obsession with activity over receptivity. Perhaps this would be an opportune moment to relay the thoughts of Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (2013) regarding the sacrifices that are made for the sake of abstract principles. At the end of her work, Gilligan (1977) looks more deeply at abstracted morality and points out the dangers inherent in a conception of moral development dominated by male traits. She refers to it as an “ethics abstracted from life” (1977: 515) and associates with it a “blind willingness to sacrifice people to truth” (1977: 515). She points to the writings of Erikson (1993), who was critical of Gandhi, to show the shortcomings of an “ethics of an adulthood that has become principled at the expense of care” (1977: 514). In Gandhi’s personal life, his conduct with family members was quite cruel, and this cruelty was often

justified by abstract principles (Gilligan, 1977: 515). Once again, I remind the reader of how neoliberalism becomes such an abstract principle, through which unjust and impersonal behaviour is allowed, simply because we are told that on paper everything checks out and is fair under the invisible guiding hand of the market. Gilligan, reflecting on Gandhi's life, calls some of his questionable actions the "self-deception of rationalized violence" (1977: 514). This is the same rationalised violence explained away by society in general as a necessary collateral damage of the neoliberalist system, in a moment of ethical blindness, as relayed in the previous chapter in the section on identity and relationality (see 3.3.3).

Gilligan speaks of the same tendency as identified by these critics of neoliberalism, although she does not offer a detailed account (as those critics do) of how this abstracted morality finds its destructive expression within a system such as our modern global economy and the culture so fervently and loyally married to that economy. However, the significance of the work of Gilligan (1977) and of other care ethicists is that they give us a moral theory by which we can assess, more deeply, what is missing, in terms of values, from our modern world. In other words, the critics of neoliberalism, writing about relationality and identity, have clearly exposed the problem, whereas the care ethicists begin to indicate possible solutions.

Similarly, Noddings (2013) states the drawbacks of the male-dominated approach to morality – an elaboration upon some of the dangers to which Gilligan had alluded. Noddings (2013: 31) speaks of a "process of concretization that is the inverse of abstraction" – a process preferred by women. This means women will seek ways to safeguard those about whom they care from principles of justice that might seem unfair in a certain context. Noddings (2013: 43) illustrates the point by speaking of our relationship with children, in whom we are invested and whom we love, not because of an abstract principle, but because of natural feelings. Just as Abraham was willing to sacrifice his child for a higher, divine reason, in "traditional, masculine ethics", the deity to which we are loyal is "principle" (Noddings, 2013: 44). Based on these observations, Noddings (2013: 37) states:

The father might sacrifice his own child in fulfilling a principle; the mother might sacrifice any principle to preserve her child. This is far too simplistic to be considered a summary or definitive description of positions, but it is indicative and instructive.

As Noddings (2013) mentions, one should not take the above statement as a rule set in stone, but there is certainly much to be learnt from a careful observation of the differences in masculine and feminine approaches to ethics. Neoliberalism is our modern principle to which many are sacrificed. As the previous section on neoliberalism pointed out so emphatically (see 3.3.1 and 3.3.3), it has become the norm to wave away the sufferings of another as their own fault, brought about by their laziness and lack of enthusiasm about the economic pursuits of life. The analyses by Noddings (2013), Gilligan (1977) and others of the ethical moods that

dominate our world, and which lead to an emotionally stunted version of ourselves so quick and willing to sacrifice ‘the other’ to the ‘principles’ of our carefully curated and abstracted moral frameworks, provide an invaluable insight into the psychological sub-consciousness that drives neoliberalism like coal would drive a gear.

### 4.3.3 Emotions and intuitive feelings

An interesting way in which Noddings (2013) and Slote (2016) expand upon the ideas of Gilligan is the inclusion of another dichotomy – rationality versus intuitive feelings and emotions. Of course, this is built upon the dichotomies mentioned previously (see 4.3.1). The rationality mentioned here is part of the abstracted, principle-based morality that has been discussed all the while.

Noddings (2013: 33) ventures into speaking about emotions when she analyses empathy. She finds it important to clarify that a feeling of empathy (which she terms “engrossment”) is not a purely emotional feeling, devoid of all sense of a higher intellectual faculty – as might be alleged (Noddings, 2013: 33). It is simply that we are “in the world of relation, having stepped out of the instrumental world” (Noddings, 2013: 34). In other words, feeling in a relational manner is not something ‘lower’ than objective, rational problem solving. Noddings (2013: 36) states, “instrumental thinking may, of course, enhance caring”, but “rationality (in its objective form) does not of necessity mark either the initial impulse or the action that is undertaken [to empathise and care]”. Noddings is showing that our moral urges come from an emotive realm and wish to establish the importance of such emotive drives. Here we see a difference between the early works of Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (2013). Gilligan did not set out to establish care ethics as its own ethical theory. However, Noddings thinks about care ethics as a potential ethical theory that is to be placed within the already established playing field of abstract, universalised masculine ethics and, thereafter, defended and argued for.

Slote (2016) also sets out to argue for the importance of emotions and feeling in ethics, and reminds one that emotions and feelings have seen some popularity in the past. The entirety of the Romantic movement (which peaked from 1800 to 1850) argued in favour of it (2016: 2); however, the same cannot be said of the modern academic world. Slote is clear about positioning himself alongside his analytic philosopher colleagues, and wants to contribute within this realm. Therefore, he wants to add to and expand upon this field by reinvestigating the validity of the supposed dominating centrality of reason and rationality in ethics (Slote, 2016: 2). He writes:

I am going to argue that reason/rationality and activity/control are a lot less important than we analytic and/or Western philosophers have thought. They are important, to be sure, but they

need to be strongly counterbalanced by a value and virtue of receptivity that has been almost totally neglected within our philosophical traditions.

Like others who have undertaken somewhat of a reassessment of our relationship with reason and rationality, Slote casts his gaze upon the Enlightenment period (1685-1815). He writes, “the general picture of human life and human values that one gets from Enlightenment thinking is distorted and unhelpful in many different ways”, and he aims to rethink our values, as opposed to what is usually done under postmodernism: “be[ing] skeptical and/or nihilistic about values and the making of value judgments” (Slote, 2016: 3).

Slote (2016: 14) also argues that a true understanding of empathy means that we not only connect with the emotions and feelings of another, but also with their “attitudes, belief system, or point of view”. Furthermore, if one claims to be truly objective and natural in the formation of one’s own beliefs and opinions, one must first have empathised with the ideas and opinions, which stand against one’s own (Slote, 2016: 14). This process is only thoroughly followed if one – at least hypothetically and as an exercise – regard the other’s point of view favourably, something which is facilitated through feeling and emotion (Slote, 2016: 14).

The Enlightenment tendency to belittle feelings and emotion (see Slote, 2016) has a price, indeed, for “emotion/feeling is essential to rational/cognitive thinking and cannot be banished from such thinking without paying a great epistemic/cognitive/rational price” (Slote, 2016: 14). In other words, to think of the realm of cognition without considering feelings and emotions is an incomplete conception of cognition, something which most from the Enlightenment period never properly considered. As with other care ethics writers, Slote (2016: 17) emphasises the fact that he is not trying to do away with the cognitive and rational processes of life. However, when it comes to the discussion of values and ethics, he suspects it has “much or more to do with feeling than with reason, and that claim certainly represents a basic and large-scale rejection of the Enlightenment picture of things” (Slote, 2016: 17).

When again entering into the discussion of Faustian motives of power and domination by looking at the treatment of women and the environment, Slote (2016: 18) argues that passivity is not to be replacing activity but rather that activity should always be accompanied by “being receptive or open in one’s dealings or relations with people and things (in the environment)”. For Slote (2016: 18), this idea has not been explored properly at the time of his writing. I am uncertain whether he is referring to contemporary moral philosophy, to the entirety of the Western philosophical canon, or to what exactly, but, as I will show in the next chapter on contemplative education (see 5.3.2), the idea is certainly an old one. However, one can hardly argue against the fact that receptivity as a virtue has long been absent from Western ethical thinking. Slote refers to it as a virtue for which one “dared not speak its name” (Slote, 2016: 21). Hume and other sentimentalists rather opted for terms such as ‘benevolence’, and

avoided the very emotionally and intimately involving idea of receptivity and care (Slote, 2016: 21). In today's analytical philosophy circles, there is certainly not much room for the acceptance of the Romantic idea that feeling and emotions are more important guiding factors than logical and rational thought (Slote, 2016: 27). There is a sentimentalist tradition within moral philosophy but, as Slote (2016: 29) states, an epistemological framework has never been formulated for it. Slote (2016: 29) aims to undertake that project of erecting an epistemology and to show that "[e]mpathy, sympathy, anger, and love turn out [...] to be absolutely essential to the process of learning things and arguing about them with others" (Slote, 2016: 29). In other words, these apparently non-traditional traits are essential for discussions and deliberations on ethical issues. Whereas the principled justice of the neoliberalist state requires no truly receptive empathy in order to continue, and can flourish amidst groups of hyper-individualised, asocial and isolated persons (Baez, 2007; Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Bordieu, 2002; Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Edwards, 2000; Lemke, 2001; Munro, 2004; Rhodes, 2013; Saunders, 2010), for someone like Slote, there is the realisation that "moral respect for others requires us to see things from their standpoint" (Slote, 2016: 198) – and without that deeper level of empathy where one can truly understand the position of 'the other', and the range of emotions that allow for this, there is a threat to one's capacity for moral respect.

If one might remember what was discussed in Chapter 3, regarding the overuse of an abstracted rationality as a consequence of neoliberalism (see 3.3.1), then the current discussion of an ill-placed rationality that leads to asocial behaviour and sacrificial tendencies seems highly relevant. This is yet another example of how care ethics and the values it advocates serve as a near-perfect countermeasure against the ethically disruptive effects of neoliberalism.

#### **4.3.4 Care ethics as an extended moral system**

Slote (2001) expands upon the philosophy of care ethics by constructing a broader, universally applicable version of it. In *Morals from motives* (Slote, 2001: 64), there is reference to Noddings (2013), who argued that caring cannot extend to those with whom we are too unfamiliar. However, Slote holds that this is actually possible (2001). Slote joins this conversation, saying that two types of caring are possible: intimate caring and humanitarian caring (Slote, 2001: 64). The latter type, of course, implies that we can, most certainly, extend our caring to those beyond our circle of intimate acquaintances. Slote sees it as an important task to study both types of caring and to see to what extent both can be integrated in the life of someone who is aiming to live morally (Slote, 2001: 65). Whereas complex arguments can

be raised and scenarios imagined where a person must choose between the two types of caring, Slote reminds us that under most circumstances, the moral actor can make decisions that are beneficial to both those near and dear and to humanity at large (Slote, 2001: 76).

Such concerns, as expressed by Noddings (2013), about the potentially limited scope of care ethics, are perhaps symptomatic of the general lack of confidence, from many different camps, in the ability of care ethics to formulate for itself a rounded framework (Slote, 2001: 92). Since Gilligan (1977) pointed out the differences in the approaches by men and women to morality, this debate about the feasibility of an ethics of care has flared up (Slote, 2001: 92). For most, it seems impossible to extend a moral viewpoint to a universal level without employing the “masculine” principles, such as rights, justice and laws (Slote, 2001: 92). Slote (2001) is confident that care ethics can develop a universally applicable system of morality without having to revert to such masculine principles. He does this by pointing out that:

[Institutions and systems within a country or within our world] are to be judged in terms of their motivational underpinnings, their human element, and it follows from such a picture that if the people of a just society with just institutions became increasingly selfish or indifferent to fellow-citizens, the society itself would have become less ethically admirable, less just, even if those institutions – the husk or shell of justice – were somehow to remain in place for a while (Slote, 2001: 109).

This version of society, where institutions and laws seem to be just, but where so much unnecessary suffering exists, is exactly what comes about in a neoliberalist model where no one is encouraged to move beyond explicit laws and take up responsibilities beyond what the human rights principles indicate. Laws that force one to take care of strangers would not make much sense, but laws that merely state one cannot explicitly harm others leave a lot to be desired. Somewhere in the middle is where citizens need to place themselves, willing to take responsibility for fellow citizens even when not forced to do so by laws and specific principles. There is a need to pursue a culture of caring, a culture of compassionate contemplative living, that creates within one the genuine desire to help others.

This agent-based virtue ethics of Slote (2001: 109) implies that “the justice of a given society cannot simply be ‘read off’ from the way institutions (or laws) are at a given time”, but –

[It] depends on the ‘(ethical) soul’ of the society, and it is an attractive feature of agent-based views that they in this fashion treat social justice as a more deeply human matter than it is on theories of justice that place primary importance on (mere conformity to) rules, principles, and/or institutional norms (Slote, 2001: 109).

Slote admits that our society is already historically arranged in such a way that it seems foreign and complex to us to base morality on the feelings and motives of individuals, instead of on

“impartial rules or principles” (Slote, 2001: 109), but what is unknown does not necessarily equate with what is unfeasible.

In *The ethics of care and empathy*, Slote (2007: 11) argues that care can extend beyond only those we know, again differing from Noddings (2013). Slote (2007: 11) admits that there is a “difference in strength between (the moral requirements of) humanitarian caring and (of what we can call) personal caring”, but he also maintains that both types should be understood as caring, and he notes that Noddings herself, in later works (see 2002b), changed her views and agreed with this expansion upon the concept of caring (Slote, 2007: 11).

As in some of his other work (see 2016), Slote (2007) draws heavily from the work of Hoffman (2000). Specifically, he cites Hoffman’s use of the concept of “inductive discipline” (Slote, 2007: 15), according to which parents and other instructive figures play a large part in the “development of full moral motivation and behaviour” –

[By facilitating a] child’s capacity for empathy with others [through] noticing when a child hurts others and then making the child vividly aware of the harm that he or she has done – most notably by making the child imagine how it would feel to experience similar harm (Slote, 2007: 15).

This is in contrast to the “power-asserting” methods of moral instruction that makes use of physical force or rigid moral rules and principles (Slote, 2007: 15). It is this concept or method introduced by Hoffman (2000) that Slote (2007) uses to try to add legitimacy to a system of ethics resting on empathy.

Furthermore, Slote (2007: 28) notes how much has been said on how empathy is more easily evoked for those who are near and dear and, if this is considered, how we can develop an empathy that is truly extended to all of humanity in situations that call upon a more far-reaching morality. As noted by Slote (2007: 29), even Hume (1978) was sceptical of any type of affection that could extend beyond the borders of one’s country. However, Slote feels that this scepticism of Hume is a reflection on the era in which Hume lived (1711–1776), more than any true indication of any limits inherent in the modern person’s capacity for empathy (Slote, 2007: 29). Today’s global landscape is an infinitely more interconnected setting than the world of Hume’s age. Additionally, Hoffman’s ‘inductive discipline’ (1970) is a glowing example of how empathy can extend to those who are not part of our immediate circles (Slote, 2007: 29). Slote notes how Hoffman (1990) also refers to the processes that can deepen “an older child’s concern for (groups of) people in other countries” (Slote, 2007: 29). This can be achieved as follows:

Both parents and schools can expose children to literature, films, or television programs that make the troubles and tragedies of distant or otherwise unknown (groups of) people vivid to

them; and they can encourage their sensitivity to such people by asking children to imagine – and getting them into the habit of imagining – how they or some family member(s) would feel if such things were happening to them. In addition, families, schools, and countries could provide for more international student exchanges than now exist, with visiting students living with local families and attending local schools – thus bringing home to both visitors and those visited the reality and real humanity of those who might otherwise just be names or descriptions. (I have read somewhere that such a program of exchanges between Palestinian and Israeli students is now under way in the Middle East.) Finally, parents and schools could inculcate in children the habit of thinking about, and being concerned about, the effects of their own actions and inactions (and those of their family, neighbors, and government) on the lives of people in other countries (Slote, 2007: 29).

Slote (2007) realises that these are just theoretical suggestions and that they might be difficult to implement, but overall he is satisfied that he has illustrated that an empathy for those who are distant can be developed as well – and this goes a long way in establishing an ethics of care based on empathy (Slote, 2007: 30). Slote goes through much effort to argue for the universal applicability of care ethics, as opposed to other writers, such as Noddings (2013), who felt it is better applied to those closer to us. Slote also mentions that Noddings later changed her perspective and argued for and formulated a broader form of care ethics. What I also appreciate about Slote (2007) is his references to psychological literature, showing that empathy as a value is not some randomly chosen construct of some haphazard care ethicists, but a value solidly grounded in psychological studies.

#### **4.3.5 Community**

Noddings (2002a) and Slote write about both the effect a community has on a young learner, and the sense of community that is generated through care ethics. One can view this as a unique elaboration upon both the sense of interconnectedness that is an integral part of care ethics and upon the notion of the particular, contextualised moral reality, versus the so-called autonomous and abstracted moral actor.

Noddings (2002a) traces the modern history of moral education. She notices that, although character education was long since popular in America and beyond, the twentieth century saw it dwindling, as there was an increasing concern for the diversity of society not being accommodated by such character education programmes, which often seemed to lean towards a specific culture or tradition (Noddings, 2002a: 63). Therefore, “cognitive approaches to moral education” started taking root (Noddings, 2002a: 63). In this approach, there is an emphasis on the “development of moral reasoning” (Noddings, 2002a: 63) but no real reference to everyday life and living. Sometimes, there is a focus on stories, but:

[T]he stories are philosophical fictions designed to trigger critical thinking. If they illustrate a tradition, it is the Enlightenment tradition of Descartes and Kant – one that extols the power of mind and reason. Besides their compatibility with liberal ideology, cognitive methods seem more congruent with the growing emphasis on science and mathematics. (Noddings, 2002a: 63)

Noddings (2002a) points out, however, that cognitive methods to moral education brought with it a few challenges. Firstly, these methods seemed more applicable to research than to teaching and a classroom context, requiring unnecessary attention and preparation to make it suitable for the classroom (Noddings, 2002a: 64). Furthermore, the cognitive approach, with its abstraction of morality and reliance on principles and theories, seems to reinforce the idea of “purposive rational action” (Noddings, 2002a: 64). In this formulation, we become preoccupied with action driven by the means-to-an-end rationality. The end in and of itself is not deliberated upon, thus leading, ultimately, to individuals who are narrowly focused on their rationalised means to an end – to an extent where they become isolated and alienated from any sense of community.

It is for this reason that Noddings (2002a: 64) notes an upsurge in the response of “conservative philosophers, sociologists and theologians”. She contends that community is an essential bedrock to the “production of worthy and acceptable citizens” and that character education and care theory are essential for preserving a sense of community (Noddings, 2002a: 64). If we think back to the previous chapter, we might remember that neoliberalism creates a highly individualised and asocial citizen (see 3.3.1 and 3.3.3). Needless to say, if Noddings (2002a) is speaking about educational methods and goals that lead to a more community-oriented learner, then that is the exact counter needed for the effects of neoliberalism.

Furthermore, she takes a position against liberalism (which she sees in relation to the Kantian line of moral philosophy [see Kant, 2013]), and questions its conceptions of human beings as ultra-individual and “rational decision-makers” (Noddings, 2002b: 71). Along with this line of moral philosophy stand the theories of Rawls (2009), who conceives of a “veil of ignorance” (Noddings, 2002b: 71), under which we can strip human beings of their different predisposed ideas and idiosyncrasies in order for them to make objective decisions about how to organise themselves justly and run a society. Noddings finds this idea to be faulty, and asks her readers to consider that an individual is deeply shaped by his or her upbringing, his or her home environment and the care he or she had received. Another one of the strongest arguments against liberalism and Kantian ethics points out that such ethics disregards community. Dewey (1927, cited in Noddings, 2002b: 74) notes how liberalist theories “held that ideas and knowledge were functions of a mind or consciousness which originated in individuals by

means of isolated contact with objects”, when, in reality “knowledge is a function of association and communication; it depends upon tradition, upon tools and methods socially transmitted, developed, and sanctioned” (Noddings, 2002b: 74). Therefore, one could argue that it is not only in theory that liberalism loses touch with the concrete needs of a well-functioning community, but also practically speaking – for, with its overemphasis on rights, there is a genuine lack in terms of discourse about responsibilities (Noddings, 2002b: 74). Noddings refers to the “no duty to rescue” (Noddings, 2002b: 74) concept in American law, according to which one has no obligation to attempt to aid another in danger (in certain circumstances), such as a drowning child for which one is not explicitly responsible (Noddings, 2002b: 74). Although I personally feel that this is not a good example, Noddings also mentions the general example of negative duties and how a preoccupation with them has “eroded not only a sense of responsibility for one another but even our understanding of human sociality” (Noddings, 2002b: 74). As Glendon (1991, cited in Noddings, 2002b: 74) puts it:

Neglect of the social dimension of personhood has made it extremely difficult for us to develop an adequate conceptual apparatus for taking into account the sorts of groups within which human character, competence, and capacity for citizenship are formed. In a society where the seedbeds of civic virtue – families, neighborhood, religious associations, and other communities – can no longer be taken for granted, this is no trifling matter.

For Noddings (2002b), the communitarian view on moral education (see Taylor, 1989) is more realistic, as it delves into an understanding of the human being as more than just a rational actor (Noddings, 2002b: 94). Rather, the “times, culture, and situations in which they live” form human beings (Noddings, 2002b: 94). However, the communitarians focus on how such socialisation occurs through communications, whereas Noddings (2002b: 94) insists that the self is also formed “in encounter with objects and events that induce affects; moreover, the developing self can be reflexive – it can encounter itself and pose questions for itself”. It is in instances like this that the mood of the care ethicists perfectly encapsulates the underpinnings of contemplative education, which I will explore in the next chapter (see 5.2 and 5.3). It is that notion, that one can become highly introspective (or contemplative) and consider one’s own development and one’s own relationship and interaction with the world, which is shared by both schools of thought (care ethics and contemplative education).

Slote (2016: 30) makes brief comments about the effects of community as well. In speaking of his project to establish an epistemology for receptivity and care ethics, he mentions the traditional Cartesian epistemology, where the point of view of the individual is of great importance. Another category of philosophers, the social epistemologists, is more aware of “constitutive or causal influence from the individual’s larger community” that will affect how they garner knowledge (Slote, 2016: 30). However, Slote (2016: 30) maintains that even these

social epistemologists do not “put enough emphasis on the epistemological importance of an individual’s prior education”. Furthermore, not only does a child’s education show the “nonindividualistic influences” (Slote, 2016: 31) that form a part of learning, but the emotional dimensions involved in what a child learns through his or her education has been ignored even by the social epistemologists. For the purpose of this study, I considered whether we are adequately aware of the influences that affect a child, such as his or her community, or the media to which the child is exposed. If so, how can we ever help them to enter into introspective modes of being where they can truly assess their ethical conduct and progress forward with and develop such conduct? That is why I would claim that the work of Slote and that other care ethicists show a path unto a level of self-awareness that is crucial to deconstructing some of the arguably more negative values we hold so dear in neoliberalism - a self-awareness and level of introspection taken even further in the next chapter on neoliberalism.

In summary, let us consider what all these different writers have said about ethical behaviour and the values of empathy and care. It was pointed out that the recent history of Western morality has been dominated by masculine leaning values such as rationality, reason and universal principles. However, this often leads to the sacrifice of individuals for the sake of these principles (the analysis of neoliberalism showed exactly how). Furthermore, this type of morality leads to a loss of community and an arguably unjustified preoccupation with the rational and the hyper-individual at the exclusion of the role of the home, the importance of the upbringing and the context of each individual. It also leads to a preoccupation with the public domain and laws at the exclusion of a mature understanding of the role of practical ethical behaviour in a day-to-day environment. A more feminine and balanced ethics would take care to devote some attention to the essential nature of empathy and responsibility (care ethics) – essential if we wish to address the various imbalances that lead to great injustices in the name of the neoliberal state.

#### **4.4 Criticism against care ethics**

In this section, I attempt to share some of the various criticisms against care ethics – specifically against the work of Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013).

Some critics (such as Held, 1995; Smeyers, 1999) have shown that care ethicists do not strike the right balance in their theories between a morality based on care and a morality based on principles. Smeyers (1999: 238) draws attention to the fact that Gilligan (1977) sees moral problems as either understood from a care perspective or a justice and/or principles perspective, although he argues that most moral situations consist of a combination of both.

Even when dealing with close relationships, that seem to revolve around care, there are clear principles that govern them (Smeyers, 1999: 238). He echoes Held (1995) when stating that we should guard against seeing care as something exclusively related to the private domain while seeing justice as only related to the public domain (Smeyers, 1999: 238). Smeyers (1999: 240) argues that even if we create an ethics based on personal relationships and friendships, it has to have a foundation of principles, for principles are not just called into action when things deviate from their proper functioning, but they are always present in and responsible for the very functioning of moral networks and relationships.

This same tension between particular care and justice is then reconstructed as a tension between the particular and the universal (Smeyers, 1999: 240), with specific mention of how a particularist version of care ethics without a universal vision might lead to xenophobia or racism (Baier, 1995, cited in Smeyers, 1999: 240). Senchuk (1990: 233) raised similar concerns in response to Gilligan's work, urging care ethics to move "beyond the 'here and now' and that it not be restricted to existing webs of personal relationships". The exact same concern regarding Gilligan's (1997) early work was voiced by Blum (1988: 473), who stated, "how this extension [of care ethics] to all persons is to be accomplished is not made clear in her writings".

To me, none of these criticisms ultimately makes much sense, as they all seem to presuppose that the authors against whom the criticisms are voiced intended to construct an all-encompassing moral system that had to replace those prior to it entirely. The critics seem to move between two opposite positions, sometimes admitting to and coming to terms with the fact that care ethics does not cover the entirety of the domain of ethics while at other times, relentlessly expecting it to do just that. Smeyers (1999: 245) admits, "a care ethic alone cannot address all of morality"; yet, his criticism seems to expect that it does. Besides, as we saw in the sections on Noddings (2013) and Slote (2001; 2007), later iterations of the care ethicists' work aimed at expanding the framework and reach of the theory. I don't find this line of criticism very relevant, as care ethics was always a project that served to fill in gaps in the existing ethical narratives. It is an additional, supplementary line of thinking, just as it was for this study.

There is also an entire category of criticisms coming from feminist sources. Keller (1997: 153) points out that many critics feel that an ethics of care will reinforce stereotypes surrounding women, and keep them locked in their traditional roles. These critics are not sure whether care ethics will do much for women's autonomy (Keller, 1997: 153).

Many of these critics feel that care ethics, with its focus on maternal themes, might end up "reproducing the tyranny of authoritarian transmission models" (Luke, 1996, cited in Smeyers,

1999: 248). Hoagland (1990: 112), in response to Noddings (2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013), goes as far as to relate elements of caring with a type of enslavement of the mother figure:

The children learned an assumption of privilege from their father, and he in turn became one of the children-legitimately passive, irresponsible [...] To pursue the feminine (whose essence is agape and unconditional loving), to pursue this sense of female agency, is to pursue oppression (Hoagland, 1990: 112).

This type of feminine analysis seems radical and rather disingenuous in its readings of the work of Gilligan (1977) and Noddings (2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013) – reading too far into what these two authors expect from women. A much more helpful response to the potential problem comes from other sources, which give suggestions on how a mother or one who cares might avoid a type of enslavement. Smeyers (1999: 244) states, “to ensure no over-identification with the other, self-care has to be incorporated into the ethics of care, thus keeping it from being an ethic of self-effacement”. Slote (2007: 12), although not really concerned about carers enslaving themselves, re-evaluates Noddings’ (1984) understandings of empathy, and in doing so, produces a good argument against the notion of maternal moods as slavery or oppression.

Slote (2007) delves deeper into the work of Noddings (1984), and identifies the type of caring about which she spoke (Slote, 2007: 12). Noddings (1984) was weary of the concept of empathy (Slote, 2007: 12), as she felt it (her understanding of empathy) to be yet another overly masculine and overly active activity. She desired, instead, a “‘displacement’ of ordinary self-interest into unselfish concern for another person”, whereby one “not only focuses on a particular individual, but is engrossed in that other person” and is “open and receptive to the reality – the thoughts, desires, fears, etc. – of the other human being” (Slote, 2007: 12).

Furthermore, “when they [a moral actor] act on behalf of (for the good of) the person they care about, they don’t simply impose their own ideas about what is good in general, or what would be good for the individual cared about”, much rather “they pay attention to, and are absorbed in, the way the other person structures the world and his or her relationship to the world – in the process of helping that person” (Slote, 2007: 12). This version of caring was so different to how Noddings understood empathy, that she decided to refer to it as engrossment, rather than empathy (see Noddings, 1984: 9). Slote (2007: 12), however, points out that Noddings (1984) seems out of touch with the psychological literature on empathy that was available at the time of her writing. The type of empathy that Noddings wanted to avoid and transcend “is actually just one kind of empathy studied by developmental psychologists, which they tend to call projective empathy” (Slote, 2007: 12). However –

[A]s the psychologist Martin Hoffman points out [...] there are other forms of empathy [...] And one of them, which he calls mediated associative empathy, involves precisely the receptive

and, if you will, more feminine character that Noddings says is constitutive of engrossment (Slote, 2007: 12.).

Slote (2007: 12) also feels that other care ethicists have not fully understood the importance of empathy or engrossment in an ethics of care, and that more attention should be given to the psychological literature regarding empathy. He refers to both CD Batson (2014) and Martin Hoffman (2000) and how their works “argue that various studies and experiments show that empathy plays a crucial enabling role in the development of genuinely altruistic concern or caring for others” (Slote, 2007: 13). Furthermore, what Slote (2007) gathers from the writings of Hoffman is that the identification with the other that takes place during processes of empathy is not a “total merging with or melting into the other: genuine and mature empathy doesn’t deprive the empathic individual of her sense of being a different person from the person she empathises with (Slote, 2007: 14). In other words, it is not at all necessary to undergo some ‘loss of identity’, but, rather, genuine empathy involves “feelings or thoughts that are in some sense more ‘appropriate’ to the situation of the person(s) empathised with than to (the situation of) the person empathizing” (Slote, 2007: 14).

Getting back to the early care ethicists, Sander-Staudt (n.d.) makes it clear that Gilligan’s work is strongly loyal to feminism, stating that Gilligan (1977), although she “resisted readings of her work that posit care ethics as relating to gender more than theme”, was always absorbed in “her thesis of an association between women and relational ethics.” (Sander-Staudt, n.d.:n.p.) When looking at the most recent of Gilligan’s work, such as *Why does patriarchy persist* (Gilligan & Snider, 2018) or *Darkness now visible: Patriarchy’s resurgence and feminist resistance* (Gilligan & Richards, 2018), it becomes clear that Gilligan finds the notion of the patriarchy and issues related to gender to be the foundation of almost all the primary moral conundrums of our age. I am not too sure whether this is a productive direction. If care ethics is to be about investing some effort into understanding the unique contexts, identities and struggles of each individual, then I am not sure that the potential judgement cast over an entire gender will help one in remaining receptive and empathetic towards all individuals. This stance, by Gilligan, seems to be an abstraction within a school of thought that is supposed to fight against unnecessary abstractions. Beyond being an abstraction, such a position also goes against what care ethics stands for from a relational perspective.

Care ethics calls for a very open and accepting type of relational stance as the way unto empathetic ethical values. Construing things in terms of ‘the patriarchy’ being the root of almost all evil creates an ‘us versus them’ mentality, which studies have clearly indicated leads to a strong lack of neutrality and a strong level of prejudice (Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman & Tyler, 1990), and a strong lack of empathy as a value (Cikara, Botvinick & Fiske, 2011; Cikara, Bruneau & Saxe, 2011). Anything detrimental to empathy is counter-intuitive towards the true

meaning and intention of an ethics of care. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I aimed to extract the relevant philosophical and ethical wisdom from care ethics, without the radical feminism, without the politics.

#### **4.5 Responsibility**

Throughout this study, it became increasingly clear that the safeguarding of many ethical aims is reliant on a certain understanding of our relations with one another. In other words, values can often be understood through the lens of relationality. This chapter, as a precursor to the next, predominantly focuses on the values of compassion and empathy through the work of the care ethicists. This means that the way in which relationality influences empathy, compassion and care, was explored and is reported here. However, another value that was of importance is responsibility. Chapter 2, and the policy documents discussed in the chapter, at times, made reference to responsibility as a value. Similarly, Chapter 5 and the contemplative thought found within that chapter also make reference to the value of responsibility (see 5.3.2). In order, therefore, to gain a philosophical foundation for an understanding of the concept of responsibility and, to show how this value acquires an enriched understanding if seen in relational terms, I drew on the work of both Derrida (1995) and Patočka (1974) (from whose writings Derrida, in turn, gained inspiration).

As Patočka's work (1974) illustrates, the Platonic notion of the care of the soul, which is attributed to Socrates and which plays a central role within all of Greek philosophy (Gasché, 2007: 294), came to influence Christian thinking in a very profound way. However, in order to achieve a real sense of caring of the soul, the philosopher must come to a point of shunning everything temporary and worldly, and "[he or she] is guided in this by the knowledge of what is and emulates the eternal, the unchangeable order of the cosmos, the Divine, or the Good" (Gasché, 2007: 294). It is this act of being guided by knowledge of the eternal, which still drives the Christian notion of responsibility in Patočka's (1974) and Derrida's (1995) time (and ours) (Gasché, 2007: 295). This is a type of knowledge which both writers argue should not be the impetus for responsibility.

Derrida (1995) shows how Patočka (1974) keenly warns against what this 'knowledge' and 'rationality' have become. Patočka (1974) highlights how, during the French Revolution, "things purely laical by nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things: these were the Fatherland, Liberty, Reason" (Patočka, 1974, cited in Derrida, 1995: 22). Such a revolutionary "enthusiasm", as Patočka refers to it (Patočka, 1974, cited in Derrida, 1995: 22), "is undisciplined or insufficiently disciplined by the personal relation to responsibility" (Patočka, 1974, cited in Derrida, 1995: 22). Yet, Christianity is thoroughly influenced by such Platonic

ideas (see Author, date) and maintains the “Platonic desire to subordinate responsibility itself to the objectivity of knowledge” (Patočka, 1974, cited in Derrida, 1995: 24). I remind the reader that when Patočka speaks about ‘Christianity’, his analysis is so broad and all-encompassing that we can safely take it as an analysis of the wider field of Western ethics in general (which is, of course, heavily influenced by Christianity). Derrida (1995: 24) states, “[the] Christian consciousness of responsibility is incapable of reflecting on the Platonic thinking that it represses” and, thereafter, loses sight of how the soul does not reach self-actualisation through a connection to an object or an abstract principle such as ‘the Good’, but through a connection to a person (Patočka, 1974, in Derrida, 1995: 25).

To a devout Christian, or other religious person, that person might be God, but no matter what one’s personal beliefs, when attempting to act ethically and responsibly, it is always in relation to ‘the other’ – a person. And a person implies something contextualized and particular, leading to situations that cannot be subdued and perfectly encapsulated by abstract knowledge. This is why Derrida (1995: 25) mentions that there exists an “irreducible complexity that links theoretical consciousness to ‘practical’ conscience”. In other words, when attempting to exercise responsibility, there is always a tension between the perfect decision we try to reach through appeals to theoretical knowledge and objectivity, and the decision we need to make ‘in action’, in the face of the immediate and pressing needs of the other and without sufficient knowledge of all the variables involved. Derrida (1995: 26) claims, “[the] activating of responsibility (decision, act, praxis) will always take place before and beyond any theoretical or thematic determination”. He is, thus, trying to drive home the inadequacies of the Platonic ideals that we have attempted to keep as our foundation for responsibility.

This is an analysis of responsibility that one would not easily find elsewhere, and it is intriguingly similar to the thinking of care ethicists, in that it tries to move away from the abstraction of values and ethical inclinations, and places emphasis instead on the persons, the ‘other’, the relationships, that form the basis of values and ethics. Once again, this is in stark contrast to the justice-based, asocial ethics of neoliberalism. There is much that can be said about the further implications of Derrida’s (1995) work on responsibility. For my purposes, I can at least say that it urges one further along to join a small group of philosophers and thinkers who have begun to see the limits of abstract morality and the dangers that can come from hiding behind principles.

#### **4.6 Values in the South African context**

It is important to realise that all the various ideas under consideration must also be subjected to contextualisation. One might ask, what needs to be considered when we speak about

values in the South African context? For this purpose, I have drawn from some literature to shed light on this question.

As a side note, although much of the available literature on values in education in the South African context often includes discussions on religion, for my purposes, the discussion on values goes beyond religious considerations. Of course, that is not to say that religious sentiments cannot inform the adoption of various values, but the aim of this research was to focus on a more secular conception of values. Even for the various prophets of our major religions, their hope was that their followers would develop a sense of empathy, selflessness and responsibility that is rooted in the individual at a central identity, which is beyond the various religious concerns that are highly influenced by cultural and traditional factors. Nonetheless, I will share what others have written. After all, the questions raised by the writers mentioned below regarding the tolerance and integration of various religions show, arguably, the need for a contemplative approach, where one can empathise with and care about the position of another.

Ferguson and Roux (2003: 272) note that the South African debate on values centres on on issues of diversity and the “need for mutual respect amongst people of different cultures, religions and belief and value systems”. This is not only a South African phenomenon, but also an international development of the last few decades or so (Ferguson & Roux, 2003: 272). In terms of education policy, this has the effect that “inclusive curricula is emphasised in the various policy documents” (Ferguson & Roux, 2003: 272). The degree of success in terms of facilitating religious diversity and diversity in general depends upon “the particular social circumstances of schools, the background and training of teachers, the quality of in-service training programmes and the teachers' attitudes towards religious and cultural diversity” (Ferguson & Roux, 2003: 275).

Rhodes and Roux (2004) note that, although C2005 and the NCS identified and espoused a diverse range of values and beliefs, research clearly shows that South African teachers have been quite unsuccessful in promoting or “teaching different values and beliefs in schools” (Rhodes & Roux, 2004: 25). At the time of their writing, Rhodes and Roux (2004: 25) were curious to know whether teachers would become more adept at introducing diverse sets of ethical beliefs. South Africa is beyond doubt a multicultural society, hosting “people of different backgrounds - ethnic, racial, languages, belief and value systems” (Rhodes & Roux, 2004: 25). This multicultural aspect is present even though there might be major linguistic or religious similarities (Rhodes & Roux, 2004: 25). South Africa is also a multi-religious society, even though a misconception exists that it is predominantly a country with one religion (Rhodes & Roux, 2004: 25).

It is especially in the eighth learning area of C2005 and the NCS, Life Orientation, where the teacher had to accommodate and facilitate different values and beliefs (Rhodes & Roux, 2004: 26). Yet, again, Rhodes and Roux (2004) were unsure at the time of their research whether or not teachers were equipped and trained well enough to perform this task, and to uphold the new sets of values identified in post-apartheid education policy documents (as discussed in Chapter 2) – to uphold such values amidst “prejudices towards diversity in society and schools” (Rhodes & Roux, 2004: 26). The authors thought it important that teachers “approach the values question with a sense of responsibility” and “realize the importance of their role as facilitators of values” (Rhodes & Roux, 2004: 26).

Roux and Du Preez (2006: 151) found that in-service teachers felt completely “overwhelmed and disempowered” when they have to teach or facilitate values and beliefs that were different from their own. If they were to succeed in dealing with classrooms that were diverse, it was essential that they had to be exposed, from an early stage in their training, to different values and beliefs.

Du Preez and Roux (2010: 13), when writing about attitudes concerning discipline and disciplinary measures in schools, remarked that many revert to an underlying faith in traditional cultural values, to which they refer as “particularism”. This is in contrast to an affinity for human rights values, and it risks the “elevation of the values of only one culture and the consequent subversion of the multicultural ideals of our democracy, which seeks to honour the human rights of its citizens” (Du Preez & Roux, 2010: 13). The authors identify other academic writers who stand in favour of religious values (Du Preez & Roux, 2010: 16) and remind us of initiatives such as the “Conservative Christian Lobby”, who were not quite in agreement with the new curriculum introduced to the new South Africa (Du Preez & Roux, 2010: 17). This was evidenced by the “arguments of the lobbyists [which] were for the most part hostile to the explicit enhancement of humanistic values (human rights values) and the overall emphasis on social justice, equity, tolerance and diversity” (Chisholm, 2005, cited in Du Preez & Roux, 2010: 17). The tendency to fall back upon apparently tried and trusted cultural and traditional values could cause one to oversimplify very complex issues, and could lead to a very narrow perspective when arguing about values (Du Preez & Roux, 2010: 23). Furthermore, it seems unlikely that such a teacher will be able to accommodate the diverse range of learners (in a typical South African context) and their multifarious needs when engaging with them in terms of values and discipline (Du Preez & Roux, 2010: 23).

## 4.7 Summary

This chapter served to answer sub-question 3, “What are the inherent values of contemplative education?”, and sub-question 4, “How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?” In other words, through the philosophy of care ethics, I could construct a conceptual framework through which to understand some of the ideas found in contemplative education better. This includes a thorough analysis of values such as compassion, empathy and responsibility, all of which form the foundation of an ethical way of living, which focuses on the ‘other’ and a healthy relationality overall. Care ethics offers a foundation for understanding, in a conceptual and philosophical manner, that which is most lacking in terms of empathy, compassion and responsibility, in a neoliberal world.

Care ethicists analyse how the modern world is dominated by values leaning toward masculinity, such as rationality, reason and abstracted universal principles, which often leads to the sacrifice of individuals for the sake of these principles. The previous analysis of neoliberalism (see 3.3.1) showed how such sacrifices are justified along a scheme of economic rationality and cost–benefit analysis. Furthermore, the care ethicists analyse how this principle-based morality leads to a loss of community and an arguably unjustified preoccupation with the rational and the hyper-individual at the exclusion of the role of the home, the importance of the upbringing and the context of each individual. It also leads to a preoccupation with the public domain and laws at the exclusion of a mature understanding of the role of practical ethical behaviour in a day-to-day environment (see Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016). All such findings echo and support what was found and reported in the previous chapter (see 3.3). The more balanced ‘ethics of care’, which Gilligan (1977), Noddings (2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013) and Slote (2001; 2007; 2016) suggest, establishes a framework for healthy relationality and deepens one’s understanding of values such as empathy, compassion and responsibility. A quick study of the work of Derrida (1995) added a relational analysis of responsibility as a value, in case the reader feels that the care ethicists did not write enough on responsibility. All these findings create a philosophical and conceptual foundation upon which to begin an analysis of contemplative education. This is reported on in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE REVIEW – CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION

### 5.1 Introduction

As the main research question of this thesis was – Can contemplative education respond to the tension between neoliberalism and values education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)? – I hold contemplative education is the best remedy for the drawbacks of neoliberalism. I have analysed the ways in which neoliberalism might hamper empathy and responsibility (Chapter 3) and I have looked at what care ethics might do to help us keep these social justice values alive in the face of neoliberalism (Chapter 4). There are however certain key ingredients, which I believe are missing from care ethics, and this chapter reports on possible additional benefits and key ingredients, brought about through contemplative education.

This chapter helps to answer the following three sub-questions

- What are the inherent values of contemplative education?
- How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?
- What might contemplative education contribute to the values education goals of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and the policies that informed it?

As far as counteracting the neoliberal mentality, the values contemplative education needs to oppose are:

- an overdependence on economic rationality (Baez, 2007; Bordieu, 2002; Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Lemke, 2001; Munro, 2004; Saunders, 2010);
- hyper-individuality (and isolation) (Baez, 2007; Bordieu, 2002; Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Lemke, 2001; Munro, 2004; Saunders, 2010);
- an instrumental approach towards and experience of school (Astin, 1998; Bowl, 2017; Kopnina, 2014);
- an identity of exclusively being a consumer and customer (which makes it difficult to absorb one's self in experiences that do not directly bear profits, such as building character and developing values related to empathy and care) (Chaffee, 1998; Swagler, 1978; Wellen, 2005); and
- a propensity to avoid issues of uncertainty relating to the 'other' (Bauman, 2007; Edwards, 2000).

I remind the reader, again, that much of what was discussed in the previous chapter on care ethics holds true for this chapter, as I see contemplative education as a field closely related to care ethics.

The chapter begins by relaying some introductory, background information about contemplative education. Thereafter, a more detailed exploration of the content of the field follows, including how contemplative education represents a paradigm shift in terms of epistemology and compassion and/or ethics. Finally, there is a section considering some of the criticism and areas of concern, before the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

## **5.2 Contemplative education – a history and overview**

Contemplative education is an approach to education with a particular contemplative pedagogy that draws heavily from different contemplative practices. Contemplative practices, in turn, I can define as follows, drawing from Komjathy (2017). It is a collection of practices aimed at an introspective and self-reflective way of life. It involves techniques, such as meditation, reflective writing, prayer and more – many of these techniques have to do with the deepening of attention and awareness (Komjathy, 2017). The idea is to move to altered states of consciousness, where one can access previously hidden and subconscious aspects of one's self to become a more integrated individual and ultimately to become more compassionate and more connected to everything around one. Contemplative practice also involves philosophies that function through distinct modes of living or lifestyle as opposed to a purely theoretical or abstract mode of being. This focus on lifestyle and the questioning of inherited narratives and mental conditionings is what allows contemplative practice to break through certain deeply rooted patterns and habits within an individual.

Contemplative practices have a long history as a central component of many spiritual and religious traditions from around the world (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: xi). Modern universities are descended from monastic schools, where contemplative practice was a staple (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: xi.). Zajonc (2016) gives an interesting account of the often forgotten history of contemplative practices during the development of the modern Western world. He cites the French classicist, Pierre Hadot (1995; 2002) as a prominent exponent and historian of contemplative practices. Hadot makes clear how the ancient Greek philosophers were interested in shaping, through practice and training, the learners of their time (Zajonc, 2016: 17). Hadot (2002: 274) says:

We must discern the philosopher's underlying intention, which was not to develop a discourse which had its end in itself, but to act upon souls ... The point was always and above all not to

communicate to them [the reader or auditor] some ready-made knowledge but to *form* them. In other words the goal was to learn a type of know-how; to develop a *habitus*, or new capacity to judge and to criticize; and to *transform* – that is, to change people’s way of living and of seeing the world.

Simplicius (cited in Hadot, 2002: xiii), when asked, “[w]hat place shall the philosopher occupy in the city?” replied, “[t]hat of a sculptor of men.” Thus, as early as the ancient Greek periods, philosophers were set on the notion that contemplative practice forms part of philosophy. Zajonc (2016) explains how the movement away from the synthesis of lifestyle and knowledge was accelerated by Descartes (2013). According to Foucault (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1984, cited in Hadot, 2002: 263–264), “[b]efore Descartes, a subject could have access to the truth only by carrying out beforehand a certain work upon himself which made him susceptible of knowing the truth ... [But now] evidence has been substituted for *askēsis* [practice]”. After the work of Descartes (2013), “we increasingly find such practices [contemplative] lose their explicit place in education in favour of reasoning and evidence” (Zajonc, 2016: 18).

Other select figures stand out in recent history as strong believers in the power and relevance of contemplative practice. William James (1890: 424) says, “the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will ... An education which would improve this faculty would be *the education par excellence*”. Barbezat and Bush also mention that some individuals “have thought about expansive and reflective approaches to teaching”. They refer to John Dewey (1986), Jean Piaget (1973) and Paolo Freire (1970), “all [of whom] have experiential components at the heart of their systems” (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 5).

Of course, setting aside the Western traditions for a moment, there remains the East, which has an arguably richer relationship with contemplative practice. Komjathy (2017: 167) mentions the presence of contemplative practice in the Confucian tradition of China, and Roeser and Peck (2009: 127) remind one that:

For more than 2,500 years, the contemplative traditions of India have developed highly sophisticated curricula and corresponding sets of practices by which the refinement of awareness, attentional training, and the ethical development of individuals can be cultivated (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Lutz et al., 2007; Thurman, 2006). Indeed, these three educational aims were traditionally seen as constituting the purpose of education in Ancient India (Mookerji, 1947/2003).

In recent times, contemplative practices are not always easily accepted in academic circles. Palmer (cited in Barbezat & Bush, 2013: viii) is aware that “contemplation may sound like something that belongs in the mystical world of religion and spirituality, not in the empirical, rational world of the academy”. For this reason, contemplative education and contemplative

practice seem to “have often been experienced as countercultural [in the West], given their more holistic orientation to experiences of learning” (Winans, 2012: 159). This all came about because the “dominance of a largely Aristotelian emphasis in logic, the natural sciences, and theology, beginning at least by the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and consolidated in the reformation or scientific revolution” had a large part to play in the removal of all things contemplative (Hart, 2004, cited in Winans, 2012: 159). Pulkki, Saari and Dahlin (2015: 45) have also noticed that contemplative practices are largely “disregarded in academic life”.

However, Pulkki et al. (2015: 35) also report that, “since the late 1990s a movement called *contemplative pedagogy* has emerged in Anglo-American philosophy and psychology of education (see e.g. Bai, Scott & Donald, 2009; Grace, 2011; Hyland, 2011)”. Komjathy (2017: 1) feels that contemplative studies only really emerged at the turn of the century, and only truly began gaining recognition a decade later (i.e. by 2010).

The above is a historical account of the presence of contemplative practice but it is perhaps a good idea to consider how experts in the field choose to define it, even though I have attempted my own definition earlier. Komjathy (2017: 51) defines contemplative practice as:

[V]arious approaches, disciplines and methods for developing attentiveness, awareness, compassion, concentration, presence, wisdom, and the like [with] [p]ossible connective strands or family resemblances include attentiveness, awareness, interiority, presence, silence, transformation, and a deepened sense of meaning and purpose.

Contemplative education, i.e. education based on contemplative practice, is defined as –

[Education involving] active student participation with a competent teacher (in the form of a person or a set of teachings) and a set of experiential learning opportunities designed to help students develop clear, calm, and concentrated states of awareness in a context of personal growth and values such as humility, curiosity, openmindedness, open-heartedness, and caring for others (Roeser & Peck, 2009: 127).

Such “experiential learning opportunities might involve being in nature, doing art, learning physical disciplines involving set sequences of movements (e.g., tai chi, yoga), engaging in guided imagery, contemplating existential questions, or practicing meditation” (Roeser & Peck, 2009: 127). Jennings (2008: 103) emphasises the possibility of “develop[ing] the self-awareness to recognize mental and behavioral habits and learn ways to transcend habitual patterns” – thereafter one can engage in more “mindful and willful forms of living, learning, and relating to others” (Roeser & Peck, 2009: 103). Contemplative education also enables learners to experience “universally shared human values” in ways not known or felt before (Hart, 2002, cited in Jennings, 2008: 103). Komjathy (2017: 159) defines contemplative pedagogy as an “emerging experiential and experimental educational methodology that explores contemplative practice and contemplative experience, especially with respect to their

relevance and application to education and perhaps to larger existential and sociopolitical issues". Winans (2012: 159) includes within the range of experiences and explorations of contemplative education the "embodied experiences of emotions, beliefs, and thoughts".

Barbezat and Bush go to great lengths to emphasise the importance of introspection within contemplative practice and to show how the practice of introspection was ostracised from Western academia (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 33). They argue for its presence throughout "the contemplative traditions of Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity" and its usefulness in gaining "insight into both the nature of the world around us and the nature of ourselves" (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 33).

Furthermore, it has been observed that contemplative states are such a natural part of human life (or are supposed to be) that they can be observed to manifest by themselves in children (Jennings, 2008: 102). Zajonc (2016: 23), when referring more directly to contemplative education as seen in a classroom, divides contemplative exercises into three broad categories:

- *Capacity-building exercises*, which seek to cultivate:
  - (a) Equanimity, stress reduction, or emotional balance
  - (b) Concentration, attention, and close observation
  - (c) Memory and exact sensorial fantasy
  - (d) Discernment, judgment, or relational exercises
  - (e) Will or discipline
- *Content-related exercises*, in which the material being studied (poetry, economics, art, or science) is approached through a contemplative method.
- *Compassion and community*, in which the cultivation of empathy, compassionate concern, and altruism strengthens ethical qualities in the individual and deepens our caring relationships with others.

In summary, contemplative education is a very expansive and broad field, which values experiential and introspective learning. It has existed for millennia, and places great emphasis on the deepening of ethical values, such as compassion.

### **5.3 Shifting perspectives and paradigms**

One way in which to rephrase some of my criticisms against neoliberalism is to say that neoliberalism is an ideology that encourages and reinforces stagnant modes of thinking and living. This is why contemplative education is of particular importance, for it is truly unique in how it investigates, uproots and transforms deep-seated habits, patterns and prejudices

(Forbes, 2016; Komjathy, 2017; Walsh, 1989; Winans, 2012; Zajonc, 2006). Therefore, what follows is a report on a detailed exploration of the contents of contemplative education, with a specific focus on how contemplative education goes about transforming such patterns and habits. This section is a response to the main research question, “Can contemplative education respond to the tension between neoliberalism and values education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)?”, as well as the sub-questions, “What are the inherent values of contemplative education?”, “How do the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?” and “What might contemplative education contribute to the social justice awareness goals of Life Orientation?”

### 5.3.1 Patterns of thought and action

One particular area to which our modern culture seems to have led us comprises our set patterns of thinking and attempting to gain knowledge. Pulkki et al. (2015: 44), drawing from Hart (2004), identify the “contemporary approaches to knowledge” as found in Western schools “as based on either of the two classical ideas of Western epistemology: rationalism, which finds this source of knowledge in reason and systematic thinking; and empiricism, which finds the source in sense experience” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 44). Furthermore, “rationalism emphasises calculation, causal explanations and logical analyses” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 44) while “empiricism focuses on experience, especially observation and various kinds of measurement” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 44). These two approaches have solidified as the standard for any type of knowledge-gathering activities, even though they cannot tell us much regarding “consciousness in the act of learning” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 44) - that is to say, a self-reflective, almost phenomenological investigation of our processes for gathering knowledge. This leads Pulkki et al. (2015: 44) to recount the analogy of the attitude of a hunter, who is “always prepared to meet something unexpected”, just as we should always expect that there is something that we do not know or attempt to know in the correct manner.

One should forego a “natural attitude” in favour of a type of “un-learning” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 44). Thus, contemplative education represents a type of vigilance against potential ignorance, where the learner is always aware that to enter into a state of epistemological complacency could spell trouble and could represent a lack of progressive enquiry into one’s own capacities for creative thinking and feeling. Furthermore, we are convinced that knowledge and discovery are processes that are entirely contained within our own minds or ego-domains, and Pulkki et al. (2015: 45) are quick to remind us, “meaning and knowledge are actually *lived*, not only in our bodies but also in our mind-body-world interactions”. From this one can conclude that what is of utmost importance is not only what we know, but also how we know (Pulkki et al., 2015:

45). How one knows something is intimately tied up with how one lives that knowledge and how one becomes aware of one's interconnectedness with the world. There is a paradigm shift underway in the fields of cognitive science and the broader global culture, as the older model "which emphasizes knowledge as something abstract, objectivistic, formal, logical and rational is being questioned" and supplemented by "knowledge as something that is concrete, embodied, incorporated, and lived" (Pulkki et al., 2015: 45). This would mean that one places more emphasis on the historical, that which is unique, and that which is contextualised (Pulkki et al., 2015: 45).

Furthermore, if a person is not abstract, ahistorical, and hyper-rational, then it also means that such person is not "isolated from the social world and from all other human motivations and instincts" (Smith, 1987, in Pulkki et al., 2015: 47). Komjathy (2017: 167) also highlights how contemplative studies challenges the "denial of embodied experience" as found in many schools and universities. He goes so far as to echo Wallace (2000, in Komjathy, 2017: 40), who calls it a "taboo of subjectivity", and notes that contemplative education, by overcoming this taboo, could also make great strides in terms of teaching values and helping learners to explore existential and spiritual questions. This is because a careful study of one's own subjective being could reveal one's psychological dispositions (Komjathy, 2017: 170) and the ways in which one has been formed by cultures and subcultures (Komjathy, 2017: 201).

One way in which to undergo such self-reflection is through the process known as contextualization, a method used in the social sciences (see Harrington, 2008; 2016), which can provide a comprehensive analysis of the sociocultural formation of individuals and communities (Komjathy, 2017: 202). Although contextualization is frequently used in history, sociology and anthropology, it can also be used as a map for the "history of ideas" (Komjathy, 2017: 202), which, from a contemplative viewpoint, serves the purpose of questioning the beliefs we take for granted and which we simply inherit. For Komjathy, this relates to how meditation and contemplative education in general are always forced to be analysed from a strictly scientific viewpoint (Komjathy, 2017: 202). Furthermore, since contemplative practices so often involve different forms of interpretation of experiences, it becomes even more important to contextualise our interpretations, to try to avoid cultural and historical biases (Komjathy, 2017: 203).

Getting back to the idea of lived knowledge, when speaking of philosophy, Bai (2006: 19) asserts that there is a big difference between a philosophy that is academic and technical and "philosophy as art of living". She then goes on to say that the technical version of philosophy has been prioritised over the lived version, something that is not benefitting the people in general. Bai (2006: 18) questions the Western epistemological paradigm, and she ascribes a sense of dogmatism to the way in which we take our "notions (pictures of reality)" to represent

the actual reality fully and accurately. In a manner which reminds me of the cautionary remarks of Nietzsche (2006), Bai (2006: 19) writes:

There is no autonomy when we are conditioned to do something and constantly driven by it. This is addiction. Contemplative arts help us to overcome our addiction to conceptualization, not to stop our practice of thought-construction but to achieve virtuosity in our world-making without dogmatism. The most stubborn dogmatism that plagues us is naive realism: the view that what we perceive is what is “out there”, objectively.

This makes it clear that within contemplative education, there is a constant vigilance when it comes to our own presuppositions. This is an important first step in the process of unravelling the neoliberalist ideology within which we are all submerged. Before trying to argue whether what one knows (no matter under which banner of which ideology this might be) is indeed correct, it is truly progressive to consider first whether how one attempts to know is even effective. Pulkki et al. (2015: 41) also speak of how an “autopilot mode of everyday being can be related to the mechanical and unperceptive *habits* that Dewey (1997b) distinguishes from the *flexible and sensitive* habits that should be developed in education”. Thus, contemplative practice is a guarding strategy against potentially harmful or, at the very least, underachieving habitual and pattern-driven modes of living.

There is no doubt that neoliberalism has as its foundation all these features that contemplative education identifies as problematic. This much was also established in Chapter 3 (see 3.3.1 and 3.3.3). It is, therefore, not a far stretch to identify the task of contemplative education to be largely the task of combatting neoliberalism. Forbes (2016: 358) notices this tug-of-war between the purposes of contemplative education and neoliberalism in the classroom. When looking specifically at the practice of mindfulness meditation, Forbes (2016: 358) notices that the participants are usually biased towards “scientific evidence, materialism, reason, individualism, and entrepreneurial values”. He references the “Myth of the Given” (see Alston, 2002: 69), where one assumes that “events and actions in everyday life are directly perceived as given, objective facts rather than as socially constructed, interpretable, and contested meanings that can be uncovered, discussed, and transformed”.

Furthermore, Forbes (2016: 358) claims that teachers themselves, even those who participate in the teaching of mindfulness, do not always investigate their own loyalties to neoliberalist biases, and therefore contribute to the neoliberalisation of mindfulness and contemplative education. He identifies some of these biases citing, firstly, the notion that each individual is exclusively responsible for and in control of his or her own happiness and should pursue success through the act of buying and consuming. Secondly, he explains the notion that “therapeutic behavioral change and neuroscience are the means by which the individual attains and proves personal success” (Forbes, 2016: 359). This second notion betrays itself

as a form of scientism, and Forbes (2016: 359) goes on to explain the extent to which our culture is dominated by “scientific and technocratic approaches” through which mindfulness becomes an instrument used to pursue a neoliberalist, isolated and personal version of success. Such success can be measured through ““objective” outcome measures such as education audits and test scores” (Forbes, 2016: 359). This should not be new to the reader, as all such findings were present within Chapter 3 (on neoliberalism) (see 3.3.1 and 3.3.4).

Ultimately, Forbes (2016: 359) feels that what is normalised and accepted, and what remains unquestioned, are “unhealthy and unethical values, practices, and ways of being”. Ultimately, mindfulness practice (see Germer, 2004: 24) comes to be used within schools in a manner divorced from its contemplative origin (Forbes, 2016). This means that mindfulness practice cannot reach its true potential of uncovering the “unchartered realms of unconscious emotional life” or attempt to reach states of ego-transcendence as are found in the traditions from which the practice originates (Forbes, 2016: 361). It is leading economists, in fact, who are eager for more mindfulness within education, because they feel it results in the “greatest returns on education investments and lead to greater success in life”, and, finally, will increase “the quality and productivity of the workforce through fostering workers’ motivation, perseverance, and self-control” (Forbes, 2016: 362). Everything is forced into a narrow, economic, direction of understanding. In this way, Forbes (2016: 362) makes it clear that contemplative education comes face to face with strong neoliberalist modes of thinking and acting, and, only when one can truly understand the call to overcome habits and patterns of thought and action that are present in contemplative education, can one understand the deeper purposes of this emerging field.

Contemplative education also challenges our patterns and habits of thought and action by exploring the ways in which we approach identity. In Chapter 3 it was shown that neoliberalism leads to exclusionary identity formation (see 3.3.3). Contemplative education and contemplative practice author Zajonc (2006) writes about divisive identities as well. Forms of identity politics can even lead to murder and rape (Zajonc, 2006: 1), and what can truly address such issues is not only more aid and more data, but “a view of the human being in which the individual develops the capacity to move among worldviews, transcending particular identities while simultaneously honoring each of them” (Zajonc, 2006: 1). For Zajonc (2006: 1), it is “at the level where information marries with values to become meaning” that we can begin to rectify the socio-political mishaps of our world. Contemplative education works hard to make the very consciousness of the learner more flexible and receptive to ‘the other’ (Zajonc, 2006: 1), and to move it away from forms of “objectification” (Zajonc, 2006: 2). Zajonc (2006: 3) observes the tendency for “educating the mind for critical reasoning, critical writing, and critical speaking as well as for scientific and quantitative analysis”, but, thereafter, asks, “is this

sufficient?” He urges education to move towards the transformation of the heart above and beyond the mere transformation of the intellect – aiming for the much-needed ability to “live the worldviews of others” (Zajonc, 2006: 3). This refers to the much-needed ability to have love for even those most different from ourselves (Zajonc, 2006: 3). Zajonc’s article portrays another way in which contemplative education challenges our patterns of thought and behaviour, namely identity.

Another narrative or habit of thinking to be challenged is the notion that emotions are inferior to pure rationality and thought. Winans (2012: 150) argues that thoughts cannot operate without emotions, and that this fact has been established by recent neuroscientific research (see Crowley, 2006). Beyond that, she urges one to realise that emotions are not something that individuals generate and contain within themselves, but emotions are actually shared. There exist networks of socially and historically constructed and shared emotions (Winans, 2012: 150). This is a similar point to what we saw when discussing knowledge (see 5.3.1) and identity (see 5.3.1). Perhaps at this juncture, it can be noted that contemplative education reveals an interconnectedness that moves through most facets of life and influences our ethics. This is directly in contrast to the hyper-individualist picture painted by neoliberalism. Winans (2012: 152) calls for “a critical emotional literacy”, which involves theoretical and practiced components.

The theoretical argument is engaged through “critical, analytical questions” while the practice comes about through “experiential, embodied engagement with emotions” (Winans, 2012: 152.). Traditionally, research has been approached in a manner where the researcher tries as far as possible to distance him- or herself from that which is researched (Author, date). This approach to research leads to the emotional and moral dimensions of many questions being minimised (Winans, 2012: 153). Finally, such distance creates callousness towards the sufferings of others (Winans, 2012: 153). She goes on to state that emotions are not only communal in that they are shared, but they are also actually formed within relational moments (Winans, 2012: 154), meaning that emotions and identity are closely interlinked.

Once again, this kind of topic was exactly relevant for the discussion on divisive identities and asocial relationality as undertaken in Chapter 3, and shows that contemplative education counters neoliberalism on many fronts. These identities come about through “emotional” rules that are “informed by power relations” (Winans, 2012: 155). Another important point is that, just as emotions are formed by observations, observations are directed by emotions (Winans, 2012: 155). Here it becomes evident that emotions are the driving force behind our patterns of inquiry and our very ability to be aware of how such patterns control us (Winans, 2012: 155). This has direct bearing on the realm of ethics, as we are prone to ignoring certain uncomfortable ethical dilemmas altogether if we are not aware of our own emotional attitudes

towards them (Winans, 2012: 155). When thinking further about ethics, it is important to realise that emotions can act either as a reinforcing agent of as entrenched power relations or as the very seat of transformative processes (Winans, 2012: 155). Contemplative practice and contemplative education could facilitate such transformation by helping learners to realise that they are not their emotions, and that they do not have to identify with them (Winans, 2012: 160; also see Zajonc, 2009: 26). Instead, certain negative emotions can be transcended and worked through, in order to arrive at a position where one is ready and willing to engage with difficult ethical questions. Lastly, upon studying emotions and noticing their relational formation, one has an opportunity to let such findings evolve into a genuine understanding of an existing interconnectedness, which is the most essential ingredient for social transformation (Winans, 2012: 166).

Speaking of interconnectedness, contemplative education could serve to help us question how easily we have, under the neoliberal model, let go of social bonds and social networks. The famous work, *Bowling alone: America's declining social capital*, by Robert Putnam (1995) outlines the decline of what he terms 'social capital' – referring to the strength of our social networks (or the lack of such strength). I have shown how neoliberalism contributes to the breakdown of social capital (see 3.3.3). According to Bourdieu (2002), it is such social capital, in the form of family ties and the like, that stands as the last bastion keeping neoliberalism from completely engulfing every aspect of modern culture. Barbezat and Bush (2013: 30) argue for the significance of contemplative education in restoring to us a sense of social capital through a deep sense of interconnectedness. They call for a reimagining of educational environments to facilitate the development of explorations of interconnectedness through contemplative exercises (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 32).

Finally, there is one more narrative or pattern of thought that requires consideration, namely the assumption that any individual is able to approach any type of knowledge or experience with the right amount of intellectual prowess. Western traditions, especially the more modern versions thereof, hold that knowledge is within the grasp of any who can muster up enough intellectual acumen to reach it, no matter their state of consciousness. Walsh (1989) – in his interesting article, "Can Western philosophers understand Asian philosophies? – offers some ideas on why certain ancient contemplative traditions have not quite accepted that knowledge and experiences can be handed out easily. Such traditions do not take "intellectual analysis" to be enough for gaining access to "the deepest profundities of realization" (Walsh, 1989: 281).

The *Vedantasara* (see Nikhilānanda, 1959), a text from India, includes a list of requirements needed before anyone would be able to understand its contents, and although the list includes "textual study and intellectual discrimination", two requirements that are more familiar to the Western mind, the rest of the list comprises "faith, renunciation, calm, a turning of attention

away from the outer world towards the inner, cessation of sensory perception, endurance, and continuous concentration” (Walsh, 1989: 282), which are not so familiar to the modern Western mind. In other traditions from the East, similar prerequisites are found, and usually include “a rigorous discipline of ethics, emotional transformation, attentional training and cultivation of wisdom” (Walsh, 1989: 282.). This leads Walsh to ask whether, amidst everything gained by the West through an intellectual study of Eastern traditions, something has not perhaps been lost or missed (Walsh, 1989: 283). According to recent findings on the impact of different states of consciousness, Walsh concludes that the answer might be a resounding ‘yes’ (Walsh, 1989: 283). Walsh notes (1989: 283) that the study of consciousness has made somewhat of a return within the field of Western psychology, since an absence dating back to William James (1890), and, this is happening specifically through research into altered or alternate states of consciousness (Walsh, 1989: 283).

There are a series of different states of consciousness, beyond the normal, waking state, that all hold their own, unique insights, and are all accessed in different ways (Walsh, 1989: 284). Furthermore, these different states of consciousness “display what is known as ‘state specificity’” (Walsh, 1989: 284), meaning the insights and capacities that are accessed in one state are not necessarily transferable to a different state. This begins to shed light on why certain Asian traditions emphasise different prerequisites needed in order to gain access to the treasures within more meditative and contemplative states, treasures that are not accessible through mere intellectual rigour. This also makes it difficult for whatever is experienced by a person in a different state of consciousness to be communicated to anyone else who is not in that same, altered state or who has never even experienced it (Walsh, 1989: 286). Walsh wants to be clear that much more research is needed to fully grasp the extent to which such state-specific limitations exist, but in the very least it can help one to understand why Asian mystical philosophies have always placed considerable emphasis on the necessity of reaching states of consciousness beyond the usual, mentally and intellectually charged waking state (Walsh, 1989: 286).

Of most importance for this study was the claim, made by such Asian traditions, that specific states of consciousness, attained through contemplative and meditative practice, can lead not only to “increased calm, equanimity, concentration, and psychosomatic control, greater perceptual and introspective sensitivity and acuity”, but, most importantly, “stronger emotions of love, joy and compassion” (Walsh, 1989: 287). If contemplative practice and contemplative education can provide levels of love, compassion and empathy that are not be accessed in any other way, then the field becomes all the more relevant when facing the ethical needs brought about through neoliberalism. Already, there is ample evidence for the claims of “greater calm, psychophysiological control of somatic processes, and perceptual sensitivity,

speed and acuity”, as well as evidence for “these Asian claims for enhanced introspective skills and state-specific knowledge” (Walsh, 1989: 288). Moreover, there is growing evidence for the claims regarding a sense of interconnectedness, compassion and empathy – this is to be elaborated upon in a future section specifically on contemplative education and compassion (see 5.3.2).

In short, Western philosophy is a “primarily conceptual enterprise that seeks the deepest type of understanding through intellectual analysis and logic” while Asian mystical philosophy places special emphasis on the need for discipline (Walsh, 1989: 290). Walsh describes it with the word ‘discipline’, although, personally, I feel a much better word would be ‘lifestyle’, because a deeper study of these mystical texts show that the practices need not always relate to ascetic measures, as the word ‘discipline’ might suggest. If one takes, for example, the most popular philosophical text from the East, the *Bhagavad-Gita as it is* (Swami, 1993), and examine it closely, it becomes clear that the largest parts of the text are devoted to what is called the ‘three modes of material nature’ – a framework for understanding the different modes or energies that can come to dominate one’s life according to one’s chosen lifestyle.

For example, the ‘mode of ignorance’ is characterised by inertia, confusion, depression and so forth, while the ‘mode of goodness’ is characterised by balance, good health, clear understanding, friendliness, openness and magnanimity (Swami, 1993). The text describes in no uncertain terms which habits and patterns (lifestyle choices) lead to an increase of which of the modes of material nature, making it clear that our own decisions, which reinforce our own habits and lifestyle, are at the root of the different states of consciousness to which we have access, and, consequently, at the root of the results or fruits of such states of consciousness, be it positive or negative.

Getting back to Walsh, whether one wants to use words like ‘discipline’ or use words like ‘lifestyle’, the fact remains, Asian philosophies emphasise the need for systems of training in order to access altered states of consciousness (Walsh, 1989: 292). There has been a tendency for Westerners to assume that “Asian philosophies, psychologies and religions” are “nonsensical products of primitive thinking” owing to their excessive requirements (Walsh, 1989: 293). However, it is a classic case of dismissing what one cannot comprehend. Walsh refers to the concept “grades of significance” (Walsh, 1989: 293) to explain that a single object or concept or philosophy can have different grades of significance or meaning, and that all the different levels of interpretation could – at the same time – be, strictly speaking, true, but could have different levels of significance or impact. This explains why Western academics might very well feel like they have fully understood Asian mystical philosophies, – and, for the purposes of this study, we might add contemplative practice in general – when they have, in fact, only understood a small part of the total picture. In conclusion, there is a “distinct

epistemological mode that must be cultivated before these traditions can be understood and their validity can be assessed” (Walsh, 1989: 295).

Walsh’s (1989) article goes a long way to expose a certain habit, pattern or narrative that is present within the modern, neoliberal, Western world – the tendency to assume that any type of knowledge or experience (or state of consciousness) can be reached simply through intellectual means, without any due attention given to discipline and lifestyle. Although this topic had already been touched upon in some sense when talking about how contemplative education encourages a lived or embodied approach to knowledge, emotions and experiences (see 5.3.1), it is a rich understanding to frame the ideas in terms such as those used by Walsh (1989), such as states of consciousness (see Walsh, 1989: 283), state-specificity (see Walsh, 1989: 285), and the necessity of discipline (see Walsh, 1989: 282) and – as I would like to add – lifestyle. Furthermore, what makes this analysis even more important is the fact that ethical positions can be contributed to states of consciousness, meaning that one can argue, as this study did (see 5.3.2), that the deepest levels of empathetic, compassionate and responsible living can only be accessed through discipline and lifestyle, and not simply through intellectual enquiry.

This is perhaps an opportune moment to reflect on why I feel that care ethics does not do quite enough insofar as challenging neoliberalism. When thinking of the kind of paradigm shifts, which this section associates with contemplative education, it becomes clear that care ethics does not, in fact, have the power to enact such shifts. With one type of shift, in particular, this seems most evident – and that is the move away from a purely cerebral or cognitive mode of knowledge gathering and ethics to a more embodied and lived mode thereof. Let me be clear, care ethics is distinct from most other ethical schools in that it does, indeed, move away from abstractions and the hyper-rational, towards an ethics that is focus on lived relationships and context-specific ethical interactions (see Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016), but there are no fleshed-out practices as part of the school, and this is why I feel it mainly remains a theoretical project.

Contemplative education, on the other hand, as one can begin to realise throughout this chapter, places considerable emphasis on the experiential, the lived, the meditative, in other words, on all that lies beyond the cognitive and the theoretical. Explained in a different way, one can make the simple observation that care ethics explains and conceptualises of a specific, new ethical voice that should be explored and honoured, while having nothing near the immense history and pool of concrete practices, techniques or methods for unlocking that very ethical mode or voice. Contemplative education has a plethora of exercises and practices revolving around the development of compassion.

### **5.3.2 Morality, involvement, interconnectedness and compassion**

Although the concepts of interconnectedness and compassion were already touched upon in 5.3.1, it should be expanded upon and afforded its own section, since the topic of compassion within contemplative education represents a very strong answer to the sub-questions “What are the inherent values of contemplative education?” and “How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberalist mentality?” When conversations surrounding ethics and morality arise, ‘compassion’ seems to be the term favoured by contemplative education authors, certainly owing to the fact that it is the word found to be central to many contemplative spiritual and religious traditions (Fox, 1999; Mamgain, 2010). As a brief side note, I would urge the reader to see this usage of the notion of compassion as synonymous with how care ethicists would use ‘empathy’. The way both terms are utilised within both fields represents the same ethical modes of being. Furthermore, this section also serves as an answer to the question, “What might contemplative education contribute to the values education goals of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and the policies that informed it?”, as it deals directly with contemplative education’s approach to ethics.

In 5.3.1, Pulkki et al. (2015: 44) identified rationality and empiricism as the two main constituents of the Western approach to epistemology. Furthermore, I explored how this leads to a disembodied mode of being. Even more concerning is how this disembodiment results in a person’s alienation from others (Pulkki et al., 2015: 45). Another way of analysing Western epistemology is by noticing how much it is framed in terms of “visual perception” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 38). This, once again, absorbs one in an impersonal and objective mood, as found within neoliberalism. With such a disembodied, impersonal and visual approach, one tends to view the world in terms of ‘things’ and ‘space’ and not in terms of “dynamic interactive processes between living beings” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 38). In a way, it is as if we start to look past people, and as if we “suppresses the non-visual and lived-body aspects of moral life and education” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 38). Additionally, the technology-rich internet culture of the neoliberal age contributes to the frequency of disembodied and impersonal interactions marked by “hate speech” (Pulkki et al., 2015: 38). If a different epistemological approach can be pursued, where “intuition, sensing, and feeling” are held equally to the more contemporary Western approaches, “empathy imagination and compassion” could eventually flourish (Pulkki et al., 2015: 47).

Contemplative methods rewire our cognitive biases and relational prejudices (Pulkki et al., 2015: 38), and furthermore increase our moral awareness (Pulkki et al., 2015: 39). It is imperative that one can make moral judgements, but even more important is to recognise a

moral issue (Pulkki et al., 2015: 39). This brings the discussion back to what has been mentioned earlier in this chapter – attention and awareness (see 5.3.1). The importance of this trait has been recognised since the time of Stoic philosophers, who trained their attentions, stilled their minds, and entered into an awareness of each passing moment, to become aware of the needs of those around them and to be truly able to act in a mindful and just manner (Pulkki et al., 2015: 39). This was the method employed for overcoming the self-absorption of an individualised perception and extending that perceptive power, through attention and awareness, to a larger, interconnected network of persons beyond the individual (Pulkki et al., 2015: 39). This Stoic practice is no different to Buddhist, Christian or Hindu practices for the sake of compassionate awareness. Academics are witnessing more and more each year that there is a strong connection between the heightened levels of awareness that is cultivated through contemplative education and the ability to devote one selflessly to another (Pulkki et al., 2015: 39).

In 5.3.1, I highlighted how contemplative education enables one to question and transform the patterns and habits of thought and action by which one has been conditioned. This included one's emotions and consequently one's identity. Similarly, as was argued in chapters 3 and 4, such habits and patterns affect one's moral dispositions and perceptions. Thus, the introspective thrust of contemplative education has a direct influence on the realm of ethics, "[i]nner attention makes possible the uncovering of what is often happening pre- or subconsciously in our mind. Moral perception, like all perception, is initiated by such preconscious processes, preceding the conscious interpretation of the situation" (Pulkki et al., 2015: 40).

Pulkki et al. (2015: 37) also make it clear that research within psychology and neuroscience support hypotheses of interconnectedness, which is in itself a catalyst for empathy. Other studies (see Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999) have pointed to the fact that the emotional and empathetic maturity that comes from contemplative exercises stems from the "delay of gratification" principle taught or obtained through such practices (Roeser & Peck, 2009: 129). This is simply the ability to forego a smaller reward at present in exchange for a larger reward in the future. This leads one to minimise impulsivity and become aware of the realm of the social-emotional (Roeser & Peck, 2009: 129). Barbezat and Bush (2013: 15, 30, 31) relay ample scientific research to show the significant effects contemplative education has regarding compassion and empathy.

Although Pulkki et al. (2015) view compassion and interconnectedness as one aspect (albeit a large aspect) of contemplative practice and contemplative education, Barbezat and Bush (2013: 128) hold that all forms of the teaching of contemplative practice occur "by definition, within a relational context in which personal growth and ethics are emphasized". In other

words, all the techniques and exercises used to gain a deeper sense of awareness and to become a more calm and integrated person are ultimately aimed at the ability to use such benefits for the well-being and in the service of others (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 128).

Clearly, according to the contemplative scheme, empathy and compassion flow from a sense of interconnectedness (Pulkki et al., 2015). This is why contemplative education makes an effort to transform learning environments in such a manner that learners no longer feel separated from the subject matter they study or from the broader world they inhabit (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 4). Contemplative education aims to validate and support a learner's personal experiences (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 6), and this has a considerable effect on a learner's willingness and eagerness to engage with the world around them or with their specific study subjects (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 6). In the foreword to "Contemplative practices in higher education: Powerful methods to transform teaching and learning", Palmer (cited in Barbezat & Bush, 2013: vii), when reflecting on learners and their position within education, writes, "I see too many people whose expert knowledge – and the power that comes with it – has not been joined to a professional ethic, a sense of communal responsibility, or even simple compassion". With that he immediately exposes a lack of certain core values of compassion, empathy and responsibility. Palmer goes on to say (cited in Barbezat & Bush, 2013: vii) that it is the "objectivist model of knowing" that causes –

[A] pedagogy that keeps students at arm's length from the subjects they learn about [...] [which], in turn, creates an ethical gap between the educated person and a world that is inevitably impacted by his or her actions, a failure to embrace the fact that one is a moral actor with communal responsibilities.

This immediately reminds one of the relational gap, which was highlighted by the different articles on consumer identity as reported in Chapter 3 (see 3.3.3). Contemplative education teaches one how to stop categorising other humans as 'other' and thus to create an unnecessary distance. Palmer notes that, as Barbezat and Bush argue in their book (cited in Barbezat & Bush, 2013: vii), "contemplative practices [...] will deepen, not damage, academic culture [and] the pedagogical elements found here help students [to] feel more keenly their responsibilities as educated persons in the larger ecology of human and nonhuman life".

In the words of Hadot (2002: 276):

[Philosophy] is essentially an effort to become aware of ourselves, our being-in-the-world, and our being-with-others. It is also, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty used to say, an effort to "relearn how to see the world" and attain a universal vision, thanks to which we can put ourselves in the place of others and transcend our own partiality.

Not only does contemplative education help learners to focus on a sense of interconnectedness, which permeates all things, and on care, compassion, empathy and responsibility, but the way in which such virtues are approached is also different. The current neoliberal paradigm, as discussed in Chapter 4, has a masculine, abstract and principle-based approach to ethics and issues of justice (see 4.3). Orr (2014) argues that it is time to break out of this masculine and individual mould. The way in which we attempt to develop compassion and empathy in our contemporary global world is through an overly 'rational' engagement with the concept of rights. This is done in a similar manner as we would attempt to solve a math problem. Orr (2014: 44) further notes, "modern-era ethical theories [...] are grounded in the logical abstract formalism developed out of the criteria of scientific investigation and theory". According to Orr (2014: 49), one should uncover "the structure of the feminine relational ego and the role of empathy in its mode of moral problem solving" and move "toward grounding a moral orientation in a self-concept which avoids the isolation of the purely rational ego of the Rights and Justice approach". According to Orr (2014: 49):

Meditation practices such as mindfulness, combined with study, can begin to counter this repression and to develop an experiential understanding of *pratityasamutpada* [dependent co-origination or interconnectedness]. This means that one must *live* that understanding, not simply cognitively recognize it.

In other words, contemplative practice could contribute much in terms of establishing the interconnected, ego-transcending and relational ethics, which I discussed in Chapter 4. Orr (2014) mentions meditation practices. I would add that other forms of contemplative education could be used, such as contemplative writing or thought-provoking community involvement. The form is not as important as the function, namely that learners must begin to live a lifestyle that reinforces their sense of interconnectedness. Orr is of the opinion that "[m]indfulness as a simple but powerful technique to promote *karuna*/compassion can be easily integrated into classrooms at all levels to develop natural compassion and bring it to bear on the full range of curricular, social and environmental issues" (Orr, 2014: 52).

When thinking about how this vision stemming from contemplative education differs from neoliberalism, I think of how persons are convinced that rationality and cold, calculated choices are the way by which they must move through life (Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Munro, 2004). This permeates into educational contexts as well, as shown in Chapter 3 (see 3.3.4), and has the effect of obscuring, from a learner's view, the 'other', by erecting an identity based on competition and exclusion. Clarke (2008), in his work, urges for a pragmatic identity discovery for learners. Contemplative education proves to be such a pragmatic and more organic form of identity discovery. The desires of Gunzenhauser (2008) who, when writing about education, speaks of self-reflection and the formation of an identity based upon relation

to the other, are fulfilled by contemplative education. In other words, contemplative education signifies a move away from the solipsistic (i.e. egotistic and self-absorbed) and hyper-individualist nature of neoliberalism towards a more intersubjective identity that recognises an existing interconnectedness, and, consequently sustains a greater level of empathy and compassion.

In summary, section 5.2 covered many subtopics, all related to paradigm shifts. First, there was the epistemological, the identity-bound and the emotional narratives, which are all turned upside down and revolutionised by contemplative education. Of particular importance was the emphasis on a lived and embodied philosophy instead of a purely intellectual and philosophical one, the realisation that different states of consciousness exist, which are not all accessible through mere intellect, the actualisation of an awareness of the interconnectedness of being, and, finally, the compassion-based ethics that flows from such sense of interconnectedness. All of these findings created a powerful combined formula for resisting and counteracting the values that are put in place by neoliberalism. Also of note was the fact that contextualised experiences and relationships, and openness to the 'other' are underscored exactly they are in care ethics. As I have mentioned, in this regard contemplative education is, for me, an evolution of care ethics, as it has almost all of the same concepts, but with the addition of a lived dimension, a lifestyle, complete with many sets of methods and practices.

#### **5.4 Areas of concern**

What follows are some areas of concern as noted by various authors. Contemplative education can be described as a still emerging field (see Roth, 2006) and, therefore, it is necessary to become aware of the areas that call for some caution. Many pitfalls are possible, as the ways in which contemplative education might be implemented into modern school and university curriculums are still being finalised.

A good place to start would be an official article of assessment, directed at the entire movement of contemplative education. In her article, "Look before you leap: Reconsidering contemplative pedagogy", Fisher (2017) voices various concerns. First of all, she feels that the claim of contemplative education of unlocking a "focused attention [that is] is rarely if ever systematically trained or cultivated in most educational settings" (Fisher, 2017: 11) is ungrounded. I feel this is an issue of semantics. When contemplative education authors refer to "attention" (Gunnlaugson, Sarath, Scott & Bai, 2014: 151; Repetti, 2010: 5, 7, 8) they do not mean anything close to what Fisher means by the term.

If one considers the previously discussed states of consciousness and the 'state-specificity' that goes with it (see 5.3.1), one can begin to understand that 'attention' is a multi-level concept, and that there really is a vast difference between the type of attention contemplative teachers try to cultivate within learners and the type of attention that is commonly utilised within the intellectually oriented modern educational system. Perhaps it can be argued that the authors within contemplative education need to be more elaborate and that they should considerate in their explanations of different terms, and that they make efforts to differentiate when necessary. At the same time, however, it might perhaps behove those approaching the field to familiarise themselves with some of the more nuanced meanings and understandings of different concepts used by the relevant experts in the field. In any case, it is not a criticism on the part of Fisher that I feel holds much weight.

Fisher (2017: 13) raises other concerns that I feel are relevant. She mentions the religious backgrounds of many contemplative practices. This entails various complexities. First of all, when contemplative practice is secularised, the religious or spiritual meanings behind various rituals are completely subverted (Fisher, 2017: 15). However, secularisation is one easy response to some of the troubles that come about through teachers resorting to various forms of proselytising when feeling inspired by the practices they themselves follow rigorously (Fisher, 2017: 13). Roeser and Peck (2009: 132) are a representative example of the camp within the writers on contemplative practice that feel secularisation and a non-sectarian version of the field are the best ways forward.

Furthermore, contemplative exercises within the context of a classroom could evoke a myriad of intense and complex emotions and psychological reactions, and there is the very real danger of not having teachers who are adequately trained or qualified to facilitate or manage such complex responses (Fisher, 2017: 13). Fisher feels that contemplative education misguides and distorts teaching until it becomes counselling, and could lead to "dangerous" and "irresponsible results" (Fisher, 2017: 16). She proclaims, "[any] pedagogy that requires teachers to assess potential psychological benefits or harm belongs in a therapist's office, not in a classroom", but who is to say that the current, neoliberal educational milieu is psychologically neutral? She seems to imply that contemplative education conjures up volatility where it does not exist, when it can be argued that it is merely bringing to the surface and redirecting powerful emotional and psychological drives that were always in effect.

Thinking back to the analysis of neoliberalism as reported in Chapter 3, it seems a far stretch to claim that neoliberalism is neutral in terms of emotions and psychological states. Regarding this issue of adequately trained teachers, Roeser and Peck (2009: 132) recommend "modules for the education and support of teachers in how to use contemplative practices". Others, such as Komjathy (2017: 111) agree that training is necessary, and they add that there are ample

techniques and approaches that have no real chance of resulting in unsettling emotional or psychological states. However, he also notes that many teachers or staff members who are enthusiastic about the field fail to consider and discuss potential dangers sufficiently for fear of exacerbating the unpopularity of contemplative education (Komjathy, 2017: 111). Although Komjathy is in favour of training, he is not in favour of further steps, such as certification programmes and the like, which would represent a “professionalization” of contemplative practice (2017: 174). Barbezat and Bush (2013: 19) feel that teachers must at least have some personal involvement with the practice they want to introduce if they want to be able to give learners a meaningful experience or if they want to help them “process their experience afterward (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 68).

Furthermore, these authors recommend teachers familiarise themselves with the potential resistance of a learner by learning about such learner’s level of apprehension about an exercise (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 68) and by respecting the unique context and background from which each learner comes in order to make the learners feel that their experiences in relation to contemplative exercises are important (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 69). Eaton, Davies, Williams and Macgregor (2017: 29) add that many learners, because of their cultural and religious backgrounds and lifestyles, may not know how to react to contemplative pedagogies. It is therefore the role of the teacher to “provide sufficient rationale and scaffolding for these activities so that students feel safe and supported in participating in them”. Finally, Barbezat and Bush (2013: 81) also highlight that contemplative exercises are enacted through “verbal guidance” and that it is, therefore, of utmost importance that teachers do not confuse learners with unnecessary jargon, but keep their communication effective by keeping it simple and clear.

Fisher (2017: 17) also expresses great doubts over the prospect of evaluating contemplative education, a distinctly subjective and personal affair. Yet, I would argue that contemplative education should not be evaluated at all. I feel inclined to say that Fisher is exposing the symptoms of her neoliberal bias in being concerned about evaluation and measurement when it comes to a subject that should not have anything to do with performance in the first place (Forbes, 2016). For Barbezat and Bush (2013: 76), the solution lies in grading learners according to their level of participation, instead of grading something as subjective as personal experiences and reflections.

Another cautionary note, which I think is of utmost importance considering the theme of neoliberalism within this study, comes from Forbes (2016: 357). We already touched upon his arguments in section 5.2.1. He cautions against neoliberal elements within mindfulness programmes and contemplative education more broadly. He ascribes the move towards secularisation as one of the main doorways through which neoliberal ideals move in (Forbes,

2016: 357). In other words, he is not that enthusiastic about such secularisation. A distinctly vague and relativist ethos of the secular version of mindfulness allows for the neoliberal value of “personal well-being” above all else to creep into the picture (Forbes, 2016: 357). Some (such as Purser & Loy, 2013) refer to this morally watered down version of mindfulness as McMindfulness (Forbes, 2016: 357). This is a reference to the commercial aspect of capitalism, as seen in something like McDonald’s. As Forbes (2016: 357) puts it:

[We see the rise of] self-serving and ego-enhancing purposes that run counter to both Buddhist and Abrahamic prophetic teachings to let go of ego-attachment and enact skilful, universal compassion” and which sustains the “neoliberal, corporatized, individualistic society based on private gain.

McMindfulness, that distorted version of mindfulness practice, is completely oblivious to “the present moral, political, and cultural context of neoliberalism” (Forbes, 2016: 357) and, ironically, can offer nothing more than a self-help formula, through an over-emphasis on stress relief and mental efficiency for the purpose of material productivity, for individuals to keep fit for re-enrolment in the entrepreneurial conveyor belt of neoliberalism (Forbes, 2016: 357). With McMindfulness, there is no awareness of social imbalances or social justice issues (Forbes, 2016: 357) and there is the neoliberal tendency of viewing the individual in very isolated terms, completely ignorant of the interdependent networks within society. Mindfulness practice should not only aim at the betterment of the isolated individual, but should encourage one to become deeply invested in social justice issues, and to develop an ethical and empathetic nature (Forbes, 2016: 357), and that was certainly the stance of this study as well.

In another of his works, Forbes (2017: 3) questions the heavy testing and accountability that are present in modern-school systems, and asks us to consider to what our definitions of success amount and to think how little it has been given deep thought (Forbes, 2017: 2). This was all discussed in Chapter 3 (see 3.4), but it is good to see that an Author like Forbes (2017), within the field of contemplative practice, is also noticing the same issues. Forbes (2017: 3) attests that such a narrow focus on testing and performance contributes to mindfulness education being distorted to suite the hyper-individualist and competitive ends of neoliberalism.

Komjathy (2017: 172) observed similar trends in relation to neoliberalism and contemplative practice, and refers to it as the “banalization, cooptation, commodification, and corporatization of meditation”, noticing the popularity of meditative practice and techniques among corporate giants, such as Facebook, Google and Twitter.

Komjathy (2017: 37), when writing about critics in general, feels that, since most of them “utilize caricatures, straw-man and red-herring arguments in technical philosophical language, rooted in their own fears and misrepresentations, they are negligible, underserving of serious consideration”. He goes on to say, “like contemporary academia more generally, one finds various petty careerist, opportunist, pseudo-intellectual, and politicized motivations (e.g., concern for fame, power, and influence)” (Komjathy, 2017: 37). He is obviously writing from a very impassioned corner, and there is a rather accusatory tone, making sweeping statements about very large sections of academia. However, if one can take it as an expression of his frustrations regarding the acceptance of contemplative education, one can see that there is certainly a lot of truth to what he is implying about the negative attitudes towards contemplative education. Eaton, Davies, Williams and MacGregor (2017: 29), beyond expressing challenges faced with regard to a shift away from traditional “curriculum design, course delivery, and student assessment protocols”, also attest to challenges faced regarding “acceptance for these [contemplative] practices within the student body, within our institutions, and within the larger academy” (Eaton et al., 2017: 29). They also note, “personal reflection can be misunderstood as undermining academic rigor or confusing the scientific method” (Eaton et al., 2017: 29.).

This brings us to another important area of caution, and that is the relationship between contemplative education and scientific rigour. Some authors (such as Roeser & Peck, 2009: 132) submit to the so-called need to comply with the scientific accountability standards in place. Others are not at all enthusiastic or convinced. Komjathy (2017: 38) recognises that the current educational milieu is saturated with values such as secular materialism, social constructivism, and scientific (scientistic?) reductionism”, and he prefers the cognitive processes to the embodied practices. It is clear that Komjathy does not want contemplative education to submit itself to such thoughtlessly accepted cultural norms and homogenisations.

Scientific benchmarks, such as neuroscience and psychology, have become the doorkeepers of the acceptable (Komjathy, 2017: 43) but, to Komjathy (2017: 43), it is nothing but unnecessarily “dominant interpretive frameworks”. This bias towards scientific standards is not only the result of the scientism and technocracy, which he had identified, but also of simple economics – funding goes to what is deemed relevant and verifiable (Komjathy, 2017: 43). This is yet another clear example of the great influence of neoliberalism. He is not convinced that such a scientism will allow for the proper exploration of the “deeper transformative power of meditation” (Komjathy, 2017: 256). He is also starkly aware of the political and reputational repercussions of contemplative education, and cites personal experience of being warned against involvement for fear of jeopardising career prospects (Komjathy, 2017: 39).

On the topic of secularisation, he cites the same materialist values and reductionism as mentioned above as a reason for the pressure to secularise contemplative practice, and he resists such pressures in favour of the attempt at “honor[ing] and engag[ing] multiculturalism, multiethnicity, and religious pluralism” (Komjathy, 2017: 41). In fact, he evolves these recommendations to a point where “interreligious dialogue” can become a way to guard against the watered-down and conformist values of secular materialism – “greater inclusion of alternative perspectives and other traditions, engaged on their own terms, will strengthen the field” (Komjathy, 2017: 42). When a religious learner is expected to conform to a secularised system, it represents a form of coercion, and what often happens, is that traditional practices are stripped down and reinvented and reconceived to fit a secular setting (Komjathy, 2017: 173). For Komjathy (2017: 173), there is a hint of neo-colonialism present within such appropriation.

## 5.5 Summary

Considerable content was covered in this chapter. The chapter started by giving an overview of the field, showing that it has a very long and rich history, and by giving some accounts of how different authors would define the school of thought. However, the most important part of this chapter was section 5.2, where I discussed the contents of contemplative education in more detail. It was here that I could address the questions of this study. Firstly, “Can contemplative education respond to the tension between neoliberalism and values education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)?”. Related to this main question, there were sub-questions:

- What are the inherent values of contemplative education?
- How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?
- What might contemplative education contribute to the values education goals of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and the policies that informed it?

In answer to these questions I analysed contemplative education. The findings are stated below:

- Contemplative education uproots our epistemological narrative and aims to take a learner outside of his or her own abstract, overly mental epistemological realms. Such education prioritises a lived and embodied manner of knowledge acquisition. This is starkly different to the neoliberal mood, with an emphasis on the abstract and the rational.

- This same epistemological paradigm shift extends to identity formation and emotions (the two are interlinked), and leads to a learner who is all the more aware of the interconnected nature of being. Again, this is very different to neoliberalism, where individuals conceive of themselves and operate in very isolated terms, and form identities and foster emotions and ambitions that are very impersonal and asocial.
- Contemplative education might very well signify a different state of consciousness from the one we commonly utilise when approaching our self-improvement or when approaching ethical issues. This explains why it is important to emphasise transformative lifestyles and experiential and self-reflective/introspective exercises, because an arguably higher level of ethical conduct might only be accessible in this manner.
- Contemplative education is intimately interrelated with a model of compassion, with some authors even asserting that all endeavours within the field are ultimately aimed at deepening one's sense of compassion and responsibility towards the 'other'. This compassion is enhanced through the cultivation of altered states of consciousness, and attained through practices and exercises, such as meditation and other subjective reflections.

These findings make a strong case for the ability of contemplative education to respond to the tensions between neoliberalism and values education in the CAPS. After analysing these contents and their relationship to the main research question and its sub-questions, some of the areas of concern relating to the emerging field of contemplative education were investigated.

## CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS, SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to renew consciousness about the implicit neoliberal bias in democratic South Africa's education policy, and, specifically, the CAPS. More precisely, I analysed the inherent tension between neoliberalism and core ethical values, as promoted by key policies, such as such as the National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996, (RSA, 1996a), the RNCS (DoE, 2002a; 2002b), the CAPS (DoE, 2011b), *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000), the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001) and *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* (DoE, 2011a).

In response, I argue for contemplative education as a catalyst for and a facilitator of a renewed and progressive form of values education that can resist the various challenges that neoliberalism might create. As far as I am aware, although a few authors have written about neoliberalism in South African education (such as Baatjies, 2005; Chisholm, 2003; 2005; Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Jansen, 1998; Peet, 2002), at the time of this study, there was no work available which showed how neoliberalism might work against the teaching of ethical values in South Africa. The thesis began with a report on the thorough analysis of the contents of various policy documents, to ascertain what values are upheld within them.

It became apparent that, despite particular references to values education, such as broad and generalised allusions to human rights (see DoE, 2002; RSA, 1996a), social justice (see DoE, 2002; RSA, 1996a) and good citizenship (see DoE, 2002; RSA, 1996a), there appeared to be a lack of attention to and concern for the influence of a strong neoliberal overtone within the said policy documents. Therefore, I wanted to show, by means of a report on the conceptual research, what those effects of neoliberalism are. Thereafter, I reported on care ethics and contemplative education, in order to show which steps are necessary and from which angle ethics might be approached, in order to safeguard one's cherished ethical values against neoliberalism.

This process of inquiry was represented by the following sub-questions:

- What are the inherent values contained in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement?
- How might neoliberalism undermine ethical values?
- What are the inherent values of contemplative education?
- How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?

- What might contemplative education contribute to the values education goals of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and the policies that informed it?

This chapter gives a summary of the main findings of the study. Thereafter, I consider some of the contributions this study could make to policy, to the academic realm, as well as to the broader South African society. This constitutes the scholarly contributions of the thesis. Thereafter, I reflect upon the limitations of the study, before making recommendations for further research.

## 6.2 A summary of the research findings

Chapter 2, in response to sub-question 1 (“What are the inherent values contained in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement?”), reported that there is a wide range of aims and goals within the post-apartheid policy documents. Many of the goals relate to economic progress and skills-oriented learning for the purpose of workplace relevancy and efficiency (DoE, 1995; 1996; 1997; 2002b; 2011b; 2011c). Many of the other goals relate to ethical values and ‘good’ citizenship, enacting social justice, caring for one’s fellow human beings and acting responsibly towards the environment – in other words, values education (DoE, 2000; 2001; 2002b; 2011a; RSA, 1996a; 1996b). Furthermore, it was found that certain subjects, such as Life Orientation, provide even more focus on values education. However, the main finding reported in this chapter was a distinct lack of awareness on the part of policymakers of how the neoliberal elements of modern South African education might cause tension for ethical values and values education. There is some realisation on the part of policymakers that the implementation of values education is not faring well, which led to further policy documents, which focus exclusively on values (DoE, 2000; 2001; 2011a).

However, the *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000) and the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001) serve only to identify specific values that such policy documents deem worthy of being taught in South African schools, without any clear guidelines for implementation. *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* (‘The guide’) (DoE, 2011a: 37) includes “[p]hase by phase ideas for learning and teaching about responsibilities at school”, but the recommendations remain unstructured and do not represent any solid, clearly outlined and centralised action plan for implementation. Thus, it is evident that there is a significant gap in the policy.

Chapter 3, in response to sub-question 2 (“How might neoliberalism undermine ethical values?”), sought to establish my suspicions that neoliberalism is largely to blame for the difficulties and tensions that values education experiences in the South African context. Some

important findings related to the effect of neoliberalism on education. Neoliberalism leads to a corporatisation of educational institutions, seeing a strong increase in the competitive atmosphere that permeates such settings (Alexander, 2001; Clark, 1998; Clarke, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Hill, 2003; Horowitz, 2004; Newson, 2004; Slaughter, 1998; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Tierney, 1998). Furthermore, learners identify as customers of a product (Apple, 2004; Aronowitz, 2000; Astin, 1998; Chaffee, 1998; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Swagler, 1978; Wellen, 2005). All of this leads to a very instrumental approach to education, making it difficult for educational dimensions, such as values education, to flourish.

Furthermore, various findings pointed to how hyper-individualist identities are formed by neoliberalism (Saunders, 2010), which leads to relationships and lifestyles being predicated on economic rational choice and cost-benefit analysis (Baez, 2007; Lemke, 2001). This creates attitudes where ethical values and social justice are viewed as distractions and subsequently avoided (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Saunders, 2010). The hyper-rational (economic) outlook on life also leads to real-life moral issues being abstracted and interpreted in over-simplified, impersonal ways (Bourdieu, 2002). However, what I would consider the most important findings reported in this chapter came from those writing about neoliberalism and relationality. These authors (Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1994; Biesta, 2007; Edwards, 2000; Gunzenhauser, 2008; Marginson, 2006; Rhodes, 2013; Sassatelli, 2007) drive home the findings that neoliberalism and the identities formed through it, foster asocial citizens who avoid responsibilities related to ethical modes of being and social justice, and become rather unbalanced and incapable when it comes to dealing with the 'other'. The identities formed are of a highly exclusionary nature (Bauman, 2007; Edwards, 2000).

It was particularly valuable to find a discussion of neoliberalism, which focuses on relationality, and which shows how such relational issues have an effect on questions of ethics (see Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1999; 2007; Edwards, 2000; Rhodes, 2013), because there was a growing realisation that values education is dependent on healthy relationality.

Chapter 4, as a pre-analysis of contemplative education, presented responses to sub-questions 3 and 4 ("What are the inherent values of contemplative education?" and "How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?"). A theoretical framework for healthy relationality through a study of care ethics was constructed and was reported in 4.3. I wanted to construct a solid conceptual framework for a progressive relationality within ethics to aid values education against detrimental neoliberal influences. The authors I studied (Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016) provided a considerable body of work, representing a thorough philosophical argument for the values of care, empathy, compassion and responsibility. Their writings show the need

to move from an outdated, justice- and principle-based mode of ethics, focused on abstractions of nuanced realities, towards involved modes of ethics that demonstrate a more personal element. Thus, care ethics encompasses moving away from generalised abstractions towards particular, contextualised realities (see Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016), away from independent mentalities and outlooks towards interdependent mentalities and outlooks (see Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 2002a; 2002b; 2005; 2013; Slote, 2001; 2007; 2016), and away from rational observation towards intuitive empathy (see Noddings, 2013; Slote, 2016). The work of these authors on abstract principles and the collateral damage they justify expose neoliberalism and the economic aims that go with it as a principle to which many are sacrificed – a justification for many modern injustices. The findings these care ethicists provide represent a perfect countermeasure to the unbalanced relationality as discussed in Chapter 3 on neoliberalism.

Finally, Chapter 4 included conclusions about responsibility as a value from the viewpoint of relationality, which were based on the work of Derrida (Derrida, 1995; Patočka, 1974). This furthered the argument that values can be understood in a richer sense when viewed in terms of relationality, especially concerning the study of the interaction of neoliberalism with ethics.

Chapter 5 responded to sub-questions 3, 4 and 5 (“What are the inherent values of contemplative education?”, “How can the values cultivated by contemplative education counteract a neoliberal mentality?” and “What might contemplative education contribute to the values education goals of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and the policies that informed it?”). The chapter acted as a study of contemplative education and held many valuable findings. The chapter also shows how contemplative education includes everything for which care ethics argues, while adding new dimensions to ethical modes of being. It was found that contemplative education provides new epistemological paradigms, arguing for an embodied and lived type of knowledge (Bai, 2006; Komjathy, 2017; Pulkki et al., 2015) – a shift which allows learners to feel more personally involved with what they study, and, ultimately, more personally involved with the world that surrounds them. This increases feelings of empathy, compassion and responsibility.

Furthermore, contemplative education combats divisive identities, and creates a learner who is more flexible in his or her acceptance of ‘the other’ and unlikely to engage in objectification of such ‘others’ (Zajonc, 2006). Another essential finding points to the fact that contemplative education familiarises a practitioner or learner with his or her own emotional motivations (Winans, 2012) – important when considering that unidentified and misunderstood emotional patterns can make one aversive to ethical engagements. Furthermore, Walsh (1989: 284) introduces the concept “state specificity”, which explains how certain ethical modes of being can only be accessed through experiential and practice-based processes. Such a finding goes

a long way in establishing why contemplative education, with its focus on such processes, can play a unique part in progressive values education. Thereafter, some of the most important findings from the study established a sense of interconnectedness that is generated through contemplative practice and contemplative education (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Pulkki et al., 2015) – a sense of interconnectedness, which pushes back against isolated ways of being, relational prejudices and cognitive biases, increases moral awareness, and leads to empathy, compassion and responsibility (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Roeser & Peck, 2009). Some of the authors (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 128) posited that every distinct practice within contemplative education and all forms of teaching occur “by definition, within a relational context in which personal growth and ethics are emphasized”. In other words, according to some, the entirety of contemplative education is an exercise in values education. Thus, Chapter 5 confirmed the well-developed ability of contemplative education to uphold values of empathy, compassion and responsibility, and of to creating a healthy and vibrant relationality that offers quite the answer to the problems that neoliberalism causes for values education.

Finally, it should also be noted that this chapter showed how contemplative education, through the addition of a lived philosophy, a stimulating and progressive mood towards patterns and habits of thought and ethical conduct, experiential and participatory pedagogy and self-reflective an introspective practice, is a clear improvement upon care ethics as a theoretical and conceptual framework for values education. Care ethics contains no such fleshed-out practices as part of the school, and this is why I feel it mainly remains a theoretical project. On the other hand, contemplative education, as one begin to realise throughout this chapter, places considerable emphasis on the experiential, the lived, the meditative and on all that lies beyond the cognitive and the theoretical. This represents a clear improvement, especially if one keeps in mind all that has been argued for concerning that which is lived, practical, personal and context-specific over and above that which is abstract, principle-based, impersonal and universal.

### **6.3 Returning to the problem statement and purpose statement**

The problem statement and purpose statement from the first chapter both mention the crippling effect that neoliberalism could have on values education. Both statements searched for an alternative form of education that could counteract neoliberal tendencies and reinvigorate values education. The purpose statement identifies contemplative education as the potential solution. Within the purpose statement are the following aims:

- Investigate the neoliberal elements within CAPS

- Find a moral framework to counteract neoliberalism within the empathetic and relational realm of care ethics
- See if contemplative education can represent a lived and realized incarnation of such a relational moral framework

Chapters 2 and 3 addressed the first of these aims with a thorough analysis of the policy surrounding and including CAPS as well as an investigation of neoliberalism and the stunted relationality it produces. A healthier relationality was found in chapter 4 in the form of care ethics (the second aim above), and this framework paved the way for an understanding of and appreciation for contemplative education. The compassion, interconnectedness, empathy and sense of responsibility that contemplative education cultivates was shown to be the ultimate culmination of a progressive and positive relationality. The practices inherent in contemplative education bring about a relational position that is open, accepting and communal where the neoliberal relationality is closed, divisive, isolated and hyper-individual. This is why it is such a fitting answer to the challenges of a neoliberal educational system.

Without understanding this concept of relationality, it would be difficult to see the importance of values such as compassion, empathy and responsibility in counteracting neoliberal issues. However, throughout the various chapters, I have given a thorough account of exactly why relationality is such a key concept in understanding the intricacies of neoliberalism's undermining of values education and why contemplative education, through compassion, empathy and responsibility, challenges and replaces the stunted relationality of neoliberalism. That is why contemplative education is the proper response to the issues identified within CAPS.

## **6.4 Scholarly contributions of the thesis**

This section details the different scholarly (and other) contributions of this study.

### **6.4.1 Contributions to policy**

This work contributes to South African policy in the following ways:

Firstly, this study exposed a naivety that exists within the policies, in thinking that values education can flourish without a proper understanding of how some of the other policy aims might affect it – in this particular case, how some of the economic aims, under neoliberal

ideology, might affect values education by suppressing and overshadowing it. This is, in other words, a naivety in the form of an unawareness of the neoliberal ideological undertones of the economic aims of post-apartheid education policy and its effects on values education.

Secondly, this research provided a detailed analysis of exactly how neoliberalism might undermine values education and ethical values, and, by doing so, the research went further in identifying and grasping the problem areas. The research situates the issues within a framework of relationality. Although there have been studies showing the effects of neoliberalism on education (Alexander, 2001; Apple, 2004; Aronowitz, 2000; Astin, 1998; Ayers, 2005; Baez, 2007; Chaffee, 1998; Clark, 1998; Currie, 1998; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Eckel, 2000; Giroux, 2005; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; Gumpert, 1993; Hill, 2003; Hill & Kumar, 2009; Horowitz, 2004; Marginson, 2004; McLaren, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rhoades, 2006; Saunders, 2010; Slaughter, 1998; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Swagler, 1978; Tierney, 1998; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002; Wellen, 2005; Winston, 1999), such studies have not framed the issues in relational terms and, thus, missed the opportunity for a more nuanced assessment.

A relational framework exposes the psychological, cultural and social dimensions of the problems neoliberalism pose for ethics and values education. This enables policy to be better equipped for dealing with the problem simply because policymakers can be more certain of where the difficulties for values education arise. The current study was certainly unique in this regard, for there has not yet been a study on the effect neoliberalism has on values education. There might have been such a study, but I was not able to find it, and I am even more certain that, at the time of this study, no such study had been undertaken in the South African education policy context specifically.

Thirdly, not only has the current research provided a detailed assessment of the problem, but it has, through the focus on the golden thread of relationality, and the study of care ethics and contemplative education, given the most optimal response to and improvement upon the policies discussed in Chapter 2 by making specific recommendations in terms of which theoretical and conceptual frameworks best address and counteract the problems. In other words, to echo Jansen (1998: 327), the policies in question often resort to “bland and decontextualised global statements” about social justice, values education and ethical behaviour, whereas I have aimed to provide a very clear roadmap for potential movement forward. Thus, the current study can be seen as a commentary on the policymaking process and a strong questioning of the assumptions within that process. The addition of policy documents that focus directly on values (DoE, 2000; 2001; 2011a) shows that there is some awareness of how values education is struggling, but the documents do not show enough awareness of the challenges that implementation has been facing and will probably continue

to face. The *Values, education and democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (DoE, 2000) and the *Manifesto on values, education, and democracy* (DoE, 2001) deal only with identifying the desired values to be taught and upheld in educational settings, without any consideration for ways of implementation and specific action-plans. *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* (DoE, 2011a: 37), breaks away from this tendency and includes a section called “Phase by phase ideas for learning and teaching about responsibilities at school”.

The classroom exercises and ideas that are presented in this section do not show the proper level of awareness of practical classroom realities, where the neoliberal mentality, with its instrumental approach to education and the competitive atmosphere generated, leave very little room for values education. That is why it was essential to construct, with reference to the complementary and flexible nature of contemplative education, an action plan that can address the negative outcome of neoliberalism, and provide a waypoint towards values education, while not threatening the economic aims of the policies. Furthermore, the contributions in terms of the field of contemplative education indicate that, in order to make true progress with values education, there needs to be an understanding of the importance of experiential learning, and how it stands practically uncontested as a remedy to some of the ways in which neoliberalism negatively affects values education. I suggest that future policies become more aware of this need.

#### **6.4.2 Contributions to the academic landscape**

This study represented an intersection of ideas and theories. Many different concepts and theories needed to be analysed and assessed, such as neoliberalism, values, care ethics and contemplative education. I genuinely attest to making use of such a wide array of fields and theories by which the overall analysis of the study was strengthened – not only that, but the different theories and criticism found within the thesis have received unique contributions through being studied next to one another.

The first contribution is to the area of criticism against neoliberalism. Once again, the unique contributions of this study relate greatly to the framework of relationality. In drawing from the work of those who write about relationality and consumer identities (Barber, 2008; Bauman, 1994; Biesta, 2007; Edwards, 2000; Gunzenhauser, 2008; Marginson, 2006; Rhodes, 2013; Sassatelli, 2007), I am endorsing this type of criticism on neoliberalism, and I urge future researchers who criticise neoliberalism (at least those who want to look at the ethical implications thereof) to add similar psychological, social and cultural dimensions to their

studies and to consider the importance of identity formation and relationality in discussions neoliberalism and ethics.

The study also contributes to the field of contemplative education, by identifying the key role this field could play in counteracting the effects of neoliberalism on values education. The study adds to the arguments for the practical value and contemporary relevance of the field. Major contributions to contemplative education are made by showing the similarities between care ethics and contemplative education (see 4.3.1, 4.3.5 and 5.3.2), before arguing for the greater usefulness of contemplative education by way of the inclusion of experiential learning and practices (over and above mere theory) (see 5.3.1).

Contributions are also made to education policy studies theory (see 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 2.3.2), by showing that policies that relate to the teaching of values need even more attention to strategising for implementation, if such policy is to be effective.

The study of contemplative education (Chapter 5) contributes to the wider academic milieu in urging for a reconsideration of the importance of experiential learning and self-reflective practice. In other words, it is not just an increase in experiential learning and self-reflective practice for the specific purpose of dealing with the tension between neoliberalism and values education, but also for the betterment of any educational areas that want to strive for a non-instrumental approach to education, no matter whether such areas relate to ethics or not.

Finally, the study makes a contribution to the field of interdisciplinary research, since it drew from literature pertaining to education, philosophy, sociology and psychology. There is a growing sense that the future of many academic research areas is interdisciplinary (Bridle, Vrieling, Cardillo, Araya & Hinojosa, 2013; Jones, 2010; Lyall & Meagher, 2012), and I would argue that the current study showed the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach.

#### **6.4.3 Contributions to the broader South African society**

In conclusion, this study can contribute to South African society, and the more global society, by reminding citizens that the ways in which they form identities, and the ways in which such identities affect how they relate to one another, ultimately affect their ability to treat each other, and the environment, in ways that are consistent with social justice, human rights and the ethical values of empathy, compassion and responsibility. Furthermore, Chapter 5 shows that serious thought must be given to the impact and influence of lifestyle and habits if we are to strive for such ambitious goals relating to ethics and social justice. There is certainly a lot more to achieving and maintain a successful democracy than simply investments towards GDP and, as a society, we must admit to this fact. In the more specific context of education, the findings

of the study serves as a reminder to teachers and learners alike that the importance of values education cannot be neglected and that we must turn to progressive ways of protecting and advancing values education, such as demonstrated by contemplative education, if we are to become better citizens and more conscientious teachers through the process of education.

### **6.5 Limitations of the study**

As discussed in Chapter 1, in the section on methodology (1.5.1), this study employed an exploratory research design, as there was limited literature available in terms of the specific topics I wanted to address. Yes, much has been written on neoliberalism, and a decent amount has been written on contemplative education, but when looking at the notion of contemplative education as a remedy to the effects of neoliberalism on values education, the study becomes rather unique. This means that the study was conducted exclusively by means of literature reviews and conceptual research, with the use of some forms of extrapolation in certain circumstances. The study also makes various new suggestions, and dealt with the exploration of new theories and ideas rather than with attempts at reconfiguring or investigating older ones. The main research question was an example of the notion of contemplative education entering into South African schools or even South African education policy. Of course, contemplative education exists in different forms, in private educational institutions, but this study was interested in the broader South African context. This exploratory focus means, as predicted during the section on methodology (1.5.1) and also by Christoph (2010: 372–374), that the study could feel unstructured.

Furthermore, the study did not include any empirical research, potentially adding to a reader's feelings that the findings are too open-ended. Nevertheless, I do not have any regrets about the chosen methodology, as it was always my intention to make arguments for the presence of contemplative education within the South African educational context from a very philosophical and conceptual standpoint. I feel that, since it is such a new area of investigation, the research had to begin with a philosophical foundation. It was beyond the scope of this study to begin such an exploration and above all to attempt to verify the hypotheses with empirical findings.

### **6.6 Recommendations**

I now make further recommendations in terms of how the research area can be expanded and the research continued in terms of possible developments in the South African educational context.

### 6.6.1 Pertaining to further research

Since the study was highly exploratory, there can be many possible recommendations for further research. However, I share what I consider the most relevant areas for further research.

The first area that should receive further attention is the study of values education as it is expressed through the post-apartheid South African education policy (see Du Preez & Roux, 2010; Roux & Du Preez, 2006). There needs to be a further investigation of how the policy might become more strategic, specifically when it comes to implementing values education. Perhaps an empirical study can be conducted to ascertain to what extent teachers are familiar with *Building a culture of responsibility and humanity in our schools: A guide for teachers* (DoE, 2011a) and if any of them have actively attempted to implement the recommendations of the document.

There is a great need for further research on the effect of neoliberalism on values education. My research necessitated that I drew from various different sources of literature to construct my own analysis of the effect of neoliberalism on ethical values. The most significant and contributory sources from which I drew came from authors who were not writing within the context of education. Taking their findings and combining it with studies on the effect of neoliberalism on educational institutions, I arrived at my conclusions of how neoliberalism affects values education. However, since the ideology of neoliberalism is so widespread and consists of many different sub-topics, much further research is needed in order to ascertain many potentially unidentified ways in which neoliberalism interacts with values education.

In terms of contemplative education, I would claim that one of the most important areas for further research is to demonstrate how contemplative practices in the classroom are complementary towards other study activities and subjects, and do not detract from the more traditional skills-oriented teaching and curriculums. This is because, although it is eventually certainly necessary to move away from the corporatisation and instrumentalisation of education, it will be a mammoth task, and for the time being, one should make peace with the fact that neoliberal biases need to be appeased. Although I have shown how authors in the field of contemplative education have made claims towards such a flexibility and complementary nature of contemplative education, I do not believe these authors realise to what extent contemplative education and values education must be proved in order not to stand to compete with the classic 'maths' and 'science' that help a country to be economically well oiled. This unobtrusive, complementary element must be practically demonstrated with the relevant academic studies and research.

At some point, it will be necessary to conduct actual classroom-based experimentation and research on the benefits of contemplative education in public schools in South Africa. In this regard, I would recommend that such studies include research on Waldorf Schools in South Africa – a group that is already implementing teaching methods that are certainly much closer than that of other schools to something akin to contemplative education (Nicol & Taplin, 2012; Petrash, 2002).

In Chapter 5, when discussing potential areas of caution regarding contemplative education, I mentioned the prospect of training aspiring contemplative teachers. This training should ensure that teachers are equipped to deal with the potential psychological and emotional effects of contemplative education. Some of the authors within the field agree that training should be formalised (Roeser & Peck, 2009: 132), while others feel that over-formalisation will not do the field well (Komjathy, 2017: 174). Although contemplative education seems to be as old as education itself, it is certainly not enjoying a strong presence in today's world, and therefore, no matter how the authors in the field feel, there will need to be formalised training and cautionary measures in place before contemplative education can hope to be adopted in any serious way. Substantial research on how to proceed in this area is needed.

### **6.6.2 Pertaining to the South African educational context**

Here, I have only one recommendation, and that is that teachers and parents should think very seriously about the presence of values education in today's South African schools – or the lack thereof. I see teachers and parents as the main actors through whom policy, and, ultimately, curriculums can be influenced. This study made a strong case for the re-evaluation of our assumptions regarding values education and the position of values education within a neoliberal world. This reassessment could come in the form of a renewed appreciation for the subject Life Orientation. Currently, it is a subject that provides an exclusive avenue and space for values education and a specific focus on the development of good citizens.

According to the exclusive CAPS policy document for the subject (DoE, 2011c: 8), “it is a unique subject in that it applies a holistic approach to the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners”, which “encourages the development of a balanced and confident learner who can contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all”.

Furthermore, “the subject contains the following six topics in Grades 10 to 12” (DoE, 2011c: 8):

- Development of the self in society
- Social and environmental responsibility

- Democracy and human rights
- Careers and career choices
- Study skills
- Physical education

Therefore, although there is still a trace of the focus on economic incentives, there is large scope within the subject, Life Orientation, for the development of ethical values and for values education.

Furthermore, “an emphasis on experiential and participatory methodologies” is what is most needed, yet absent, from the Life Orientation curriculum (Rooth, 2005: iv) indicating that contemplative education and Life Orientation could enjoy a very complementary and symbiotic relationship, for contemplative education is one of the most experiential and participatory forms of education that exists today, and can help to fill this gap existing within Life Orientation.

However, with all of that being said, it seems that, at the time of writing, Life Orientation will be removed from the curriculum for Grades 10 to 12 in the very near future, and be replaced by compulsory History (Bashiera, 2018). It is not clear whether this trend will deepen, and whether Life Orientation will be scaled back further, and for other grades, but it certainly opens up an important conversation. If one considers that Life Orientation is unquestionably the best platform for values education and experiential learning, then this development should prompt teachers and parents to consider the future of values education in the South African context.

I am certain that History, just like Life Orientation, is expected to address the need for values education, and can provide a theoretical version of values education, but I urge teachers and parents (and policymakers) to consider whether History can facilitate the experiential elements and the need for practice and deep self-reflection, over and above mere theoretical learning, as this study has argued for. Teachers, parents and policymakers need to reconsider where the various ethical aims of current education policy can find suitable expression in the classroom. I have presented my arguments for why contemplative education, potentially within the subject of Life Orientation, provides the greatest opportunity for such aims, and I hope that it will resonate with those who are steering South African education.

## **6.7 Summary**

The study began with a thorough investigation of post-apartheid South African education policy, culminating in the CAPS, and highlighted the fact that both strongly economic goals and goals pertaining to values education are present within policy, without any provisions made for or predictions of potential tensions between the two different sets of aims. As my

problem statement indicated (see 1.3), there is a great potential, given the strong presence of neoliberalism in education, that the economic aims will overshadow the ethical aims. My proposed solution was to introduce new pedagogies and new methods of education, which can rejuvenate values education – as indicated by the main research question: Can contemplative education respond to the tension between neoliberalism and values education in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)?

My first order of business was to establish the potential harmful effects of neoliberalism on values and values education, and through studies done on – specifically – how neoliberalism affects our identity formation and how we relate to the ‘other’, I began constructing a conceptual framework for addressing the issues. This relational approach to ethics was thereafter philosophically grounded in a study of care ethics, before finishing with an analysis of contemplative education. Contemplative education, with its immense focus on the development of a sense of interconnectedness within the teacher or learner, leads to a very thorough engagement with values and ethics, specifically values such as empathy, compassion and responsibility. Contemplative education represents the resurgence within education of experiential and participatory modes of learning, which include many self-reflective and introspective elements. It is argued that such experiential and participatory modes of education can solidify the importance of values education within the hearts and minds of both teachers and learners in a manner that no other methods can. Furthermore, the flexible nature of contemplative education makes it even more suitable for a context like South Africa, where multiculturalism might complicate discussions on and the teaching of values. Therefore, I make recommendations for further research into the advantages of contemplative education for the South African educational context, especially regarding values education. We need to afford this progressive area of education at least a trial period. The poor track record for the implementation of values education, in the face of the gigantic and far-reaching ideology that is neoliberalism, speaks for itself (Rooth, 2005) and demands that newer, reformist approaches start replacing more traditional and stereotypical ones. I sincerely hope that this study has acted as a contributing voice to this argument and I am hopeful for the large shifts that are necessary when one speaks about education in the twenty-first century.

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