

# **The relationship between teacher and student from an Emerging Body Language perspective**

Relational thinking in the educational setting

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- Nick

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# **The relationship between teacher and student from an Emerging Body Language perspective**

*Relational thinking in the educational setting*

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## ***Abstract***

*In this qualitative, ethnographical research the potential of relational thinking as developed from an Emerging Body Language perspective for the educational setting is studied. The main goal was to investigate how relational aspects are reflected in the perceptions and behaviour of a group of eleven primary school teachers. The means by which this was established was threefold, 1) interviewing teachers about two different therapeutic clips, 2) having teachers make a Mental Class Map of the students in their class, 3) in vivo observation of their actual classroom behaviour. The results revealed that relational aspects can mainly be recognized in the intuitive, natural behaviour of teachers. The use of relational aspects in their teaching seems to be related to an intrinsic basis in the mind-set of these teachers. In some teachers, an incongruency between the perceptions they verbalized and their behaviour was noticed, indicating that they were not able to convert their perceptions into behaviour. The conclusion is that the principles underlying relational thinking can best be offered to teachers at a behavioural level and have to be supported by participating in a practical training. Finally, it is important within scientific educational research to always obtain a broad picture of teachers' functioning.*

## *Prologue*

The main reason I decided to study 'Pedagogical sciences' is the appeal that working with children with psychiatric and behavioural problems has on me. So when I finished Teacher Training College, I decided to move to Nijmegen and become a 'behavioural scientist'. After graduating the Bachelor phase, a student can choose between either the master 'Pedagogical sciences' and the master 'Educational science', which are both full-time, independent master studies. This decision naturally has implications for your curriculum and eventually for the job you end up doing. Because of my history in Teacher Training College and because I already did a couple of internships at different schools, 'Educational science' appealed to me as well. I noted that the choice was rather hard for me and that I simply did not want to make a decision. So I figured I was up for a challenge and decided to simultaneously participate in both these master studies and therefore do two separate master studies at the same time.

In the third Bachelor year of 'Pedagogical sciences', students get to choose between six different Clinical Practice Trainings to gain experience with various forms of interventions. I decided to choose the interventional approach called 'Emerging Body Language'. Emerging Body Language (EBL) is a systematic and dynamical approach in the practice of helping and supporting children and adolescents with developmental and behavioural problems, based on the natural movements of client and therapist. EBL focuses on the relationship between therapist and client and within EBL, it is important that the client is always respected for who he or she is. These principles differ from other approaches that I knew and this appealed strongly to me.

During the theoretical part of the course, but particularly during my internship at a mental health institution, I was able to gain experience in working with this methodology. The basic principles of the theory and the practical implications started to intrigue me more and more. Therapist and client have an equal and reciprocal relationship: An important assumption is that the therapist influences the client, but the client also influences the therapist. Behaviour that is perceived problematic by the people around the client is interpreted in a different way and seen as assets and qualities of the client. It is the context of the behaviour that determines whether or not the displayed behaviour is problematic. EBL does not focus at unteaching problem behaviour or learning a specific task, but aims at relational- and interactional structures between client and therapist.

During my internship, I experienced what therapist and client can accomplish together, through contact with one another and through an alternative perception of treatment. The

year-long internship was a valuable, intense, and insightful experience for me, and altered my perspective on ‘treating’ people with ‘problem behaviour’.

After I finished my internship, the institution had plans to apply the principles of EBL beyond the individual setting and implement them in group work. From this moment on, I started to wonder about the possibilities for the implementation of EBL principles in a setting that had my interest, namely the educational setting. Is it possible that the EBL-values and principles, which can have such immense effects in the therapeutic one-on-one setting, are being translated and applied in a broader setting with a different population? What are the possibilities for the principles behind EBL therapy in education? Are teachers open to new insights that come from a different setting? Or are these just rather idealistic thoughts that cannot count on much support in the area of education? These thoughts and questions, along with a strong desire to build bridges between the disciplines of ‘Pedagogical sciences’ and ‘Educational science’, led to the decision to research this area and thereby combine both my master studies in one overarching thesis.

I consider the most intriguing aspect of the EBL therapy the emphasis on the relationship between therapist and client. The mere subject-subject relationship that is essential in EBL differs from a lot of other treatments provided in the therapeutic setting. In most traditional treatments, an object-subject relationship between therapist and client is assumed. This ‘relational’ way of thinking is one of the main pillars behind the Emerging Body Language approach. This study will, therefore, focus on the relational way of thinking and the value this might have for the educational setting.

### ***Study objective***

The objective of this thesis is:

*“To explore the value of relational thinking for the educational setting, by researching the perceptions and behaviour of primary school teachers.”*

I would like to create an image of the way in which ‘relational aspects’ can be recognized in the perceptions and the behaviour of teachers. This way, it can be shown in what way and to what extent teachers make use of aspects with a certain relational content. Apart from this, I want to explore the possibilities of implementing relational thinking in the educational system. The potential of relational thinking for the educational system and the way in which this can best be taught, have to be explained.

Before knowing how to implement aspects from this relational thinking in education, it first has to be explored how these aspects are reflected in the educational setting. Creating an image of the way relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting is the main target of this explorative study. This research is a pre-study, which has to clear the way for further research into the potential of relational thinking for the educational setting, that hopefully inspires more people to think about this specific area and that will raise questions in those who are already interested in this area. I acknowledge that the above described objectives are rather ambitious. With this research, I would like to contribute to the exploration of the value of relational thinking for the educational setting. This research can best be seen as a first step in a long process. It is not possible, and therefore not my intention to be complete in this research.

Because of the rather explorative nature of the study, there will still be a lot of ground to be covered in the future to build a stable bridge between ‘relational thinking’ and education. Further connecting the disciplines of ‘Pedagogical -’ and ‘Educational science’ is therefore a more underlying objective of this study. I am convinced that it could benefit both areas of expertise when the frames of the disciplines are breached and when the value of certain context specific ideas is researched for different settings. This could lead to new insights, a fresh look at ingrained patterns, and innovative ideas that will induce positive change.



## **1. Introduction**

To explore the value of relational thinking for the educational setting, it is important to explicate the meaning of the term ‘relational’. The description of this concept will be based on the main ideas from Emerging Body Language, without elaborately involving other theories. The EBL-perspective provides clarity, uniformity and insight into the different concepts used in this study. To understand what is meant by ‘relational’, the origin of the word is addressed first. After relationships and the way they emerge are discussed, the different aspects that underlie the EBL interpretation of a ‘good and healthy’ relationship will be addressed. This framework is essential for the interpretation of the data, because it defines the perspective from which the data are approached. To link this perspective to the interactional process and the way positive and negative interaction can be manifested, a couple of examples are presented. The over-all objective of the study is to explore the value of relational thinking for the educational setting by creating an image of the way in which relational aspects can be found in the perceptions and behaviour of teachers. To enable this process, the term ‘relational aspect’ has to be operationalized. Following the operationalization of the term, the research question of the study is presented. Finally, the value of the results of this study for the educational practice is discussed.

### ***1.1 Relationships***

‘Relationship’ is a concept that raises different associations. Between people, there are for example romantic relationships, family relationships, friendly relationships and business relationships. In science, one speaks of a relation when two or more variables are interrelated. One way to look at the concept of relationship, is through the perspective of Dynamic Systems Theory. This theory offers tools to describe systems and is focused on the complexity and interdependence between and within systems (Verhofstadt-Denève, van Geert & Vyt, 2003). In Dynamic Systems Theory, there is a transactional vision on development, in which all variables depend on each other: they continuously and mutually affect one another, in which the strength of the dependence can differ. This means that all participants (children, parents, therapists, teachers, etcetera) influence each other’s life’s (Rauh, 2011). A system is a coherent whole and therefore not just an addition of separate parts. Dynamic Systems Theory sees people in the context of their relationships.

A relationship does not necessarily have to be active, but is also regarded as a ‘state of being’. The way people relate to other people, animals, things, and concepts, occurs within

their consciousness, as well as in the sub- and pre-consciousness, or even better, in the ‘sense of’ (Stern, 1985). We generally call it consciousness, when someone is aware of things he perceives and connects this to thinking. When this is not the case and there are just sensations and experiences, one speaks of a ‘sense of’. For example, most people who walk in a busy shopping street have a ‘sense of’ the other people and things that cross their path. Most of them do not bump into garbage cans and walk into other people they come across. However, we are not constantly aware of all the obstacles we encounter. Yet, we can avoid these obstacles without any problems, because we have a subconscious ‘sense of’ them (Marinussen, 2009). With regard to people, the concept ‘relationship’ can be specified as follows:

*“Relationship is a connection or engagement in which a person relates to various factors (people, animals, things, concepts) by having a ‘sense of’ them”*

(Marinussen, 2009, p. 9).

This definition leads to the conclusion that a relationship can be bi-directional as well as uni-directional. It is bi-directional, when both people have a ‘sense of’ each other. When just one person has a ‘sense of’ the other, there is a uni-directional relationship.

‘Meaning’ always emerges in the relationships (Bosman, 2008). A certain judgment about a person, animal, thing or concept only has value when it can be related to something else. Take, for example, the comparison between a dwarf, a human-being, and a giant. From the dwarf’s point of view, the human-being is big. From the giant’s point of view, the human-being is small. The way in which the dwarf and the giant relate to the human-being is different from each other, despite the fact that it regards the same human-being (Marinussen, 2009). Another example of ‘meaning emerging in the relationship’, is that a deaf person will feel restricted in the hearing community and at the same time, a hearing person will feel limited in a deaf community. The characteristic of not being able to hear is not necessarily a handicap. A handicap or limitation emerges in the relationship with the environment the person resides in (Marinussen, 2009). In the same way it might happen that a child is considered to be hyperactive in one situation and quiet in another. It is not by definition a ‘hyperactive’ or ‘quiet’ child, but one can speak of a child that displays hyperactive behaviour in relation to the context. The concept ‘hyperactive behaviour’ is not a characteristic of the child itself, but of the child in relation to the environment. Each context evokes different behaviour. With a large and flexible behavioural repertoire, people are able to adjust to many environments, dependent on the requirements a specific environment has. The same goes for body language. For example, facial expressions are able to dynamically alter the behaviour of

social partners (Fogel, 2006). A tiny facial movement requiring little energy can induce large expenditures of movement energy in the social partner, as when a smile elicits a partner's heart rate change and initiates movements of approach. A facial expression, such as a smile, does not contain discrete information about the smiler. Rather, the meaning of the smile depends upon the relationship between the smiler and the partner. People do not typically smile unless the partner is perceived as receptive to opening that line of interaction.

### ***1.2 The emergence of relationships***

To know more about relationships, it is essential to know how they are constructed. Relationships form when interactions between the same individuals occur over repeated occasions (Fogel, 1993). Interaction takes place within the context of ongoing relationships and it is within the sanctuary of relationships that we develop as individuals: with parents, with children, with teachers, etcetera. Interactions describe what occurs between individuals and this cannot be derived from the behaviour of the individuals separately (Schaffer, 1996). The interaction process is therefore also a specific manifestation of relationships between people. Interaction is an active exchange process between two or more people, in which they (alternately) mutually influence each other. It is a continuous and reciprocal process in which partners are actively engaged in the interaction. This interpersonal process may be equal or unequal with respect to the direction and the magnitude of the effect one has on the other. In the majority of therapeutic treatment settings, the therapist is usually the subject and the client is mostly the object of treatment. Also, the influence the therapist exerts on the client is often bigger than the influence the client has on the therapist. In that case there is an unequal interaction. When there is a balance in the interaction, that is, therapist and client affect one another in a similar way, the interaction between therapist and client is equal; in such relationships simultaneous and reciprocal influences between partners lead to subject-subject relationships rather than subject-object relationships. Such relationships are characterized by a mechanism called 'co-regulation', a concept that will be explained later on.

### ***1.3 A 'good and healthy' relationship***

When a woman states after a fight with her significant other, that "she just wants to be in a healthy relationship", what does she mean? Or when a teacher claims to find "a good relationship with his students" an important aspect of the teaching process, what is he trying to say? When we know what relationships are and how they emerge, I will try to specify what can be perceived as a 'good and healthy' relationship. Therefore, an analysis is made of the

different concepts that underlie this perception. This will be done from the Emerging Body Language point of view.

### *1.3.1 Healthy attachment*

John Bowlby said that a good relationship can emerge, when there is a healthy form of attachment. Bowlby (1988) described attachment as a “deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space”. He believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers, especially in the first nine months, have a tremendous impact that continues throughout life. The central theme of the attachment theory is that mothers who are available and responsive to their infant’s needs, establish a sense of security in their children; a secure base for the child to explore the world. Children who are not able to form secure attachments in early life, have a higher risk of developing severe disorders like oppositional-defiant disorder, conduct disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Konrad Lorenz (1937) discovered a process called ‘imprinting’, which proves the existence of a biological attachment mechanism in young geese. Right after hatching, young geese follow the first moving ‘thing’ they see, which results in them thinking this ‘thing’ is their mother (Vicedo, 2009). Lorenz observed that at a certain critical stage soon after hatching, the young geese learn to follow the parent. With this discovery, he proved that it is not so much the representation of the mother that is biologically pre-programmed in the geese, but an attachment mechanism (Vicedo, 2009). In his studies, Lorenz also began to focus on human behaviour and he discovered that certain facial features and physical proportions are different in children than in adults. In children, the head is quite large in comparison to the rest of the body and they mostly have big, round eyes, a small, short nose and chubby cheeks. All these features evoke feelings of tenderness in adults and the need to protect and nurture. Lorenz believed that maternal care is a matter of instincts, as is the behaviour of an infant towards its mother. Lorenz’s thinking about animal behaviour and his views about the human psyche were deeply connected and he stated that “even in humans, social behaviour in particular is largely determined by instincts”. The pre-programmed attachment mechanism that is also present in humans, results in babies synchronizing with their environment and adults wanting to synchronize with their babies and protect and nurture them (Condon, 1975).

### *1.3.2 Equality and reciprocity*

Within a good and healthy relationship, equality and reciprocity are important aspects. Equality means that two people have an equal role within the relationship and that there is a

balanced initiative. When a relationship is equal, there is also a certain degree of reciprocity. This means that there is mutual influence, action, and dependence between two people. Mutual influence characterizes a subject-subject relationship in the therapeutic setting: when the therapist influences the client, the client simultaneously influences the therapist to the same extent. When there is mutual influence between therapist and client, there is equal interaction or 'co-regulation' between the two.

The term co-regulation was first described by psychologist Alan Fogel (1993). It regards a social, dynamic process in which a mutual objective is reached through equal interaction between individuals. Fogel (1993) speaks of a continuous, dynamic, mutual process of influence, in which actions of different people are constantly adapted to each other. Co-regulation is a social process by which individuals dynamically alter their actions with respect to the ongoing and anticipated actions of their partners. In co-regulated interaction, information is created between people in such a way that the information changes as the interaction unfolds. It leads to the emergence of something new and mutual in the interaction between two people. To achieve this, both people have to be open to new possibilities and patterns in the relationship with the other person. This requires spontaneity, creativity, and respect.

Fogel (1993) sees communication as the construction of a 'consensual frame', in which child and adult play an equal part. It is not one of the partners who imposes or teaches a certain frame to the other. Also, various practical skills that children can learn by acting together with adults, are not transferred from adult to child, but are constructed within their mutual, dynamic interaction. Relationships develop through the process of co-regulated creation of consensual frames. The specific types of relationship patterns that emerge will depend on the types of skills available to the participants, their ability to regulate attention and body position and the presumed purpose of their activities together. When there is co-regulation within a therapeutic treatment setting, therapist and client are both subject and object at the same time: they influence each other simultaneously and proportionally. There is an equal relationship with an equal interaction. Because dynamic thinking presupposes equivalent reciprocity, the presence of a subject-subject relationship between therapist and client is essential within EBL therapy (Rutten-Saris, 1990). Rutten-Saris considers any form of 'being in the world' as equal, without having equal skills. This means that therapist and client are always equal, that is of the same value, within their relationship, but do not always have equal skills.

The importance of mutual influence in relationships was also researched by Colwyn Trevarthen. He discovered that very young infants are competent partners in social interaction, who have latent sociability and intentionality (Trevarthen, 1979). Trevarthen's view of early interaction is that infants are doing more than automatically responding to the behaviour of others. He stated that infants are born with the motivation to engage in social interaction and primitive communication with people. In order to communicate, infants must be able to adapt or fit subjective control of the subjectivity of others. This is called 'intersubjectivity': the shared, reciprocal experience between the parent and child, whereby the experience of the one has an impact on the experience of the other. For example, children experience themselves being loved, valued and clever whenever their parents experience them as manifesting those characteristics. Intersubjectivity emerges from attunement, shared emotion, shared attention and shared intention.

### *1.3.3 Attunement*

Attunement can best be explained as "a form of matching in which the referent for the match is not the external action, but the presumed feeling state of the partner" (Fogel, 1993). Daniel Stern and his colleagues have defined and described attunement processes of which there is a wide variety. Matches can be in any behavioural modality, such as vocal, respiratory (heavy breathing, sighing), facial, gestural or movement. One can also match intensity contours within the same modality or when using a different modality. For example, an infant may suddenly make a jerky movement with his arms, while the mother responds with a sharp 'Oh!' that has the same temporal and intensity contour as the infant's arm movement (Fogel, 1993). Timing matches can also occur according to beat, rhythm and/or duration. Clapping to the same beat of someone singing is a good example. Finally, there can be matches according to the spatial shape of the action, for example, moving the hand up and down can be matched by another person moving the head up and down. Attunement reflects some underlying dimension of the action that is believed to correspond to the feeling that accompanied the action. Attunement can have the following social functions: to be with another or share feelings with another, to empathize, to mock, to respond contingently, to change the other's arousal levels or emotion, to change the other's goal, to teach or to play. The specific forms and functions of attunement are culturally regulated (Fogel, 1993).

Attunement plays a rather important role in Daniel Stern's vision on early parent-child communication. Stern (1985) described the development of five interrelated 'senses of self'. These 'senses of self' develop over the lifespan, but make significant developmental strides

during sensitive periods, mainly in the first two years of life. The mother and other primary attachment figures play a critical role in helping the infant with this developmental process. The 'sense of self' exists before there is any self-consciousness and language involved and it forms the primary organizing principle of human development. The first stage is the 'sense of an emergent self', in which the main focus is on physical care. It covers the first two months after birth and a sense of organisation begins to develop. There is also a lot of social interaction between parent and child, for example, touching the baby, rocking the baby, or singing and talking to the baby. The baby reacts by looking, staring, smiling or crying. From the parents behaviour can be deduced that they consider the baby to be a social being with its own subjective experience.

The second stage is the 'sense of core self' and it covers the period between two and seven months of age. In this stage, the social smile emerges and joint attention and vocalizations of the baby are focused on another person. It is the most exclusive social period in the baby's life. There is also a clear preference for the human face. The parents use baby faces, baby language and talk slowly to the baby, in high pitch and relatively loud voices. This way, the parents help the baby with the discovery of a certain congruency. Both language and body language are characterized by themes and patterns in which variations can occur. The facial expressions of the parents are rather exaggerated, long lasting and emerge slowly. These activities make the baby and the parent recognize each other.

Between the seventh and fifteenth month of age, the 'sense of subjective self' develops and it becomes obvious to the environment that the baby wants and also is able to communicate, shown by gestures, posture, actions, and vocalizations. A baby is able to share intentions, for example when the mother has something in her hands that the baby wants. The baby will reach, grab, make noise, and look back and forth between the mother's face and the object. This behaviour implies that the child 'knows' that his mother can understand its intentions and is also able to meet the baby's conditions. The intention becomes a shared experience. In this period, the child gets to understand the intersubjectivity between child and parent and is able to apply it. The child discovers that another person can also have feelings, thoughts and intentions. It discovers that they can communicate about these thoughts, also without words. When the child masters these qualities, he is able to 'read' the mental state of a person, to match and to attune.

The fourth stage is 'sense of verbal self' and it starts from the fifteenth month. In this period, the child becomes more aware that language is a medium for organizing perceptual experiences and experiencing intersubjectivity. Language enables the possibility to share

experiences in a different way than through more direct ways that were already available in the child. The fifth and last stage is the 'sense of narrative self'. This period starts from around the third year of life and mainly includes the ability to 'talk about' (meta) in comparison with just naming objects and situations around us. All different stages of the 'sense of self' keep existing and growing next to each other, during someone's entire lifetime (Stern, 2004).

Stern (1985) states that the existence of a 'sense of self' implies that there automatically is a 'sense of other'. In the period the 'sense of a core self' develops, the 'sense of self' starts to distinguish from the 'sense of other'. The essential difference between the 'sense of self' and the 'sense of other' is that all experiences of 'the other' are just slightly different than the baby's own experiences. There is no perfect similarity: every experience is partly structurally similar and contains variations. Only the baby's own actions lead to almost entirely predictable reactions, while actions of the other rarely lead to completely predictable behaviour. At a certain point in the development of the 'sense of a core self', babies can turn their head towards the source of sound. This way, the parent who is nearby the baby will evoke a 'sense of other' by looking at, talking to and touching the baby. The baby is able to move body parts similarly and in a rhythmic pattern. Parents will synchronize with the baby and take rhythmic breaks, while adjusting their facial expressions and voice tone. The baby is also able to synchronize with its parents, for example, by displaying powerful gestures when a parent sets up a sudden, loud voice. The baby and parent start together, finish together, and changes in direction and speed are also similar. Stern observed this strategy and his findings were structured in the methodological approach of Emerging Body Language.

#### ***1.4 Positive and negative interactions***

All the different aspects that are described underlie an EBL perception of a good and healthy relationship. When we look at the way relationships are formed, we see that they emerge when interactions between the same individuals occur over repeated occasions (Fogel, 1993). Relationships can thus be seen as a structure in interactions. The interaction process is a specific manifestation of relationship between two people. So through the different aspects of the interactional process, the relationship between two people is influenced. When there is a positive and healthy relationship between two people, this will be reflected through positive and healthy interactions. And also vice versa, when there are positive and healthy interactions between people, this will contribute to a 'healthy and positive' relationship. But negative and unhealthy interactions will contribute to 'unhealthy and negative' relationship. For the



understanding of positive and negative interactions, it is important to point out that it is not so much about the content of a message (the ‘what’) as it is about the way in which the message is brought (the ‘how’).

An interaction with a seemingly negative content, like a heated argument, or putting someone in his place, can be rather constructive for the relationship when this is done within the contact with the other person. It frames the relationship and provides clarity and predictability between two people, through the construction of ‘consensual frames’ (Fogel, 1993). A conflict can let someone know that he is gone too far and that certain behaviour is not accepted within the relationship with the other person. Everyone gets angry at someone else once in a while or loses his temper. When this process takes place within the contact with the other person and when someone, for example, apologizes afterwards or the situation is reflected upon by both people, this may have a constructive contribution to the relationship. But it goes the other way around as well. An interaction that has positive content does not necessarily have to be a positive interaction. A compliment that is brought in a patronizing, cynical way, or a compliment for something that is not considered to be an achievement by the one who receives it, can be harmful for the relationship. For example, a child gets complimented for a drawing he made, when he is fully aware that he does not draw well and that his creation is not good at all. The compliment does not have any value for the child, because he knows that it is not something that is worth complimenting.

Positive and negative interactions are therefore not so much about the ‘what’ but they are about the ‘how’. This can be illustrated through an example of an everyday situation in a group of children who live in a home. The support staff who is on duty sends a client to his room to calm down, because he displays angry and aggressive behaviour in the group. The client is sent to his room as a form of punishment. However, the same objective can be reached in a way that the support staff remains in contact with the client. He walks up to the client and says that he notices that the client is getting angry and aggressive. He then proposes to go up to the client’s room with him, to get away from the situation that causes the aggravation. When they are sitting in the client’s room, the support staff asks the client whether he would like to be alone for a while or whether he wants him to stay for a bit. This allows the client to decide what he feels is best. This way, the support staff and the client stay in contact with each other with the same objective to be reached. The client is in his room, away from the disturbing situation and has the possibility to calm down. Both scenarios have the same result, but in the second scenario, the client does not experience a form of punishment, he is still part of the interaction and is treated respectfully and equally.

This example also represents why ‘punishment’ is not an aspect of Emerging Body Language. The same objective is to be accomplished in a different manner, by maintaining the relationship. Positive interaction can therefore best be interpreted as *“interaction in which two people are in contact with each other, respect each other and are both subjects in the interaction”*. Within this interaction, there can be arguments as well, as long as both people are in contact with each other and stay in the relationship. On the other hand, negative interaction can best be seen as *“interaction in which two people are not in contact with each other and one of them is seen as an object”*. In this interaction, one or both disrupt or end the contact, disrespects or ignores the other person.

Besides the view on punishment, EBL also has a certain approach to making ‘compliments’. It is usually more valuable to comment on the relationship between two people than to explicitly reinforce someone through giving a present or compliment. A present or compliment is given from a kind of an elevated perspective of one person and is therefore rather one-sided. The one who pays the compliment, has to be ‘better’ or ‘smarter’ in order to assess whether something is worthy of complimenting. This suggests the existence of an unequal balance within the relationship. By saying *“We are having a great time together, right?”* the relationship between the two people is addressed. When the relationship is addressed, this concerns both people that are interacting with each other and it refers to their ‘togetherness’. By saying that you are having a great time together, it also implicitly lets the one person know how the other feels about the contact.

This ‘togetherness’ and being together in the relationship is also appropriate when teaching someone practical skills or ‘desired behaviour’. The skill or behaviour has to become part of the other person. For example, therapist and client can clean the house together in several different ways. The therapist can delegate chores to the client and tell him to wash the windows, or mow the lawn. When the client does this correctly, he can be complimented. But it can also be done by the therapist starting to do some tasks and this way, eliciting behaviour in the client. When the client observes the therapist cleaning the table, the client can start to do this as well and learns new behaviour through the relationship. The behaviour is elicited by the therapist and this way, it becomes behaviour that emerged from the client rather than forced upon him. All these examples emphasize that it is the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’, that makes it a positive or negative interaction. The understanding of these concepts is important to further define what is going to be studied in the educational practice.

Besides this, it has to be noted that Emerging Body Language applies to the therapeutic setting and therefore focuses on ‘one-to-one’ relationships (therapist-client), while

the daily practice of the educational setting is mainly about ‘one-to-many’ relationships (teacher-students). Because of the different setting, the context and the characteristics of the relationship differ as well. This has to be kept in mind while reading the rest of the study.

### ***1.5 Relational aspects***

In this study, I am going to investigate in what way the reflections on a ‘good and healthy’ relationship can be recognized in the perceptions and the behaviour of teachers with regard to their students. From now on, these reflections of a good and healthy relationship will be referred to as ‘relational aspects’. A relational aspect will be defined as:

*“an aspect that, directly (through behaviour) or indirectly (through perception), has a positive, constructive influence on the relationship between two people”*

The behaviour of the teacher, as well as the perceptions of the teacher will be the main focus in this study. This has implications for the way a relational aspect might be reflected in the educational setting. Therefore, when the perceptions of the teachers are studied, a relational aspect will be defined as:

*“a perception in the mindset of a person that has a positive, constructive influence on the relationship between two people”*

When the behaviour of the teachers is researched, the relational aspect will be interpreted as:

*“a behaviour in the interaction between two people that has a positive, constructive influence on the relationship between two people”*

Whether a certain aspect has a positive, constructive influence on the relationship between two people is linked to the perception of a good and healthy relationship and positive interaction as described in the Introduction. When an aspect in the perceptions or the behaviour is in line with the aspects that are known to substantiate a good and healthy relationship (equality, attunement, eliciting behaviour, etcetera), they are considered to have a positive and constructive influence on the relationship between two people. The theoretical foundation of a good and healthy relationship is therefore rather important for the rest of the study, because it has to be considered as the perspective from which the entire research is conducted. This means that it is also the perspective from which the data will be approached, analyzed, and interpreted. The theoretical foundation of a good and healthy relationship can

metaphorically be seen as the pair of glasses through which the entire study and all the data are perceived.

The study will focus on relational aspects in the perceptions and behaviour of teachers. It will be researched in what way relational aspects that derive from a certain perspective on a good and healthy relationship can be recognized in the relationship between teacher and student. Therefore, the concepts that are presented to substantiate a good and healthy relationship have to be translated to the educational setting. For example, the aspect of 'reciprocity' in the relationship between teacher and student implies that there is mutual influence, action and dependence between teacher and student. This could be reflected in the educational setting through the teacher sharing a rather personal story with a student, in response to something personal the student shared. The aspect of 'equality' implies that teacher and student have an equal role within the relationship and that there is a balanced initiative. This could be reflected through the teacher being receptive of the student as well as the student being receptive of the teacher. This means that the teacher does not just perceive the student as someone who has to be 'filled with knowledge', but sees him as someone that influences her to the same extent that she influences him. The aspect of 'attunement' could appear in the relationship between teacher and student, because the teacher adjusts her behaviour to the students. This could, for example be through her body posture, by kneeling down a student's desk when talking to him, or by adjusting the tone of her voice. But attunement could also occur through responding to the different learning styles of the students or adjusting the managed approach to the students' needs. Within the relationship, the teacher can also 'elicit behaviour' in the students and give them the opportunity to make it their own. This could be done by the teacher showing model behaviour in daily practice, that students are able to observe and 'make their own'. This model behaviour could be for example practical- or social skills. In this study, it will be investigated in what way the different concepts that substantiate a good and healthy relationship and other aspects that can be perceived as relational aspects through the explicated perspective that has been presented, can be recognized in the educational setting.

In the previous sections, different concepts that substantiate a good and healthy relationship and other aspects deriving from relational thinking are presented. However, this study will be conducted in the educational setting and will focus on the relationship between teacher and student. Therefore, it is rather important that this aspect is addressed as well. What do we know about teacher-student relationships and how can we use that information in this study?

## ***1.6 Teacher-student relationships***

The importance of the interpersonal relationship with teachers for the development of children has gradually received more attention in scientific research over the last two decades (Spilt, Hughes, Wu & Kwok, 2012). The importance of this relationship is substantiated by research from several educational domains, such as educational effectiveness research (e.g. Creemers, 1994), learning environments research (e.g. Fraser, 1998), and educational psychology (e.g. Shuell, 1996). The significance of the parent-child relationship has been undisputed for a long time, because of the abundance of empirical evidence that is collected over the last decades, for example with respect to the attachment paradigm in relation to different developmental aspects (Bowlby, 1969/1982). The relationship with parents proves to affect the competence of coping with peers (Howes, Hamilton & Matheson, 1994), the development of behavioural problems (Toth & Cicchetti, 1996), academic performance (Pianta & Harbers, 1996), and the behaviour in the classroom (Morrison, Rimm-Kauffman & Pianta, 2003) for children in the (pre)school age.

Apart from the relationship with parents, the relationship with teachers also influences the development of children and their ability to adapt (Koomen, Verschueren & Pianta, 2007). The extended attachment perspective postulates that poor relationships with teachers evoke feelings of insecurity and distress, which limit children's ability to devote energy to academic and social learning activities (Pianta, 1992). Poor relationships with teachers thwart children's basic need for relatedness and diminish children's feelings of belonging at school and perceived academic competence, thereby obstructing motivational processes that drive academic achievement (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Conversely, children who perceive their teacher as caring and accepting are likely to internalize academic and pro-social goals valued by their teacher (Wentzel, 1999). Thus, beneficial effects of a positive and warm teacher-student relationship and adverse effects of a negative and hostile relationship are reported for a divergent range of aspects of school performance. This also includes the extent to which students enjoy going to school (Ladd & Burgess, 1999), their work attitude (Ladd, Birch & Buhs, 1999), social competence (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004), problem behaviour (Hughes, Cavell & Jackson, 1999), and academic performance (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). The teacher-student relationship also directly relates to order in the classroom, one of the most common problem areas in education (Veenman, 1984).

Especially for young children, the interpersonal aspects of the teacher-student relationship are regarded extremely relevant. Hamre and Pianta (2001) showed that the relationship of students with their kindergarten teacher, even many years later, is a unique

predictor for academic performance and social behaviour in students, that mainly concerns the negative aspects of that relationship, such as conflict and dependency. With regard to work attitude and problem behaviour, effects were even found up to secondary education. Children in preschool and elementary grades who establish more supportive and less conflictual relationships with teachers are more accepted by peers (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999). Some researchers have interpreted these findings as evidence that positive teacher–student relationships function to enhance children’s peer relationships (Howes, Hamilton, & Matheson, 1994).

There are also studies that provide evidence for the importance of the relationship with teachers for older children. Skinner and Belmont (1993) showed that the interpersonal involvement of the teacher played the most important role in the enhancement of the motivation of students from the upper years of primary school (8-12 years). Wentzel (1998) found that teacher-student relationships experienced as supportive by the students have a beneficial effect on various aspects of the students’ motivation for school. Supportive relationships with teachers are believed to foster students’ engagement in learning activities and progress in academic achievement (Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Loyd, 2008). Research by Lynch and Cicchetti (1992) showed that the relationship with the teacher is important for students to feel safe at school, especially for older, more vulnerable students. They also showed that students from 7-13 years that come from abusive families are in strong need of psychological relatedness to the teacher, compared to other students. Negative relationships with teachers are therefore a risk factor, whereas positive relationships have a supportive and protective function in the adaptation of children to the school situation. A positive relationship with the teacher is of increased importance for children who have a higher risk of developing socio-emotional and/or learning disabilities (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta & Howes, 2002) or who display behavioural problems at an early age (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). A study of Meehan, Hughes & Cavell (2003) showed that a positive student-teacher relationship can also function as a protective factor for childhood aggression, which is a risk factor for later maladjustment, including academic failure, substance abuse and delinquency (Loeber, 1990).

The importance of the interpersonal teacher-student relationship is also addressed in the Self-Determination Theory of motivation of Ryan and Deci (2000). The Self-Determination Theory postulates three universal, innate psychological needs: relatedness (close relationships, interpersonal regard, and support), autonomy (ownership, responsibilities, and self-actualization), and competence (feeling capable to bring out desired outcomes and effectively cope with challenges). Fulfillment of the three basic needs

contributes positively to intrinsic motivation where the job is primarily done for pure interest and its inherent enjoyment and satisfaction. For students, satisfaction of the three basic needs through emotional involvement, provision of structure, and autonomy support from teachers has been shown to contribute to academic motivation and achievement (Bao & Lam, 2008). Stevens (1994) used these principles in his definition of the 'basic psychological needs' for development: relation, autonomy and competence. The basic psychological need of 'relation' in education implies that children are in need of relationships with their teachers and that it is rather important for a student to feel that he has the ability to influence this relationship. Students have to feel accepted, included, safe, and welcome through the relationship with the teacher. Stevens (2008) states that: *"First and foremost, a good relationship between teachers and students is fundamental in education. They have to listen to each other, support each other and trust each other."* The relationship between teacher and student plays an essential role in the interaction between teacher and students, the instruction and the class management (Dijkstra, 1999).

Because of the importance of the relationship between teacher and student for many different aspects of the student's development, there is more interest in the role of the teacher in this interpersonal relationship in the last decades. The 'interpersonal competence' is considered to be an important aspect of the teacher's functioning (SBL, 2010).

#### *1.6.1 Interpersonal relationship between teacher and student*

Teacher behaviour can be studied from an interpersonal perspective. The interpersonal perspective describes and analyses the role of the teacher in terms of the relationship between teacher and students. Two elements are central to this perspective: The communicative systems approach and a model to describe teacher behaviour.

To analyse teachers' contributions to relationships with students, their behaviour can be considered a form of communication. Within the systems perspective, communication is seen as "every behaviour that someone displays in the presence of someone else" (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson 1967). The communicative systems approach assumes that one cannot *not* communicate when in the presence of someone else, whatever a person's intentions are, the others will infer meaning from this behaviour. For example, if teachers ignore students' questions because they do not hear them, then students might infer that the teacher is too busy, that the teacher thinks that the students are too dumb to understand, or that the teacher considers the questions to be impertinent. The message that students take from the teacher's inattention can often be different from that which the teacher intends. Within the

communicative systems approach, the focus is on the effects of someone's actions on the other and it is assumed that the behaviour of teacher and students mutually influences one another. The behaviour of the teacher is influenced by the behaviour of the students and in turn influences the students' behaviour.

The perceptions of students about the interpersonal relationships with their teacher have been mapped and studied in research with the Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behaviour (MITB) (see Figure 1). This model is based on Timothy Leary's research on the interpersonal diagnosis of personality (1957) and its application to teaching (Wubbels, Créton & Hooymayers, 1985). The Leary model has been investigated extensively in clinical psychology and psychotherapeutic settings (Strack, 1996) and has proven effective in describing human interaction (Foa, 1961; Lonner, 1980). The MITB can be seen as an adaptation of the Leary model of interpersonal behaviour to the context of education. Two dimensions are important in the Leary model: *proximity* and *influence*. The *proximity* dimension is placed on a continuum that has *cooperative* behaviour on one end and *oppositional* behaviour on the other. The *influence* dimension is a continuum between *dominant* behaviour at one end and *submissive* behaviour at the other. Leary plotted a person's interpersonal behaviour on a diagram that had the *dominant/submissive* continuum (DS) as the vertical axis and the *cooperative/oppositional* continuum (CO) as the horizontal axis. The *proximity* dimension indicates the degree of cooperation or closeness among those who are involved in the process of communication and the *influence* dimension portrays who is controlling or directing the communication process, and how often. For application of the model to the classroom situation, each quadrant of the model was divided into two sectors, resulting in eight sectors that each describe different aspects of teacher interpersonal behaviour (see Figure 1).



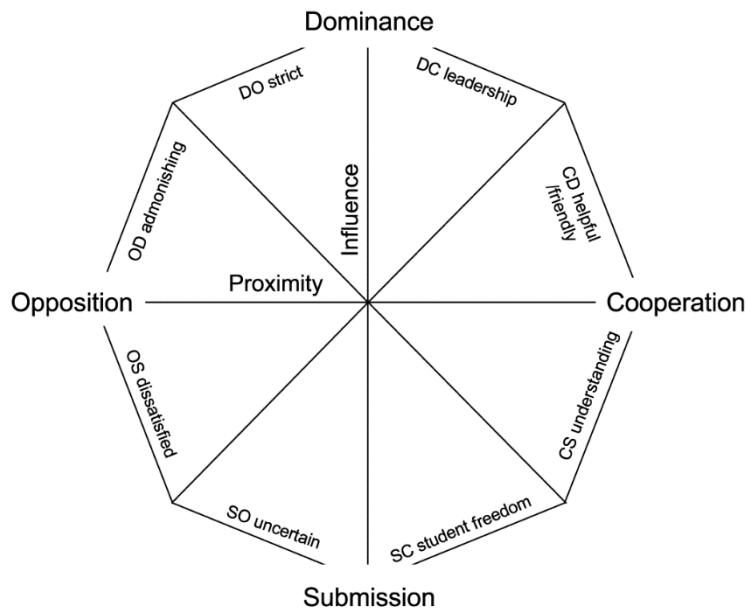


Figure 1. Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behaviour (MITB)

The sectors are labeled DC, CD and so on according to their position in the coordinate system, the letters coding the relative influence of the axes. For example, sectors DC and CD are both characterized by *dominance* and *cooperation*, but in DC *dominance* predominates over *cooperation*, whereas in CD *cooperation* is more evident. The closer two sectors are to each other, the more similar are the teacher behaviours they represent. The eight sectors were labeled as following: Leadership (DC), Helping/Friendly (CD), Understanding (CS), Student responsibility/Freedom (SC), Uncertain (SO), Dissatisfied (OS), Admonishing (OD), and Strict (DO) behaviour. To clarify what the eight sectors involve, they are described by the typical teacher behaviour associated with each sector (see Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Information of MITB Sectors.

Sector MITB		Description
Leadership	DC	Notice what is happening, lead, organize, give orders, set tasks, determine, procedure, structure the classroom situation, explain, hold the attention.
Helpful/Friendly	CD	Assist, show interest, join, behave in a friendly or considerate manner, be able to make a joke, inspire confidence and trust.
Understanding	CS	Listen with interest, empathize, show interest and understanding, accept apologies, look for ways to settle differences, be patient, be open.

Student responsibility/ Freedom	SC	Give opportunity for independent work, wait for class to let off steam, give freedom and responsibility, approve of something.
Uncertain	SO	Keep a low profile, apologize, wait and see how the wind blows, admit one is in the wrong.
Dissatisfied	OS	Wait for silence, consider pros and cons, keep quiet, show dissatisfaction, look glum, question, criticize.
Admonishing	OD	Get angry, take pupils to tasks, express irritation and anger, forbid, correct, punish.
Strict	DO	Keeps reins tight, check, judge, get class silent, maintain silence, be strict, exact norms and set rules.

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*Note.* Descriptive Information of MITB Sectors. Adapted from *Contemporary Teaching and Teacher Issues* (p. 202), by L. V. Barnes (Ed.), 2005, New York: Nova Science Publishers.

When the patterns in interpersonal relationships in classrooms are described, eight different types of relatively stable patterns can be distinguished (Brekelmans, 1989; Wubbels, & Levy, 1993). These eight interpersonal profiles do not have to be mistaken for the eight different sectors of the MITB. Both concepts are based on the same idea about interpersonal teacher behaviour, but the fact that eight categories could be distinguished in both cases is coincidental. The interpersonal profiles are Directive, Authoritative, Tolerant/Authoritative, Tolerant, Uncertain/Tolerant, Uncertain/Aggressive, Drudging, and Repressive. These interpersonal profiles can be characterised in terms of the two dimensions in the MITB.

The *directive* teacher is usually not really close to the students, though she is occasionally friendly and understanding. She has high standards and is seen as demanding. The teacher gets angry at times and has to remind the class that they are there to work. She likes to address students who misbehave and are inattentive. The *authoritative* teacher is enthusiastic and open to students' needs. She takes a personal interest in them, and this comes through in the lessons. The atmosphere in the class is well-structured, pleasant and task-oriented, and students do not need to be reminded of rules and procedures. The *tolerant/authoritative* teacher maintains a structure, which supports student responsibility and freedom. She develops close relationships with students. The teacher ignores minor disruptions, choosing instead to concentrate on the lesson. Students enjoy the class, are highly involved in most lessons and there is very little need for the teacher to enforce the rules. The *tolerant* teacher creates a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in which and students enjoy attending class. Students appreciate the teacher's personal involvement and her ability to

match the subject matter with their learning styles. They often work at their own pace and the class atmosphere sometimes may be a little confused as a result. The *uncertain/tolerant* teacher is highly cooperative, but does not show much leadership in class. The teacher's rules of behaviour are arbitrary, and students do not know what to expect when infractions occur. The teacher generally tolerates disorder, and the teacher's few efforts to stop the misbehaviour are delivered without emphasis and have little effect on the class. The *uncertain/aggressive* teacher and her students regard each other as opponents and spend almost all their time escalating conflicts. Students seize nearly every opportunity to be disruptive, and continually provoke the teacher. This generally brings a panicked over-reaction from the teacher, which is met by even greater student misbehaviour. The teacher shows unpredictable and unbalanced behaviour, in which rules of behaviour are not communicated properly. The *repressive* teacher is the epitome of complementary rigidity. Students in her class are uninvolved, extremely docile and perceive the teacher as unhappy and impatient. They follow the rules and are afraid of the teacher's angry outbursts. The teacher seems to overreact to small transgressions, frequently making sarcastic remarks or giving failing grades. The atmosphere is guarded and unpleasant, and the students are apprehensive and fearful. The *drudging* teacher continually struggles to manage the class and this process costs her a great deal of energy. Students pay attention as long as the teacher actively tries to motivate them. When they do get involved, the atmosphere is oriented toward the subject matter and the teacher does not generate much warmth.

The MITB and the interpersonal profiles provide insight in the manner in which the teacher shapes and gives meaning to the relationship with the students. From the perspective of relational thinking, teacher and student are equal within the relationship and the teacher is expected to attune her behaviour to the student (Fogel, 1993). When the student requires *dominant* or *oppositional* behaviour from the teacher, she might display this behaviour to attune to the student's needs. When the student shows behaviour that asks for a *submissive* or *cooperative* response, it seems that the teacher can best attune to the student by showing this type of behaviour. When the teacher is plotted to be *oppositional* and the student is in need of *cooperative* behaviour, the teacher might not be able to display this behaviour and therefore, might not be able to provide adequate attunement. The more the teacher is plotted towards one of the poles of the diagram, the more difficult it seems to be for her to make use of other behaviours.

From the perspective of relational thinking, it seems to be important that the teacher is able to assess whether the student is in need of more *dominance*, *submission*, *cooperation* or *opposition* and has the ability to adjust her behaviour accordingly. There are moments the teacher has to be a bit more *dominant* and there are moments the teacher has to be more *submissive*. Therefore, the teacher has to be able to show different kinds of behaviour and switch between them to adequately attune to every individual student. This would be rather difficult when the teacher is merely able to display one type of behaviour.

The Model for Interpersonal Teacher Behaviour and the interpersonal profiles can be deployed to assess ‘what kind’ of teacher someone is or ‘what sort’ of behaviour the teacher displays. Someone is labeled either an *authoritative* or a *tolerant* teacher. By wanting to assess, determine or define the role of the teacher within the interpersonal relationship and the teacher’s behaviour in the classroom practice, the emphasis is rather on the ‘what’. What kind of teacher is the person? Is she *repressive* or *directive*? This leads to a classification of decontextualized teacher behaviour, without actually looking at the reciprocal relationship between teacher and student. The MITB focuses on the behaviour of the teacher, but not on the response of the students to this behaviour or the way the teacher in turn responds to the students’ reaction. The MITB displays a rather one-sided view on the relationship between teacher and student, because it only provides insight into the behaviour of the teacher. Within relational thinking, the emphasis is not necessarily on ‘what’ the teacher does or ‘what’ kind of teacher someone is, but on ‘how’ the teacher attunes her behaviour to the behaviour of the student.

From the perspective of relational thinking, two additional critical remarks can be made about the presented research on interpersonal teacher behaviour. The first remark concerns the perception of interpersonal teacher behaviour as a constant, fixed factor in the teacher with little regard to context-specific variation in the behaviour. The behaviour of the teacher may vary depending on the context, situation or student. However, this is not reflected anywhere in the MITB or the interpersonal profiles. As said, this line of research assumes that a teacher’s interpersonal behaviour can be described based on two dimensions: *proximity* and *influence*. The teacher’s behaviour and the different interpersonal profiles can be plotted on a diagram with the *dominant/submissive* continuum (*influence*) as the vertical axis and the *cooperative/oppositional* continuum (*proximity*) as the horizontal axis, by combining either of the poles from each continuum (Wubbels, Creton & Holvast, 1988). From the perspective of relational thinking, it is probably assumed that a teacher has to be able to show different kinds

of behaviour, because students, situations, and contexts elicit different kinds of behaviour in the teacher. It seems as if the teacher cannot be assigned to one specific sector or profile, because students do not display only one type of behaviour that has to be responded to. The behaviour of the teacher always depends on the particular context, situation, and student. It may very well be that a teacher who is classified as the *authoritative* type, shows the associated behaviour more often than other kinds of behaviour, but it does not imply that she displays this behaviour in all situations, towards all students. Within relational thinking, it is probably expected that the teacher has the ability to utilize an arsenal of different behaviours to respond to different contexts, situations, and students in an adequate manner and is therefore always able to attune. To enable this process and to ensure a good and healthy relationship with the students, it might be required within relational thinking that a teacher embodies a well distributed mix of different behavioural sectors from the MITB.

The second remark that can be made about the research on interpersonal teacher behaviour, is that there is little regard to the differences between students within the classroom. Different studies have reported a low intra-class correlation regarding the students' perception of the teachers' interpersonal behaviour (Maulana, Opdenakker, den Brok, & Bosker, 2010; den Brok, Levy, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 2006; Sortkær & Reimer, 2014). This means that students within the same class have rather different perceptions of the interpersonal behaviour of the teacher. However, these differences are not reflected in the interpersonal profile. All the students' perceptions of the teacher's interpersonal behaviour are combined to a class average and aggregated into a single interpersonal profile. Within relational thinking, it is assumed that the teacher has a different relationship with every individual student in her class. The interpersonal profile displays the teacher's average relationship with the entire class, instead of her relationship with the individual student. When a teacher is assessed to be *directive*, this can be viewed as a summary of the perceptions of all students within the class regarding the teacher's interpersonal behaviour. The interpersonal profile is therefore blind for the variation in perceptions of the teacher's interpersonal behaviour between students within the same class. Therefore, one has to wonder what kind of information this aggregated, average interpersonal profile provides and what it says about the individual perception of students on the teacher's interpersonal behaviour. The interpersonal profile can be seen as a 'generalized class perception' that is not individualized at the level of the student. This is not in line with the principles of relational thinking, which emphasizes the individual relationship between teacher and student.

The MITB and the interpersonal profiles are used in scientific research to study the relation of different teacher behaviours and interpersonal profiles to different student aspects. For example, the higher a teacher was perceived on the *influence* dimension, the higher the cognitive outcomes of the students (Brekelmans, 1989), teachers of the interpersonal profile *repressive* have the highest effect on achievement outcomes (McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer & Barraclough, 1995), and *uncertain/tolerant*, *uncertain/aggressive* and *drudging* teachers were found to have the most disorderly classrooms (Brekelmans, 1989). Different studies that investigated the teacher-student relationship found a positive effect of both *influence* and *proximity* on affective outcomes in students, such as feelings of pleasure, confidence, effort, relevance and motivation (Wubbels & Levy, 1991; Levy, Wubbels & Brekelmans, 1992). The higher the perception of *proximity*, the higher the affective student outcomes (Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Neuliep, 1995). Figure 2 displays the graphical interpersonal profile of a teacher with relatively high affective outcomes in students (Wubbels & Levy, 1991), in which a clear emphasis on the sectors *leadership*, *helpful/friendly* and *understanding* of the MITB can be recognized.

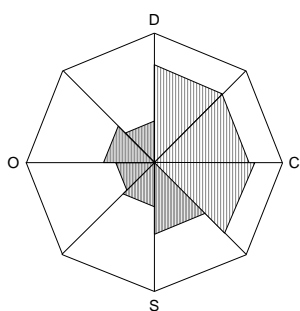


Figure 2. Graphical Interpersonal Profile of Teacher with High Affective Outcomes

Different studies found positive relationships for *helpful/friendly* and *understanding* behaviour on the MITB with pleasure, confidence, effort and relevance of students (Derksen, 1994; van Amelsvoort, 1999). Other studies found strong and positive associations between the sectors *leadership*, *helpful/friendly*, and *understanding*, and affective outcomes, while negative relationships have been found with *admonishing*, *dissatisfied*, and *strictness* (Rawnsley, 1997; Evans, 1998). Brekelmans (1989) investigated the relationship between student affective outcomes and students' perceptions of teacher interpersonal behaviour. She found that *authoritative* and *directive* teachers have the highest student affective outcomes

and students of the *drudging*, *uncertain/aggressive* and *repressive* teachers have the lowest affective outcomes.

This information enables a certain value judgement on what is considered ‘good and healthy’ interpersonal teacher behaviour in the MITB. In general, appropriate teacher-student relationships are characterised by a rather high degree of teacher *influence* and *proximity* towards students (Brekelmans, den Brok, van Tartwijk & Wubbels, 2005). Based on different studies, it can be stated that mainly the sectors *leadership*, *helpful/friendly* and *understanding* of the MITB are important teacher behaviours for shaping a good and healthy interpersonal relationship with students. When the descriptions of these sectors are analysed (see Table 1), it can be concluded that the sectors *helpful/friendly* and *understanding* show great similarities with the principles behind relational thinking and the way the interpersonal relationship between teacher and student would probably be filled in from the perspective of relational thinking.

The value of the research in interpersonal teacher behaviour lies mainly in the provision of a vocabulary to interpret relationships between teacher and student. The MITB and the interpersonal profiles provide concrete terms to talk about the interpersonal behaviour of teachers. The interpersonal profiles can be used to assess what kind of teacher someone is and can therefore provide insight into the teacher’s strengths and weaknesses. This might also help in determining the areas a teacher can address to improve herself, which can be the basis for preservice and inservice teacher education.

The focus within relational thinking is on the relationship between the teacher and the individual student. The MITB is rather focused on classifying the decontextualized teacher behaviour in one of eight sectors and addresses the teacher’s relationship with the entire class. This study will regard the relationship between the teacher and the individual student, instead of the relationship with the class as a whole. This major difference naturally has implications for the manner in which the study is conducted. From the perspective of relational thinking, MITB is not suitable to research the relationship between teacher and student, because it focuses at the relationship between the teacher and the entire class. This results in the research question of the study being rather open and explorative. It does not focus on studying the sectors or profiles associated with MITB or finding relationships between teacher behaviour and class reaction.

### ***1.7 Research questions***

In the previous paragraphs, I have described in what way the concept of a good and healthy relationship is interpreted within Emerging Body Language and therefore within this study. The existence of the different aspects that underlie this perspective are essential for the success of EBL therapy. Moreover, I have also described the importance of teacher-student relationships and the manner in which this is approached within relational thinking. The objective of this study is to explore the value of relational thinking for the educational setting, by researching the perceptions and behaviour of primary school teachers. Because this study can be considered a first step in this line of research, an image of the way relational thinking can be found in the teaching practice has to be created. This will be done by exploring the way relational aspects can be recognized in the educational setting. Therefore, the main question in this research is:

*“How are ‘relational aspects’ reflected in the educational setting?”*

Because of the explorative nature of the study, I deliberately chose to apply a broad and open research question. This enables me to create an image of the way relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting. The educational setting, as defined in the main research question, will be targeted through different research instruments, which relate to the perceptions, as well as the behaviour of teachers. The way in which the three research instruments are used within this study, will be explained in detail in the Method section.

### ***1.8 Value of the study***

Creating an image of the way relational aspects are reflected can have a certain value for the educational setting. Because the study is about relational thinking and therefore focuses on the interpersonal relationship between teacher and students, the results might provide a different way of looking at (the set-up) of the classroom practice and the educational setting. Also, the results could provide the teachers with insight into the way they perceive their students and their own behaviour in the classroom. The study could also provide insight into the way teachers might be able to work in a more relational manner and implement the relational principles behind EBL therapy in the educational setting. This could give them more concrete tools in their approach towards the students and therefore extend their mind- and skill set. The results of the study could have implications for the training and education of teachers, which might contribute to the discussion of adding certain topics to the training content or changing the set-up of the teachers’ education. It could also portray in what areas the relational aspects can mainly be found, which enables new research that specifically focuses on these areas. The



results have to be seen as a basis for further research into this subject. Other researchers can choose to apply a more focused method of data-collection, targeting specific aspects or contexts, or continue to build on the created image. It could also be used as a start for developing a more practical translation, in which concrete and practical tools are provided to the teachers. In further research, other aspects of the teaching practice, next to the interpersonal relationship between teacher and students could be selected to research in what way relational aspects are reflected in this. For example the didactical approach of teachers or their class management.

## **2. Method**

### ***2.1 Research approach***

I chose to apply a rather open and qualitative research approach, in which an interview based on the viewing of two clips, the construction of a Mental Class Map and an observation were used to collect all the data in a group of eleven primary school teachers. The choice for this approach fits the explorative nature of the research: Explore the potential of relational thinking for the educational system. Effective qualitative study has to make use of multiple methods for data collection (Cresswell, 1998). It also commences with a single focus rather than a hypothesis or the assumption of a causal relationship (Cresswell, 1998). Because the data are collected in different manners, the applied research approach can be characterized both as semi-structured and unstructured. The interviews based on the viewing of two clips and the construction of a Mental Class Map are both semi-structured, because they contain standard, open questions and assignments that all participants have to answer, but there is also room for personal contribution. The observation has an unstructured and descriptive nature, because all the behaviour from the classroom practice that was perceived as striking was noted, regardless of its nature.

The applied research approach shows similarities with naturalistic and ethnographical approaches. Naturalistic means that the researcher intervenes with the studied situation as little as possible. The research has to be conducted such that it is sensitive to and has respect for the nature of the setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). In naturalistic research, researchers do not know in advance what they will see or what they will specifically look for. Researchers generate rather than test hypotheses and they are the instruments of the research (Eisner 1991). Naturalistic research is influenced by the researchers' values as expressed in the choice of a topic and in the (theoretical) framing of that topic. The research is therefore influenced by the choice of the framework that guides the study and the substantive theory utilized to guide the collection and analysis of data and in the interpretation of findings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). A form of naturalistic observation is ethnographical research. This approach originates from the anthropology and has the objective of describing and documenting the behaviour of a certain culture or group or to create a theory about it after it is being studied. Some of the main methods for data collection in this type of research are observations and interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

## **2.2 Participants**

Eleven female primary school teachers, who were selected based on availability and willingness to take part, served as participants in this study. All participants had their own class and were employed full-time at three different mainstream primary schools in the South of the Netherlands. The participants were between 26 and 62 years of age ( $M = 37$ ;  $SD = 15$ ) and they had between 5 and 32 years of teaching experience ( $M = 12$ ;  $SD = 9$ ). The teachers taught from Kindergarten to Grade 6, meaning that students' ages ranged four to twelve years. The minimum number of students in a class was 14 and the maximum was 32 ( $M = 22$ ;  $SD = 5$ ).

All teachers participated in an interview based on the viewing of two different clips, that lasted from about seven to thirteen minutes ( $M = 11$ ;  $SD = 2$ ) and the construction of a Mental Class Map, that took them about six to 47 minutes ( $M = 16$ ;  $SD = 12$ ); they also agreed with the request to be observed in their classroom while teaching. The observation lasted approximately one hour.

## **2.3 Research instruments**

To explore the way in which relational aspects are reflected in education, three situations in which teachers could show these aspects are analyzed by using three different research instruments. It could appear from the way in which teachers talk about the relationship between an adult and a child in the therapeutic setting, the way they state to use aspects from the therapeutic setting in their teaching (Clips), and how teachers talk about their students during the construction of a Mental Class Map (MCM). The Clips and the MCM's are both research instruments that aim at the perceptions of the teachers, whereas the relational aspects could also appear from their actual behaviour (Observation).

### **2.3.1 Clips**

Two different clips were shown. Clip 1 had a duration of 73 seconds and Clip 2 of 54 seconds. Both clips are situated in the therapeutic setting, in which Clip 1 is an example of a therapy based on Applied Behaviour Analysis and Clip 2 is an example of therapy based on the approach called Emerging Body Language. Prior to the clips, the participants were provided with a short, situational description and the announcement that there were going to be a couple of question after each clip. The clips were selected because of the fundamentally different approach on therapy.

### Clip 1 – Applied Behaviour Analysis

This clip shows a therapist together with her client in an eating situation. The therapist tries to feed the client a spoon of applesauce. This intervention is based on Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), a methodology that finds its roots in behaviouristic principles. The therapist stimulates wanted behaviour and punishes or ignores unwanted behaviour. The participants in this study received the following description prior to viewing the clip: *“The client you are about to see is three years old. He has problems with eating and is therefore treated in a clinic for eating disorders”*.

In the clip, the therapist and the client are sitting at a table, each on a different side. The client starts to put on a bib, a process the therapist supports with words. The therapist talks friendly to the client and the client responds by gibbering back. When the client has put on the bib, his hand goes towards the television set that is on the table. This television serves as a reinforcer to stimulate wanted behaviour, in this case eating. The therapist stops the client and shows him a plate of applesauce. She supports this with words. The client looks at the applesauce and keeps his gaze at it. He does not make eye contact with the therapist. The therapist scoops up a spoon full of applesauce and moves it towards the mouth of the client, who then opens his mouth. She wipes off the spoon on the lips of the client. The therapist supports this with the words; *“Now, a good swallow. Alright, perfect chap! One acceptance. Very good”*. The client immediately turns on the television (reinforcer) and starts coughing. Meanwhile, he looks at the television. Then the client starts gagging, makes loud gagging noises, retrieves his food and starts vomiting. As this happens, the therapist ignores the behaviour by not making eye contact with the client, not talking to him anymore, and subsequently turning off the television. While she is doing this, she is talking to the camera to explain her actions. The client looks at the therapist from the corner of his eye, but there is no response. As soon as the vomiting seems to be over, the next spoon of applesauce is prepared. This is supported with the words: *“Okay, there we go again. The next bite”*. The therapist offers the next spoonful of applesauce to the client, by putting it in front of his mouth. The client is still busy wiping his mouth, rubbing his eyes and coughing, as a result of the previous spoon. He does not open his mouth directly this time.



Figure 3. Screenshots from Clip 1 – Applied Behaviour Analysis.

### Clip 2 – Emerging Body Language

This clip shows a therapist and client in a free and playful situation. This intervention is based on the approach Emerging Body Language (EBL). In this particular setting the therapist and client are practicing the skill of rolling together. The participants in this study receive the following description prior to viewing the clip: *“The client you are about to see is six years old and he is physically and mentally disabled. In this clip, he and his therapist are practicing the skill of rolling”*.

In the clip, the therapist and the client lie next to each other on their backs, on a red mat. They are in a playroom, where toys are lying around and red lights are shining. While there is soft music playing in the background, the therapist makes eye contact with the client and says *“Yes, ooh you do that so well”*. The therapist then says *“Come on”* and start rolling towards his left side. He tries to keep eye contact with the client and only fully rolls over on his belly, when he sees that the client has also started the movement. The client simultaneously imitates the therapist’s movement and rolls on his belly over his left side. When they both lie on their bellies, the therapist says *“Good job. Come on”*, to stimulate the client to perform another roll. The client continuously makes squeaky, happy noises and initiates eye contact with the therapist. The therapist leans on his right side and looks at the client, while he stimulates him verbally and rubs him over his back. The client rolls over on his back and the therapist says *“Aaah boom, you are falling down”*. The therapist leans over the client, who starts laughing and quickly turns his head from side to side. The therapist also

turns his head from side to side to imitate the client. Then the client makes a loud squeaky noise and tries to lift his head. The therapist slides off the mat, so there is more room for the client to roll. The client is trying to make another roll and puts extensive effort into moving his arms and legs, while making loud, squeaky noises. The therapist maintains eye contact with the client and stimulates him verbally, by saying “*Yes, roll. Good job*”. When it seems that the client is not able to finish the roll, the therapist says “*Cross your legs*” and demonstrates this by doing it himself. The client then tries to imitate the therapist’ movement and rolls over while trying. The therapist compliments him by saying “*Good job. That is good*”, while he rubs the clients back. The client looks at the therapist and makes squeaky, happy noises.



*Figure 4. Screenshots from Clip 2 – Emerging Body Language.*

#### Interview after viewing the clips

Clip 1 was shown to the teachers and after the clip, five short questions were asked. The interview technique is known as the ‘interview guide approach’ (Patton, 1980). The questions were:

- What do you see in this clip?
- What stands out for you in this clip?
- What do you think about the interaction between therapist and client?
- What do you feel regarding the interaction between therapist and client?

- Do you recognize certain aspects of this interaction in your own way of teaching?

After the participants had answered these questions, Clip 2 was shown and the same five questions were asked. When both clips were shown and discussed, two questions were asked regarding both clips. These questions were

- What method has your preference?
- Why do you prefer this method?

All the interviews were recorded with an iPad and later transcribed to enable qualitative analysis.

### 2.3.2 Mental Class Map

A Mental Class Map is an example of a Graphical Organizer. Graphical Organizer is a collective term for various forms of graphic, non-linear representations for the visualization of one's thinking. The most common forms of Graphical Organizers are 'mindmaps' and 'concept maps'. Mindmaps are based on a radial hierarchy with the main concept in the middle and concept maps are based on the connections between different concepts. Mental Class Maps are designed specifically for the situation of teachers. The participants were asked to create a Mental Class Map (MCM) based on pictures of the students in their class. In order not to affect the teachers' attention for some specific student characteristics, the participants all received the same instruction. The participants were provided with a stack of (passport) photographs of the students in their class. The following instruction was provided; "*Can you make a mindmap of your class using these pictures, based on student characteristics that are important to you?*" The term 'mindmap' was chosen, because it was expected that this term would be the clearest for the participants. The participants were asked to 'think out loud' during the entire mapping process and to verbalize every thought and consideration they had regarding the creation of the MCM. When the MCM was finished, the participants were asked to explain their final result through a short, semi-structured interview. They were asked the following standard questions:

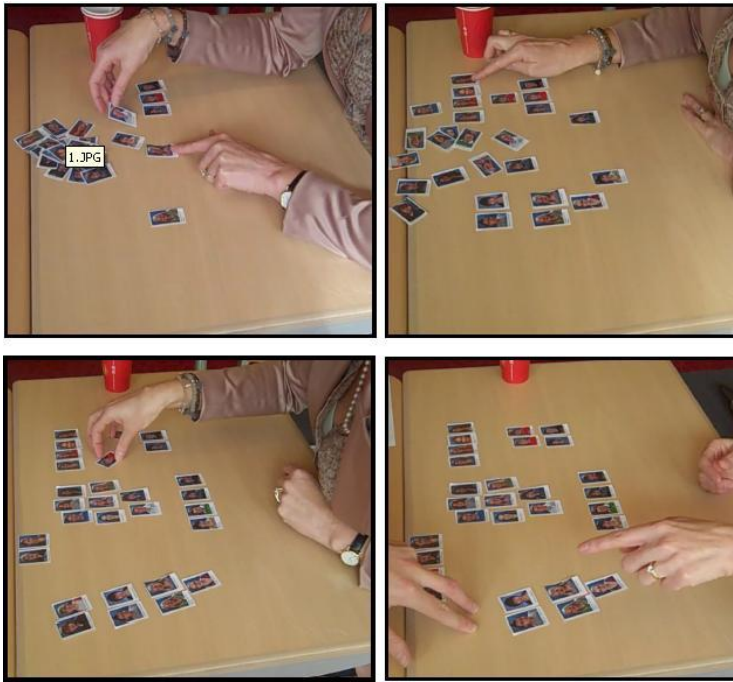
- Why did you choose this classification?
- What student characteristic(s) did you use to base your mindmap on?
- In what way does this classification, the fact that you find these student characteristic(s) important, influence your teaching?
- Could you give a concrete example of the way in which this can be recognized in your teaching?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages for students that you take these characteristic(s) into account?

After the questions, the teachers had the possibility to make final remarks or comments on the MCM they created. The entire process was recorded with an iPad and later transcribed to enable qualitative analysis. The construction of the Mental Class Map of one teacher was not captured in a clip, but extensively described in a written report, due to an error in the recording process.

The construction of a Mental Class Map was chosen based on a couple of assumptions. By confronting the participants with pictures of their students, the context-specific nature of their knowledge is acknowledged (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2006). This knowledge would probably not be activated by a more general task or question. In the process of ‘mapping’ the pictures, the participants are enabled to retrieve more implicit, context-specific knowledge and explicate this. Apart from that, maps are not just a graphical description of what is said, rather they are interpretations of what is meant by the interviewee (Eden, 2004). By mapping, the subjective reality of the participant is portrayed in a more realistic way. The research task forces the participant to verbalize student characteristics that are important to her in their own manner. The process of mapping can assist the participant in the interpretation of what she actually wants to show, because of the initial, more intuitive nature of the ordering process in MCM. This can also give direction to clarifying follow-up questions during the interview. Ackerman and Eden (2010) state the following about the process of mapping in Graphical Organizers: *“Because the picture has been constructed using the natural language of the problem owner it becomes a model of the situation that is owned by those who define the problem”* (p. 135). Eden (2004) states that the process of looking for an ‘easy to read’, two-dimensional display, provides insight in the ‘way of looking’ of the participant. It is, therefore, expected that the process and product of ‘mapping’ during the making of the MCM can provide more insight into the participants’ knowledge. This mainly regards insight into the student characteristics the participants perceive as important and the teachers’ ‘way of looking’ to create an overview within the complex reality of the class.





*Figure 5. The construction of the MCM by one of the teachers.*

### *2.3.3 Observation*

Prior to viewing the two clips and the construction of the Mental Class Map, an observation was performed in the class of each participant. The participants did not know the objective of the study at that time, so they were not able to adjust their behaviour accordingly. The observation covered one lesson and had the duration of one hour. It was performed during a Language, Reading comprehension, Spelling, or Math lesson. These conditions were chosen to create some homogeneity in the settings in which the observations occurred. During the observation, the researcher sat in the back of the classroom and took notes of the events that occurred during the hour. These could relate to the course of the lesson, actions of teacher and students, interaction between teacher and students, and notable events. These field notes were later elaborated on the computer and analyzed to create an image of the lesson. This method within naturalistic observation is known as the ‘observer-as-participant’ approach, because the group knows that they are being observed and the observer is known to the group as the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007).

### *2.4 Procedure*

The principals of the schools were invited to participate in the study through a telephone conversation and a personal meeting. The study was described as “research on how teachers perceive their students and the concept of learning”. Only the directors were aware of the

intentions of the study, teachers were not informed of specific details. The teachers were approached by the directors to participate in the study. This is an example of ‘convenience sampling’. Convenience sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals who happen to be available and accessible at the time (Cohen et al., 2007). Cohen et al. (2007) state that teachers often serve as participants based on convenience sampling and that this sampling strategy is most commonly selected for (series of) case studies. Teachers were informed that participation in the study would be voluntarily and confidential. The data collection took seven days during the period mid-April until June 2013.

Prior to data collection, a time schedule was decided upon in which the researcher would carry out the class observation, before administering the remainder of the research instruments. This was done, so the teachers had as little knowledge as possible of content of the study during the class observation, which prevented them from adjusting their behaviour to the aim of the study. The construction of the Mental Class Maps and the interviews based on two clips, were successively administered to teachers and were always conducted in a quiet, office within the primary school building.

## **2.5 Data collection**

The data collection was aimed at eliciting perceptions and observing behaviour of the teacher with regard to the classroom practice. The objective was creating an image of the educational setting in a rather open manner, through the use of three different research instruments. From this collected, general data, the relational aspect could subsequently be extracted. Therefore, the data collection process is rather open and teachers will not be directed towards certain areas and topics. For example, the first question that is asked in the construction of the MCM's is: *“Can you make a ‘mindmap’ of your class using these pictures, based on student characteristics that are important to you?”* The teachers were free to verbalize on whatever characteristic they find important and were not ‘guided’ towards aspects that have a relational load to them.

It has to be noted that the questions that are presented to the teachers as a result of the viewing of the clips and the construction of the MCM's, have a certain influence on the data as well. The specific language that is elicited from the teachers relates to certain areas of teachers' perceptions. This obviously leads to interview questions targeting certain areas and leaving out others. Because of the sequence of the questions, the student characteristic(s) the teachers verbalize and the way in which they construct their Mental Class Map, most likely affects their answers to the rest of the interview questions. Also, the fact that the assignment

contains the concept 'student characteristic', rather than something like "Make a classification of your class", influences the way teachers interpret the assignment. Teachers may have been guided in a certain direction by the choice of language, which might not be totally representative of the personal perceptions on their teaching. This has to be taken into consideration with respect to the interview data.

The researcher started the observation with the intent of writing down everything that was generally perceived and that stood out in any way, shape or form. There was no special attention for relational aspects during the observations, which is in line with the objective of the data collection. This was done to enable the creation of an image of the way relational aspects are reflected in the behaviour of the teachers. What this means, is that the data that derives from the observations, consist of general observations and notabilities that were perceived and written down and can therefore be taken as an overall, general report of the observation. Subsequently, relational aspects were extracted from the written reports of the class observations.

Note that, this implies that when a certain behaviour is reported during the observation of Participant A, but not reported during the observation of Participant B, this does not mean that Participant B did not display this behaviour. It simply means that in Participant A it was noted by the researcher and therefore written down, and in Participant B it was not noted or not considered to be striking behaviour. This does also not mean that there were no other behaviours shown by the participants apart from the ones that were written down. It is simply impossible to report everything during an observation.

Because the observation has been conducted by only one researcher, the fundamental, underlying coloring of the data has to be explicitly acknowledged. The behaviour of the participants was described as concretely and objectively as possible and the statements that were verbalized during the observation were, whenever possible, written down literally. However, the observation data still only come from the perceptions of one researcher and the moment the researcher sets foot in a classroom, he is already influenced by what he perceives: the atmosphere in the classroom, the appearance of the teacher, the behaviour of the students, etcetera. All this affects the perceptions of the researcher during the observation and therefore, also affects what is perceived as striking and what is included in the general report of the observation. No matter how objectively and independently the researcher tries to be, he will always have a certain mindset or fundamental principles from which he perceives the participant's behaviour. After all, to be entirely objective is simply not possible. This has to

be recognized, explicated and acknowledged and subsequently taken into account while reading the reports of the observations.

## ***2.6 Analysis of the data***

The objective of the data-analysis is to provide an answer to the research question. After the data were collected, they were processed through six different steps that will be described in detail.

### **Step 1: Transcription**

The objective of the first step was to get data useful for the analysis. This meant that the audio files that were recorded as a result of all the interviews were fully transcribed on the computer in Word documents. Also, the field notes that were written down during the observation were written down in a Word file to enable a qualitative analysis of the data.

### **Step 2: Division into fragments**

All the transcribed data were then divided into separate fragments that refer to the one subject. This was done regardless of the specific content of the text and resulted in a better overview of the data, which made it easier to carry out the next step of the process.

### **Step 3: Selection**

The focus of the study was how relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting. Therefore, fragments that had any kind of relational load to them were extracted from the bulk of the data. This could be literal statements of the participants or behaviour that was noted during the observation. This was done by the researcher himself and based on the explicated perspective from the theoretical framework.

### **Step 4: Clustering**

First of all, it was indicated whether the fragments derived from the theoretical concepts as described in the Introduction. When this was the case, the fragments were linked to the corresponding theoretical concept they exclusively derived from. The remaining fragments could not be exclusively linked to a theoretical concept, but were considered to be relational based on the explicated perspective from the Introduction or the fact that they could partially be linked to multiple theoretical concepts from the Introduction. These fragments were grouped based on the similar content they represented.

### Step 5: Labeling

Initially, the labeling was done based on the theoretical framework. The theoretical concepts ‘attunement’ and ‘equality and reciprocity’ from the Introduction were used as labels. The other theoretical concepts were not used as labels, because perceptions and behaviours from the data could not be exclusively linked to the concepts of ‘subject-subject relationship’, ‘eliciting behaviour’ and ‘equal, but not of equal skill’. Subsequently, perceptions and behaviours that were noticed in the data and that could not be interpreted via the theoretical framework were labeled as well. These categories were defined as: ‘the role of the teacher’, ‘stimulating and motivating students’, ‘the wellbeing of the students’, ‘humor and sarcasm’, ‘physical contact’ and ‘non-verbal communication / body language’. The definition of these labels can be seen as the concise description of the similar content of the fragments included in the different categories. The labeling process was conducted based on the theoretical framework and in addition, labels that derive from the data were added. Therefore, this study is a combination of theory-driven and data-driven research. The results that derive from the labels based on the theory are referred to as ‘Pre-defined categories’ and the results that derive from the labels based on the data are referred to as ‘Additional categories concerning relationships’.

### Step 6: Checking

This step had the objective of checking the choices that were made in Steps 3, 4 and 5. The fragments that were selected in Step 3 were scanned once more to check whether the fragments were still considered to have a relational load to them. After this, it was checked whether the clustered fragments still represented similar content. Whenever it was necessary, fragments were classified in different clusters. Finally, the labeling of the clusters in the section of Additional categories concerning relationships was checked and whenever necessary adjusted to the changed composition of the cluster.

## ***2.7 Display of the data***

The research results can be displayed in two different ways: Thematically or chronologically (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I chose to apply a thematic display. Displaying the results thematically has several advantages over the use of a chronological display: It provides an organized classification system and it takes less time for the reader to get a clear impression of how relational aspects can be recognized in the educational setting. Also, a thematic

classification makes the comparison and analysis of the data easier, because fragments of similar themes are clustered.

The clustering of the fragments, the labeling process and the definition of the headings that indicate these clusters was based on the theoretical framework in the Pre-defined categories and on the data in the Additional categories concerning relationships. In the Pre-defined categories, the fragments that exclusively derive from a theoretical concept from the Introduction are presented. In the Additional categories concerning relationships, the remaining fragments that were considered to be relational based on the explicated perspective of a good and healthy relationship from the Introduction, but that could not be exclusively linked to one of the theoretical concepts, are presented. These categories were clustered and defined based on their similar content. The labeling process was conducted based on the theoretical framework and in addition, labels that derive from the data were added. Therefore, this study is a combination of theory-driven and data-driven research.

The observation fragments can consist of spoken text or literal statements (italic font) and descriptive text (regular font). When I was not able to literally quote a statement during the observation, the text is formulated in my own words (regular font). The MCM's and the interviews are recorded verbatim and therefore, the statements that derive from these research instruments are always the literal quotes of the participants.

Some of the fragments can be classified in different clusters. In most cases, the fragments are placed with the most appropriate and relevant theme. The fragments are intended to substantiate and justify the chosen clusters and to create an image of the way relational aspects are reflected in the perceptions and behaviour of the teachers. With regard to the size of the thesis, it was not possible to display all the fragments that underlie the reported behaviours. Therefore, I chose to select the most adequate fragments to illustrate the perceptions and behaviours that are discussed in the different themes.

## ***2.8 Quality monitoring***

Several measures have been taken to ensure the quality of the data collection and the data analysis process. First of all, I audiotaped all the interviews that followed the viewing of the clips and the construction of the MCMs. This enabled an exact transcription of the research instruments that targeted the teachers' perceptions. Also, it made it possible to listen to the recordings again, long after the interviews were conducted. During the observations, there was enough time to write down the field notes and to pay attention to the situation in the classroom practice at the same time. Because the elaboration of the observational reports was

performed rather shortly after the actual observations, the field notes could be supplemented with additional, contextual information that was not written down in the field notes. All these aspects enhanced the descriptive validity of the study (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995). The quality of the research is also monitored through methodological triangulation, which means that different research instruments are used with the same participants. Methodological triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity within qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2007).

The observations in this research have a high ecological validity, because they are conducted in the natural setting without any manipulation by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007). The daily practice of the teachers was not interrupted by the presence of the researcher. Also, the teachers did not know the objective of the study, until after all the research instruments were administered. The sequence in which the instruments were administered, was fixed. The observation was conducted before the interviews based on the viewing of the clips and the construction of the MCM, so the teachers did not know the objective of the study. Based on the content of the clips and the MCM, they might have gotten an idea of the study's aim. Because of these considerations, the study has a low level of reactivity (Cohen et al., 2007). The teachers were not able to adjust their behaviour to the expectations of the researcher, because they did not know what the aim of the study, and therefore the expectations of the researcher, were. This enhanced the external validity of the research (Cohen et al., 2007).

The data collection as well as the data analysis process, was constantly discussed with two research supervisors to enhance the reliability of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Because it concerned three different research instruments, it had to be extensively discussed how they should be administered to the teachers and in what way the data that resulted from these research instruments had to be elaborated, analyzed, and interpreted. The frequent consultation with experts was used as a control mechanism to monitor the data collection and data analysis process.

In the process of labeling, the definitions of the clusters were based on the content of the fragments as well as on terminologies that derive from the theoretical framework in the Introduction (for example: attunement). The clusters were conducted based on the content of the fragments, but in the definition of the clusters, it was first consulted whether the theoretical background did not already impose adequate terminologies. This mainly goes for clusters that showed similarities with aspects of a good and healthy relationship, as defined in the Introduction. When there was no previously introduced term from the theory to describe

the cluster, the researcher defined one himself, in consultation with (one of) the research supervisors, based on the mutual content of the fragments.

To enhance the traceability of my interpretations, the teachers' verbalized statements are literally quoted and the behaviour that is perceived during the observations is described as factual and objective as possible. This is displayed through the different fragments that substantiate the interpretations assigned to the perceptions and behaviours of the teachers. This enables the reader to interpret the data, in the form of the fragments, in his or her own way. It also reveals the researcher's 'way of thinking' regarding the connection of certain perceptions or behaviours to certain interpretations. This enhances the interpretative validity of the study (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995).



### 3. Results

To investigate the research question of this study, three different situations in which teachers could show certain relational aspects were analyzed by using three different research instruments. It could appear from the way in which teachers talk about the relationship between an adult and a child in the therapeutic setting, the way they state to use aspects from the therapeutic setting in their teaching (Clips), and how teachers talk about their students during the construction of a Mental Class Map (MCM). These research instruments target the perceptions of teacher. It could also appear from the way in which teachers behave in the classroom (Observation). The analysis of these three situations, in which the verbalized perceptions and the behaviour of the teachers are addressed, results in an image of the way in which relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting.

The results are divided in two different sections: the Pre-defined categories and the Additional categories concerning relationships. In the section of Pre-defined categories, the results that derive from the concepts that underlie a good and healthy relationship as presented in the theoretical framework, are displayed. This means that it is displayed in what way certain perceptions and behaviour of teachers can be exclusively linked to concepts such as ‘attunement’. In the section of Additional results concerning relationships, the clusters of perceptions and behaviours that could not be purely linked to a specific concept from the theoretical framework are presented. The clusters that derive from the data show either features of multiple theoretical concepts or are considered to be relational aspects based on the explicated perspective from the theoretical framework. The specific argumentation of the clustering in the section of Additional results concerning relationships varies per concept and is therefore elaborated prior to the presentation of every cluster.

Within each presented cluster, a distinction is made between the perceptions and behaviour of teachers. ‘Perceptions’ are considered a collection of different types and levels of the teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, cognitions and perceptions. It may pertain to the teachers’ opinion on what is good for the students, what the students need. For example, when teachers state that they value the wellbeing of the students. It may also concern their opinion on what they find important or good for a teacher to do. For example, when a teacher verbalizes to find it important to spend time on enhancing the students’ wellbeing. Furthermore, it can also regard teachers’ perceptions of their own behaviour: what they state they are doing in their classroom. For example, when the teacher says she has personal talks with the students to positively influence their wellbeing. In this Results section, no explicit distinction is made

between these different types and levels of perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and cognitions. This was rather difficult because a majority of the fragments contained multiple levels and types of teachers' perceptions. However, it is important to keep in mind during the reading of this section, that there are differences between the 'perceptions' that are displayed. Whenever it is possible, I tried to group the different levels and types of perceptions together.

### ***3.1 Pre-defined categories***

In this section, the results that derive from the concepts that underlie a good and healthy relationship as described in the theoretical framework, are presented. Merely the clusters of perceptions and behaviours that could be exclusively linked to a particular concept from the theoretical framework are displayed. This leads to the presentation of two concepts that derive from the theoretical framework, namely 'attunement' and 'equality and reciprocity'. It was not possible to exclusively link perceptions and behaviours to the remaining theoretical concepts ('subject-subject relationship', 'eliciting behaviour' and 'equal, but not of equal skill') and therefore, these concepts are not presented in the Pre-defined categories. When perceptions and behaviours could be linked to multiple concepts, or were considered to be relational based on the explicated perspective from the Introduction, they are clustered in a different manner and displayed in the Additional categories concerning relationships.

#### ***3.1.1 Attunement***

Attunement can best be explained as "a form of matching in which the referent for the match is not the external action, but the presumed feeling state of the partner" (Fogel, 1993). Attunement is one of the basic needs for a good and healthy relationship to emerge. The presented fragments all consider the way in which attunement can be recognized in the perceptions and the behaviour of teachers.

#### **Perceptions**

Teachers verbalized to find it important to attune the way information is offered to the particular student. Teachers have to analyze and respond to the way in which students best pick up information.

*"You have to look at what kind of child it is, how it picks up information. When a child is very communicative, you can best start a conversation with him. With a child who is not, it does not make a lot of sense to do so. You have to work with this child in a*

*different way, for example by showing him things, be visual, or doing a lot of things together. You cannot do this all the time, but you can try to do it as much as possible. You can try very hard to talk to the children, but when they are not sensitive to this, then it is not going to work.” (Noelle in response to Clips)*

Some teachers stated that all students are fundamentally entitled to the same things, but the manner in which these aspects are offered has to be attuned to the particular student.

The researcher gives Wilma the assignment to construct an MCM based on student characteristics she finds important. She responds by saying students are generally in need of the same things and therefore, she wants to put all her students in one big pile. She decides that she will tell her story from that point on. Wilma elaborates: *“In general, students are all in need of the same aspects. And it is not that one student needs more of this, or more of this. I think that you have to keep a balance in the classroom, not that one child gets more of something. It can be in a different manner than another child, but I think it has to be distributed evenly.” (...) I think that a child in primary education is entitled to certain aspects from a teacher and a school. That is the learning process, the learning. What I find very important in fifth grade, is the ownership of the students. That they try to solve problems themselves and are not so dependent on teachers. I find that important for all students. There are students who do this quite well, but also others who still find it difficult. But also the students who are good at it, I try to help them improve. I think attention is very important. Every child has the right to personal attention from the teacher. (...) Assistance, assistance from the teacher. Also when they do not ask questions, I observe them and keep an eye on them. But also that they take the initiative to come and sit at the instruction table, have the courage to ask questions and also actually do it. The wellbeing, the socio-emotional part. (...) Then you have the level groups within the class. There is the below-average group, who need extra attention and instruction. But the students that are working independently need feedback and they need the teacher to question them about their work. And the above average group, who you can let go off very easily, also need that piece of feedback on their process or product. (...) Challenging the students, trying to take them to a higher level. That goes for everybody as well. Even the ones who find it difficult, still try to take that next step. Of course you have to account for the wellbeing of the children. Can they handle it? Motivating, you do that*

*with everyone as well. (...) Every child is special, but eventually they are all in need of the same things.” (Wilma in MCM)*

Apart from the aspects teachers stated to find important in their teaching, teachers also verbalized what they actually did in their own teaching. There were teachers who stated to attune their approach to the students.

Sofia is asked in what way the place the students have in the group influences her teaching. She points at the group she defined as “an extravert group that mostly focuses on each other”, and says: *“Well these children are very focused on each other, so I try to pull them towards the rest of the group some more. And these children (Sofia points at the group she defined as “a group that is mostly focused on the teacher”) are mainly focused on me, so I try to involve them in other things.”* (Sofia in MCM)

Some teachers verbalized that they adjust their approach when students encounter problems.

*“Children who have problems, I approach in a certain way. To take the extra step, to still do it. When they do not dare, we will do it together. I will help you, we can write this word together, and then you will try it yourself.”* (Megan in response to Clips)

Some teachers mentioned to attune their language to the level of the students.

*“It is important that the students are addressed at their own level. When you look at sixth grade, those children are already young adolescents. And I try to adjust my language to them.”* (Birgit in response to Clips)

Teachers brought up that they carefully observe their students to find out what their interests are and in what areas their qualities and strengths are. This way, the teacher knows in what areas her students are able to excel and is able to address these.

When Hildreth is asked to give a concrete example of the way in which the aspects she finds important are reflected in her teaching, she points at one group of the MCM and says: *“These are very social girls, but cognitively, there are much weaker. I try to address their strong sides as well. So, a small example, they love to clean the classroom. They do this perfectly and enjoy it very much. This way, they can perform as well.”* (Hildreth in MCM)

Hildreth states that she tries to look for areas in which her students are able to excel and explains: *“You can aim at the areas the students are good at and then their peers will see: okay this is where they are good at. Because when you see their scores, those are very weak and their peers see this as well. This way, you give them the feeling that they are important to the class, in a different area. Last week, a teacher from the infant classes needed a student to interview a couple of the little ones. Then I pick certain students for this task, for example the ‘loners’, because they can grow from this. They grow from assisting in a different area. They can cope with the young children really well, which leads to compliments by the teachers and makes them gain experience of accomplishments.”* (Hildreth in MCM)

Wendy is asked what the advantages are of her way of teaching and responds by saying: *“I take their strong sides into account, so they can show what they are good at. But students who can still grow in these areas have to get this chance as well.”* (Wendy in MCM)

### Behaviour

In some teachers, it can be noted that they attune to the level of the student when they interact with them. This can take place in different ways, but is all about getting at the same level as the student. Some teachers do this by adjusting their posture, so they are psychically at the same level as the student.

When Noelle talks to one of her students, she bends her knees in order to be at the same height as them. (Noelle in Observation)

A student has a question about the exercise he is making. When Cora arrives at the student's desk, she squats next to the desk, so they can face each other when they are discussing the content. (Cora in Observation)

Attunement can also take place by adjusting the tone or the volume of the voice to the students, and/or to the message the teacher tries to bring across.

Two students are discussing the content of an exercise rather loudly. Wendy tries to establish eye contact with one of the students. When she makes eye contact, she whispers to him that they are talking loudly. Both students immediately lower the volume of their voices. (Wendy in Observation)

The attunement can also occur through the language in which the teacher interacts with the students. Some teachers talk to some of their students in dialect, instead of ‘formal’ Dutch.

Sandy makes her round to discuss the exercises with the students. With some of her students, she does this in dialect. (Sandy in Observation)

Sandy classically addresses one of her students and says to him in dialect: *“Alright, now pay attention will you”*. (Sandy in Observation)

It could be noted that the support that was offered to different groups of students was attuned to their didactical needs. The amount of time that was spent with every group was about the same, but the way in which the help was offered, was attuned to the needs of the students within the group.

Wilma spends about as much time during her rounds through class with each group that is working on an assignment. The groups are divided by didactical level and are working separately throughout the classroom and hallway. Wilma supports the weakest didactical group by helping them to get started and by providing assistance with the construction of answers. Wilma supports the strongest didactical group, by reflecting on the learning process together with the students and jointly checking the answers on the assignment. (Wilma in Observation)

### To conclude

These fragments are all in some way related to the concept of attunement. They reveal different levels in which attunement can be recognized in the teaching practice: what teachers state to be important, the way teachers verbalize to attune to students and the way in which attunement is actually perceived in their behaviour. Attunement can occur physically, by adjusting the posture; vocally, by adjusting the tone or volume; and also verbally, by adjusting the language. But it can also be the attunement of the teacher to the didactical needs of the students or specific areas in which students are able to excel. This shows the diversity of areas in which attunement can be recognized in the perceptions and behaviour of teachers.

The perceptions that the approach of the teacher or the manner in which fundamental aspects are offered, have to be attuned to the students also relate to the basic principles of a subject-subject relationship. In this relationship, student and teacher are equal, but not of equal skill. The teacher has more highly developed skills and is therefore able to provide these

fundamental needs to the students (assistance, challenging, motivating, etcetera) or adjust her approach to the students. Because of the relationship, the teacher is able to achieve positive growth in the students through the use of her higher skills.

### *3.1.2 Equality and reciprocity*

Equality means that two people have an equal role within the relationship and that there is a balanced initiative. When a relationship is equal, there also is a certain degree of reciprocity. This means that there is mutual influence, action and dependence between the two people. Mutual influence is characteristic for a subject-subject relationship: when the teacher influences the student, the student simultaneously influences the teacher to the same extent.

### Perceptions

The perceptions of the teachers regarding equality and reciprocity can be recognized in the aspects teachers stated to value. Most teachers said that it was important to look at the students and to take them into account.

*“You really have to take the children into account in the approach towards them.”*  
(Sandy in response to Clips)

In the case of Sandy, this can be linked to the relationship between adult and child in the therapeutic setting, in which she verbalizes these same perceptions.

When Sandy is asked what she finds of the interaction between client and therapist in the first clip, she says: *“The words she uses are more based on ‘this is how it is supposed to be done’, than on her emotions. It was not at the level of the client.”*  
(Sandy about Clip 1)

Sandy is asked what she thinks about the interaction in the second clip, and says: *“It seems like the therapist really has eye for the client and not for what he wants to teach him. The client comes in first and not the objective of the therapy.”* (Sandy about Clip 2)

Besides the importance of looking at the students and taking them into account, teachers also state to find the ability to ‘put yourself in the position of the child’ important.

*“You really try to put yourself in the position of the child. You try to go to the child’s level of thinking. You look at what the child can handle.”* (Noelle in response to Clips)

They also verbalized that teachers have to enjoy the contact with the students and show this to them.

*“I try to transfer the fun in everything I do. I try to show the children that I am enjoying myself and that I like it when they enjoy themselves. I want to show them that I am not doing it just for myself.”* (Sofia in response to Clips)

*“I can really enjoy my students sometimes. I still like them very much, and they know it. So we can make jokes, we can highlight the little things and have fun about it with the entire class.”* (Desiree in response to Clips)

This can be recognized in Desiree’s perception of an adult child relationship in the therapeutic setting as well.

When Desiree is asked what she noted in the second clip, she states: *“The fun both therapist and client were having. It is a very positive interaction and one can see that they both enjoy it.”* (Desiree about Clip 2)

Some of the teachers stated that when a teacher is approachable students will come to talk to her more quickly about their personal problems or stories.

When Wilma is asked what the advantage is of her prioritizing the different aspects she chose in the MCM in her teaching is, she states: *“An advantage is that they have the courage to approach me. When you are a teacher that is open to the students and is willing to take time for them, you will notice that children will approach you with their stories or things that make you think “Wooow, okay”.”* (Wilma in MCM)

Teachers also verbalized what they actually did in the classroom. There are teachers who let students know and feel that they put trust in them.

When Wilma is asked in what way she puts all of her students in one pile can be recognized in her teaching, she responds by saying: *“I take time to observe. I can let my students go and see what happens. Whenever I think I have to interfere, I can, and I keep in contact through non-verbal signals. This way, I can see how students respond*



*in certain situations and give them the responsibility to come up with their own solutions.” (Wilma in MCM)*

Some teachers stated to have individual moments with the students. These are small, one-on-one moments that can be verbal as well as non-verbal.

*“I try to have one-on-one moments with my students now and then, just the two of us, making jokes, or I give them a pat on the shoulder. Or I will talk to them in dialect, which makes it more accessible as well. Just having a laugh, or talk about soccer or something.” (Sandy in response to Clips)*

When Desiree is asked what aspects she took into account in the construction of her MCM and how this can be seen in her teaching, she says in her elaboration: *“So we talk a lot about what the students think and how they feel. Every day I try to have a chat with them during the first half an hour, when they enter the classroom in the morning. And whether this considers mom being home again or something else, it does not matter. I try to give all of them the feeling that they are seen.” (Desiree in MCM)*

Wilma substantiates why she puts all her students in the MCM in one big pile and says: *“I think attention is very important. Every child has the right to personal attention from the teacher. This could be a small conversation during a round through class or a little talk after school.” (Wilma in MCM)*

Hildreth is asked whether she can provide a concrete example of the way in which the aspects she finds important can be recognized in her teaching. She points to the group she defined as ‘performance minded students, who compete with each other a lot and are perfectionists’ and says: *“I have small conversations with these students from time to time, to emphasize that performing is not the most important thing. You have to feel good as well.” (Hildreth in MCM)*

### **Behaviour**

The behaviour of teachers reveals that they conduct small conversations with the students and sometimes share something of themselves in order to elicit similar sharing behaviour from the students. This matches the essential nature of equality and reciprocity within a subject-subject relationship. Teacher and student are equal and both subject and object at the same time in their relationship. Sharing a personal story has a larger effect than asking the students to share

something, as is illustrated in the associated fragment. This also matches the principle of ‘eliciting behaviour in the client’: the therapist models certain behaviour and elicits this behaviour in client, with the hope that he makes it his own. Some of the teachers had small conversations with students throughout the lesson in which personal content was discussed. These conversations mostly occurred when the teacher made her round through the class and could be initiated by both the teacher and the student.

One of the students addresses Cora during her round through the class and tells her that something unpleasant has happened at home. The student starts to tell the story and Cora stays at her desk to listen. When the story is finished, Cora says: *“That is bothersome”* with a sad expression and pats the student on the shoulder. Cora waits a couple of seconds and then says: *“Alright, can you go back to work?”* The student nods her head and continues to work on her exercises. (Cora in Observation)

Some teachers share anecdotes about themselves or personal stories with their students.

Wilma asks the students whether they have nicknames for each other. None of the students respond to her question. Wilma says: *“Okay, then let me tell you this”* and she starts to tell a story about a nickname she had in middle school (‘Harry’). She says that she did not like it very much and that her peers sometimes teased her with it. She describes how she dealt with this situation. After she is finished with her story, a lot of hands go up in the air, because students want to share their own stories now as well. (Wilma in Observation)

The individual moments between teachers and students that occurred through their non-verbal communication, like a wink or a thumbs up, could be recognized in the teaching practice as well. However, different forms of non-verbal communication, with different purposes were observed. Therefore, it was decided to classify all forms of non-verbal behaviour under the cluster ‘non-verbal communication / body language’ in the Additional results concerning relationships.

### To conclude

These fragments are all in some way related to equality and/or reciprocity in the relationship between teacher and student. These are fundamental principles of a subject-subject relationship and they can be recognized in different levels of the teaching practice. Teachers

who stated to ‘really look at the students’ and ‘try to put themselves in their position’, showed that they are not just ‘sending’, but that they are also receptive and open for the students as well. This also goes for teachers who stated to be ‘open and approachable to students’. The teacher is receptive of the students and elicits behaviour in them, by inviting students to share personal stories with her. Besides this, the teacher can also show the students that she enjoys contact with them. These principles correspond with a subject-subject relationship, in which teacher and student are both object and subject at the same time in their relationship.

Also, putting trust in students is one of the basic principles within an equal and reciprocal relationship. By putting trust in students, the teacher shows that she is willing to ‘give’ something in the relationship. This also corresponds with the positive basis from which the relationship between teacher and student has to be conducted. The reciprocity that emerges from a positive, trusting basis is also necessary to accomplish positive growth in students. The teacher can let the students know she believes in them through the relationship by putting trust in them. The teacher does not have to say literally: “*I put trust in you*”, but by giving the student slightly more responsibilities or having him do different, higher level tasks, the student will notice and feel this. This is similar to what is happening in EBL therapy, in which the client is not pressured to learn certain skills or to accomplish a number of objectives. It is trusted that through the relationship with the therapist, the client extends his behaviour repertoire.

### ***3.2 Additional categories concerning relationships***

In this section, data are presented concerning perceptions and behaviours that show similarities with multiple concepts from the theoretical framework or that can be interpreted as relational based on the perspective described in the Introduction. In some clusters, there are no fragments of either perceptions or behaviour displayed. This is due to the decisions that were made in the clustering process. Some fragments could be associated with different concepts, but are always described in the cluster the researcher assessed most fitting. When it regards sections of perceptions or behaviours that contain no concrete fragments, it will be explained why there are no fragments displayed or the clusters in which the associated fragments can be found will be referred to.

#### ***3.2.1 The role of the teacher***

In the verbalized perceptions of the teachers, a lot of statements could be recognized that consider the different roles a teacher can have within the teaching practice. This could be the

teacher as a role model, as a mirror for the students, as an observer and it could pertain to the role of the teacher in the group process. In the theoretical framework, the role of the teacher is not explicitly addressed or considered in the definition of a good and healthy relationship. The different fragments regard the manner in which the role of the teacher can influence the relationship between teacher and student and other aspects within the teaching practice. Therefore, the fragments regarding the role of the teacher are clustered and presented in the Additional results concerning relationships.

### Perceptions

The perceptions of the teachers concern what teachers find important and what they state they apply in their teaching. Teachers verbalized that it is important for teachers in general to realize that they are role models and that their behaviour is considered to be model behaviour.

*“I think the model behaviour of the teacher is very important for the children, because they might not have learned certain skills at home. They can learn that there are other ways to interact with each other. For example, when the students come into class in the morning, I wish them all personally a good morning. Some students wish me a good morning as well, but some of them look at the ground. They are not used to being wished a good morning by someone.”* (Wilma in response to Clips)

Wilma also addresses model behaviour in her perceptions of the relationship between an adult and a child in the therapeutic setting.

*When Wilma is asked what she perceives in the second clip, she says “Mainly model behaviour by the therapist and the client imitating this. Also because the therapist sets the example and the client copies the behaviour he sees.”* (Wilma about Clip 2)

Teachers brought up that they are also role models regarding the way in which they respond to the behaviour of the students in the class. Other students might copy this behaviour.

Sandy points to one group in her MCM, consisting of three students, she defined as “a group that has slightly more difficulty making contact with others, who want to make contact with others a lot, but who do not always do this adequately” and says that she manages a slightly different approach for these students. The researcher asks what this different approach looks like in her teaching and Sandy says: *“Some children really stand out because of their behaviour. Not reacting too negatively to this, as a teacher,*

*is quite difficult sometimes. Because you notice that other children will copy your approach. Although they show negative behaviour, you have to be aware of the fact that you do not emphasize this too much, so the other children will not be like “Ooh there is that kid again”. ” (Sandy in MCM)*

The teachers also verbalized that it is important for a teacher to realize that she is part of the group process just as much as the students are.

*Desiree is asked what the advantages are of her teaching approach and in one of her arguments she addresses her own role, the role of the teacher. She elaborates: “I ask the students whether they think that I should do something differently, because that is allowed as well. I am the teacher, but I still try to be a part of the group process. I talk to the students, we do that in circle talks, but not just from my initiative, we do it together.” (Desiree in MCM)*

Teachers also stated that it is an important task of the teacher to induce a group feeling. Students can be addressed differently, but they have to feel like they are one group.

*Wilma is asked whether she has any remarks on the final result of her created MCM, and she says: “I think it is nice when the teacher sees his class as one and not like: he has ADHD, he has this, he has that. In all these different boxes. I am absolutely no proponent of that view. Sure you can take into account what students have, but you always need to see them as one group. I think you have to let them feel that as well. That they are a group, without any outsiders.” (Wilma in MCM)*

Another aspect that was discussed is that the teacher can also function as a mirror for the students. When students are rather dependent on the teacher and quick with asking questions, the teacher can increase their independency by asking them reflective questions.

*“When students come up to me with questions like “I do not get it”, I respond to them by asking whether they read the task correctly or by asking them what the text says. And then they will be like “Ooooh” and they suddenly know what to do. Then I think, what did you come here for in the first place? They approach the teacher extremely quickly and when I would constantly answer their questions, they would become very dependent on me.” (Wilma in response to Clips)*

Teachers also brought up that they sometimes deliberately choose to not interfere in conflicts, to let students solve arguments themselves. This provides them with the opportunity to gain success experiences and teaches them problem solving skills.

*“Sometimes, I just let things occur, just to let them bump into a wall and experience what went wrong and how they could do this differently the next time. I do not immediately intervene as a teacher. Sometimes, I will let them fix it themselves, when there is a fight or something. Just try to solve it! And when that does not work, I can still get involved. Just try it yourself! And they can also gain success experiences from that.”* (Wilma in response to Clips)

The teachers brought up that the teacher can also influence the group process through the construction of groups and by connecting students to each other, based on different characteristics. This can be done with many different underlying ideas and teachers bring up various reasons why it is important that careful thought is put into this process.

The researcher points to one of the groups in Noelle’s MCM and asks what these students have in common. She responds: *“It is not that they have certain things in common, it is more that they compliment each other. I want to rotate as much as possible, so the children have to deal with everyone. When you focus on the childrens’ characters, I think you can best put students who are complimentary towards each other together, instead of students who are alike. This way, they can learn more from each other. (...) Sometimes I put them together based on didactical performance and other times, based on social behaviour. But it is hard, because sometimes you think students fit well together, but it turns out to be a bad match with another child in the group.”* (Noelle in MCM)

The researcher points to the middle group of the MCM and asks Noelle what she can say about this group. Halfway across her explanation, she starts to elaborate more about the thoughts behind the group formation in general: *“The groups are mostly classified on the didactical level, the level they perform at, which is based on test results. But we rarely work in those exact groups, we mostly add one or two from a better group to provoke the others a bit. Because otherwise, nothing is going to come of it and they will all remain at that same level. We also do this regarding behavioural characteristics: an introvert child with a extravert child, one who is good at arranging*

*stuff, one who stands up for himself etcetera. You look at what they can learn from each other, what they can pick up from one another.” (Noelle in MCM)*

The researcher asks Noelle how the reason behind the formation of the different groups can be recognized in her teaching. She starts to elaborate about the ideas behind her way of creating different groups and says: *“It has the effect of one student pulling another student along in certain positive behaviour. And challenge the other cognitively, so that the other student is able to grow as well.” (Noelle in MCM)*

When Noelle is asked what the advantages are of her way of composing different groups for her students, she points to one of the students from the group that is placed at the bottom of her MCM and says: *“When you put him with busy, noisy kids in a group, he will adopt that behaviour. But when you put him with more quiet kinds, he will tone down. Because he will notice that his behaviour is actually not acceptable. In that respect, they do copy each other’s behaviour.” (Noelle in MCM)*

Sandy is asked in what way the fact that she accounts for the socio-emotional aspect in her teaching, can be recognized in her daily practice. She responds: *“I try to stimulate the children to work with each other very often. By constructing different pairs, different groups, by letting them cooperate with different children. This makes them look at certain students in a different way. Because when they have to cooperate with them during reading or math, they actually start to think: “Wow, they are actually nicer than I thought” or “I can actually work with them quite well”.” (Sandy in MCM)*

### Behaviour

The role of the teacher is a topic that can be recognized in the perceptions of teachers. It mainly concerns the mindset of the teachers and certain underlying ideas teachers have with their actions, for example influencing the group process through connecting students to each other. This makes it more difficult to concretely and objectively observe the role of the teacher in the behaviour of teachers, without the researcher interpreting observed behaviour. Behaviour regarding the role of the teacher was not observed in the teachers or at least not noted as such by the researcher at the time of the observation. It could be that behaviours in others categories describe the role of the teacher, but then they were considered to be more suitable in that specific category.

### To conclude

The presented fragments were considered to be relational aspects, because they showed certain features that can also be recognized in a subject-subject relationship. The teachers verbalized the importance of model behaviour and letting the students reflect on themselves. In a subject-subject relationship, the teacher and student are equal, but not of equal skill. The teacher is able to display certain social and communicational skills and has the ability to have students reflect on themselves. Therefore, she is considered to be the more skillful one in the relationship, in which teacher and student are always equal to one another. Also, the teachers display model behaviour through certain social and communicational skills and make these skills available to the students through their relationship. The teacher displays certain behaviour and hopes the student adopts this behaviour through the relationship with her, for example by observing and later copying her behaviour. The teacher does not explicitly teach these social and communicational skills, but hopes that students will pick them up and make it their own. She invites the students to also show this behaviour, without using words and explicitly saying anything about it. Teachers do not have to teach social skills, but they 'have to be social skills'. This is congruent with the way EBL approaches the acquisition of new skills.

Also, the teacher most certainly has objectives with the students, just like the therapist has with the client in the therapeutic setting. In the therapeutic EBL setting, the therapist has the objective of making contact with the client. The therapist wants to mutually create something in contact with the client. However, teachers do not have to deal with just one child, but have an entire class of students. The teacher must realize that she plays a major part in the group process and has a leading role in what is done in the group on a daily basis. Equal to the therapeutic setting, there must be an objective with the group to work on, because otherwise everyone would be just sitting around all day. These objectives do not have to be explained or visible to the outside, but the teacher has to know what she is doing. It is important for her to realize that she has a rather influential role within the class and the group process and that it is her task to ensure that the students have a useful and educative way to get through the day.

### *3.2.2 Stimulating and motivating students*

In the perceptions as well as the behaviour of teachers, a lot of fragments regarding stimulating and motivating the students could be recognized. It is not just the fact that the students are stimulated and motivated, it is more about the manner in which this occurs (the



'how'). In a lot of fragments, this emerges from an initial positive approach. A positive approach is essential in motivating and stimulating students and cannot be disconnected from the principles of relational thinking. However, it cannot be exclusively linked to one of the concepts from the theoretical framework and is therefore presented as a separate cluster in the Additional results concerning relationships. I think that working through the relationship with the students, is only possible when the teacher applies a positive approach towards the students and stays in contact with them. Once this is established, the students can be stimulated and motivated.

### Perceptions

Teachers frequently brought up that they stimulated and motivated their students by managing a positive approach.

*"I think complimenting the students is important. When they did a good job, or when they tried to do so, I will say: "Well done!", or "You tried very hard"."* (Birgit in response to Clips)

*"I think a positive approach is important. Giving the students compliments when they do something correctly. And the occasional pat on the shoulder."* (Cora in response to Clips)

Some teachers stated that they try to stimulate and motivate their students by managing an initial positive approach, in which students are initially always addressed in a positive manner and corrected by positively addressing students around them.

*"Punishment has way less effect than working from something positive within the child and from that point, trying to work on different things as well. When I say to the class: "I already see two hands", I automatically see another ten go up the air. But when I say: "Why are you not raising your hand?" I address the negative side."* (Wilma in response to Clips)

*"I try to always approach the students in a positive manner and give them compliments. Especially emphasizing the positive instead of the negative. This of course also happens, but I try to mainly pick out the positive and reward them regularly with what they do correctly."* (Hildreth in response to Clips)

The teachers address that it is their task to stimulate students to bring out the best in themselves. Teachers have to recognize problems that students might have and support and assist them in addressing these problems.

Megan states that the classification of her MCM, mainly based on the socio-emotional and the didactical aspect, along with the construction and compliance of certain behavioural rules, brings calmness in her class. The researcher asks whether she can give a concrete example of the way this works and Megan says: *“Ryan has repeated third grade. Last year he was very noisy and his grades were failing. Then he came into my class and in the beginning, he kept getting off his seat, constantly gave up on his work and kept saying that he could not do it. Well, I have worked with him for a year and we addressed this problem. Now you can see that he is able to remain seated. He only has to look at me and he knows that he does not have to walk through class. I think it is nice that he learned that here.”* (Megan in MCM)

Most teachers state that motivating and stimulating the students is important, because it lets the students know that they are doing a good job when they are working hard. The teacher can do this verbally, as well as non-verbally.

Wendy is asked in what way the classification of the MCM influences her teaching. At the end of her explanation, she says: *“I try to encourage the students, even when it is just by tapping them on the shoulder.”* (Wendy in MCM)

Desiree is pointing out the different advantages of her approach and in one of her arguments, she points out: *“It is motivating when eventually you get something back. And that could be something very small, like “Wow, you are working very well”.”* (Desiree in MCM)

The aspects Desiree points out show similarities with the perceptions she has of the therapist-client relationship.

When Desiree is asked what she perceives in the second clip, she says: *“More interaction, more eye contact with the client and a lot more immediate response to the movement the child makes. And the positive side, giving compliments, reacting to the movements the child makes and imitating them.”* (Desiree about Clip 2)

But there are more teachers who address the importance of stimulating and motivating the students, non-verbally, as well as verbally.

*“You can stimulate and motivate the children. Especially non-verbally, I do this in class a lot as well. It does not always have to be verbal, so everyone can hear it. But a wink, or a pat on the back, or laying a card on the table to show a student that he is doing a good job. But also verbally. When something is going well, letting the child know you have seen him work hard, by saying “Good job.” (Wilma in response to Clips)*

Wilma verbalizes the same principles regarding the therapeutic setting, when the relationship between therapist and client is addressed.

When Wilma is asked what she noticed in the second clip, she says: *“There were few words in the beginning, but there was eye contact with the client. Also a small pat on the back and giving the client a compliment when he completed the task.” (Wilma about Clip 2)*

When Wilma is asked what she thinks of the interaction between therapist and client in the second clip, she says: *“A very pleasant form of interacting between the two. You can see they have a bond as well. He does something and then the child imitates. And then he compliments the child for this, which makes the child want to go again.” (Wilma about Clip 2)*

### Behaviour

Some teachers tried to stimulate students by complimenting students who did something correctly or positive, to make other students adjust their behaviour.

When Wilma sees that a couple of students do not have their books on the table, she says: *“Wow, I see a couple of students already have their stuff on the table.”* This makes the students who do not have their books out, get their stuff on the table. The students who already have their books out, smile at Wilma. (Wilma in Observation)

When students showed unwanted behaviour, teachers could also address this by asking questions to the students, instead of correcting them. This would give the students an extra moment to think about what they had to do, without them being instantly corrected.

When Sandy asks the students to clean their desks, one student only takes a couple of items off his desk. Sandy looks at him and asks: *“Okay, what did you have to clean again?”* The student pauses for a couple of seconds and then starts to clean the rest of his desk. (Sandy in Observation)

Motivating and stimulating the students could also be recognized in the non-verbal communication of the teachers during the observation. Because the non-verbal communication served different purposes besides stimulating and motivating students, these fragments are clustered under a separate category, namely ‘non-verbal communication / body language’.

### To conclude

The students can be motivated and stimulated through the initial positive approach of the teacher, which is an essential aspect of relational thinking. It cannot be disconnected from the content of these fragments and it cannot be seen separate from relational thinking. I think that it is only possible for a teacher to work in the relationship with the students when a positive approach is applied and the teacher stays in contact with them. By initiating the interaction from a positive perspective and because she is also part of the relationship with her students, the teacher is able to stimulate and motivate her students through this relationship. Therefore, it can even be used to correct students. This is exemplified in Sandy’s fragment. Instead of punishing or correcting the student, she asks him a question and achieves the same objective (the student cleans his desk) by staying in contact with the student, that she would have achieved through correcting him.

### *3.2.3 The wellbeing of the students*

Within relational thinking, the wellbeing of the student is an essential aspect that cannot be ignored and cannot be seen separate from the relationship between teacher and student. When a student does not feel well, this automatically has implications for the relationship between teacher and student. Teachers frequently verbalized the importance of the ‘wellbeing of the students’ in their perceptions. The wellbeing of the students can be related to multiple concepts from the theoretical framework (for example equality, reciprocity, subject-subject relationship), but it cannot be exclusively included in one particular concept. Because the wellbeing of the students is brought up by the teachers rather frequently and therefore

explicitly derives from their verbalized perceptions, the aspect is displayed in a separate cluster in the Additional results concerning relationships.

### Perceptions

Teachers frequently verbalized that the wellbeing of the students is the most important aspect of teaching and that it can be considered the main condition to make learning possible.

Sandy says she chose to ground her MCM on the socio-emotional aspect and elaborates by stating: *“I think it is important that children feel good about themselves, before you even begin teaching them. When a child does not like coming to school and sits here with stomach ache, then I can try to teach him a lot of things. But I think that it is a very good start when you are just feeling good about yourself.”* (Sandy in MCM)

Desiree is asked what the advantages are of the fact that she accounts for the wellbeing of the students in her teaching and she responds: *“The wellbeing, it all starts from there for me. When students feel recognized and have fun, they will come to better learning results. When they feel good about themselves, they are much more open to new things.”* (Desiree in MCM)

When Hildreth is asked in what way the aspects she finds important can be recognized in her teaching, she says: *“I think it is very important that the children feel comfortable in the classroom and I find this more important than the performance. So I prefer that the children like to come to school, that they feel good and comfortable in the classroom, they get along with everybody, that there are no arguments and that there is no bullying. This is more important to me than performing didactically. I would rather see them getting a bad grade, than not being comfortable with themselves.”* (Hildreth in MCM)

Hildreth verbalizes the same perception with regard to the relationship between adult and child in the therapeutic setting.

When Hildreth is asked about the interaction in the second clip, she says: *“It seems like the therapist is helping the client, by touching him, by complimenting him. So the client feels that someone is with him. It feels warm.”* (Hildreth about Clip 2)

Teachers brought up that the approach towards the students has to be calm and that teachers have to be loving and warm towards their students.

*“I try to approach them in a calm manner and I try to always be loving towards the children.”* (Lindsay in response to Clips)

These aspects can also be recognized in the perceptions Lindsay valued as important in the relationship between therapist and client.

When Lindsay is asked what her feelings were regarding the interaction in the first clip, she responded: *“Very friendly and calm. I find this important in the approach towards children.”* (Lindsay about Clip 1)

When Lindsay is asked what she perceives in Clip 2 she says: *“A gentle, sweet approach. The client responds to the therapist very much and I can see trust from the client in the therapist. I thought the therapist was very sweet towards the client, a very positive approach. I felt a lot of love and devotion from the therapist towards the client.”* (Lindsay about Clip 2)

Teachers also verbalized that it is the task of the teacher to give the students the feeling they are wanted and valued.

*“I want to give the students the feeling they are important in this group and for this group.”* (Lindsay in response to Clips)

Some of the teachers stated that the students’ wellbeing benefitted when students have the feeling that they can be themselves at all time and that they do not have to be equally good at everything.

Hildreth states to address the qualities and the strengths of the students in her teaching. When she is asked what the advantages of this approach are, she explains: *“Students can be themselves at all time and do not have to present themselves as someone they are not. They can do their own thing and they can do what they are good at. They have to feel that they do not have to be equally good at everything.”* (Hildreth in MCM)

There are also teachers who state that when students feel comfortable and at ease, they will eventually succeed in making tasks they find difficult.

*“It is very important that, even when the child does not get the exercise done, that he enjoyed it. Because that is what it is all about. And then at a certain moment, the child will succeed.”* (Megan in response to Clips)

*“Sometimes I will make a game of it with the students. They have to prepare a set of words and then read them within a certain timeframe. Then I will ask who dares to do that as well. You will also see students who find it difficult, but want to do it, although they are not going to make it in time. But they do not care. They might read only three words, but they like to participate. You see them enjoying it, because they dared to read in front of the entire class. They want to try, although they are ‘worse readers’ than their peers. But that does not matter, that is not important. As long as they enjoy it.”* (Megan in response to Clips)

These principles could also be recognized in the verbalized perceptions of Megan regarding the relationship between adult and child in the therapeutic setting. She shows to value the wellbeing of the client and rejects the therapists’ cold approach from the first clip.

When Megan was asked what she thought of the interaction in the first clip, she said: *“Little was based on the client and there is no interaction. The client keeps an eye on her, but the therapist talks over his head. She has contact with the person shooting the clip and does not make any contact with the client. I think that is very weird. I think that is very sad for the child as well. There was no rapprochement, nothing loving, it was cold from the therapists’ side.”* (Megan about Clip 1)

There were also teachers who stated that it is also important to invest time in the wellbeing of the students who already feel good about themselves.

When Wilma is asked what aspects she used to construct her MCM, she says: *“The wellbeing is important in every child. Also children with whom it goes well and who have a stable home situation. You talk with them as well, you show interest in them as well.”* (Wilma in MCM)

The teachers stated that students can be complimented as a person, to make them feel good about themselves.

*“It is more difficult to start a conversation with some of the students, or to compliment them. But then I will say, “Ow, your hair looks very nice today!” and then*

*they smile because of that. I always try to find something.*” (Sandy in response to Clips)

### Behaviour

Behaviour that could be linked to the enhancement of the wellbeing of the students could be recognized during the observations. However, the fragments in which these behaviours were reported seem to fit the other clusters better, such as ‘attunement’ and ‘non-verbal communication / body language’. Besides this, the teachers’ behaviour has to be interpreted by the researcher to assess if it concerns behaviour that has the objective of enhancing the students’ wellbeing. This could be at the expense of the objectivity of the data. Therefore, the behaviours are reported as concretely and objectively as possible and classified in the most suitable clusters. The wellbeing of the students can mainly be interpreted as a concept in the perceptions of the teachers they verbalized that they often pay attention to it. It does not necessarily concern concrete behaviour in the teaching practice, which could be linked to the wellbeing of the students

### To conclude

From the content of the fragments, it appears that teachers find it important that there is attention for the wellbeing of the student in many different ways. Being ‘calm’, ‘loving and warm’, ‘giving the students the feeling that they can be themselves at all time’ and ‘making students feel comfortable and at ease’ are all features of the way the teacher approaches the students within the relationship. The teacher also tries to positively influence the wellbeing of the students through their relationship. Verbalizing that the wellbeing is rather important and investing time in the enhancement of the wellbeing of the students is actually working on the relationship between teacher and student through the relationship. When the students feel good and their wellbeing is accounted for, there can be attention for other areas such as learning. All these aspects are rather similar to the principles underlying EBL therapy.

#### *3.2.3 Humor and sarcasm*

Making a joke can be a way for teacher and student of ‘having contact together’ and therefore experiencing the relationship together in a fun manner. It can be a way of establishing contact or a specific manifestation of the relationship between teacher and student through the interactional process. Humor and sarcasm are certain value judgments that can be assigned to the content of interactions between teacher and students. Because it is a manifestation of a



positive interaction between teacher and student and can therefore contribute to a positive relationship between the two, it is presented as a separate cluster of relational aspects in the Additional results concerning relationships.

### Perceptions

Some teachers verbalized that they make jokes with students, find it important to have fun with students and make use of humor in their teaching. However, the ‘humor’ aspect was mostly part of the description of a bigger concept, such as the importance of having individual moments with the students. Therefore, the perceptions of teachers in which the aspect of humor was included are classified under different categories. This mainly regards the cluster ‘equality and reciprocity’, in which it is addressed that a teacher has to show that she enjoys contact with their students and the importance of having individual moments with the students, which can occur for example through making a small joke, is discussed.

### Behaviour

Some of the teachers made use of humor as a way to make contact with their students.

A student says to Megan: *“My uncle came in second with his cross motor”*. Another student says: *“Who? His grandmother?”* Megan responds by saying *“No, I do not think his grandmother still rides the cross motor”* and Megan and the students start laughing. (Megan in Observation)

The teachers could also make use of humor by deliberately exaggerating facial expressions (making an extremely surprised or extremely confused face), their voice or their body language.

Hildreth asks one of her students a relatively easy question (*“What is the name of the new king of the Netherlands?”*). The student answers her question correctly (*“Willem-Alexander”*). Hildreth gives the student an exaggerated thumbs up and both teacher and student have to laugh. (Hildreth in Observation)

The previous fragment shows that the use of humor is related to the non-verbal communication between teacher and student. It could be recognized that it was associated with more forms of non-verbal communication, for example winking. Winking was mostly preceded by a joke, or a sarcastic comment, after which the teacher winked at the student it

was addressed to. The fragments in which this could be recognized are displayed in the cluster ‘non-verbal communication / body language’. It was decided to classify all forms of non-verbal communication in an overarching cluster, because different forms with different purposes could be recognized in the behaviour of the teachers.

Some teachers make use of humor or a sarcastic comment, to correct students and to let them know what is expected of them.

Sandy addresses a student who is not working on his exercises by saying: *“Wow, you are working very hard mister!”* The student looks at her, grabs his pen and starts to make his exercises. Sandy laughs, walks towards the student and slightly grabs his arm. The student looks up and shows a little smile. Sandy then starts her round through the class. (Sandy in Observation)

The previous fragment revealed that the joke was made within the relationship between the teacher and the student. The teacher accompanied the comment with a laugh and a pat on the arm. The student responded by smiling to her and it is not until after this reaction, that the teacher started her round. It is because of the relationship and the context that is created by the teacher, that she can make such comments and the student visibly accepts it and is able to move on.

### To conclude

These fragments reflect the importance of context and display why the relationship between teacher and student is essential in the understanding and interpretation of separate interactions. A joke that is made outside of the relationship between teacher and student, for example at the expense of a student, can be rather harmful. But when there is a good and healthy relationship between teacher and student, even sarcastic comments or little jokes at someone’s expense can be made. It is all about the relationship in which the joke or the comment is made and the situation that is built around it. Slightly grabbing the arm, or winking at the student after the joke may put the remark in a proper perspective. When a decent, stable and positive relationship has been constructed between teacher and student, a lot is possible.

### *3.2.4 Physical contact*

Physical contact, as observed in the behaviour of the teachers, can serve many different purposes and has an important role within the interactional process and the relationship between teacher and student. Physical contact can be associated with the establishment of contact, amongst other aspects within the relationship between teacher and student. Therefore, it is briefly discussed as a separate cluster

#### Perceptions

In the perceptions of teachers, there is attention for psychical contact between teacher and students. Teachers mostly verbalized the purpose of the physical contact: to stimulate students, to compliment students, to establish contact, etcetera. Therefore it is decided to classify these fragments into the most fitting categories, which is mostly associated with the purpose of the physical contact. Fragments regarding the perceptions of teachers on physical contact can therefore mainly be found in the clusters ‘equality and reciprocity’ and ‘stimulating and motivating the students’.

#### Behaviour

There are teachers who make a lot of physical contact with their students, for example by giving them pats on the back or touching their arms when they talk.

The students are working on their exercises and Cora makes a round through the class. Before Cora starts to talk to the students about the exercises, she lays her hands on the shoulders of the student and makes eye contact. (Cora in Observation)

When a student gives the correct answer to the question Noelle asked him, she rubs his hair, while she smiles at him and says: “*Good job*”. (Noelle in Observation)

#### To conclude

The physical contact serves as establishing contact with the students. This way of making contact meets the fundamental needs for healthy attachment. It can establish a sense of security and lets the students know they are seen. However, decontextualized physical contact is not sufficient to establish decent contact between teacher and student. It has to occur within the relationship and it has to be followed by behaviours that sequence the established contact.

### *3.2.5 Non-verbal communication / body language*

Non-verbal communication plays an important role in the interaction process and therefore in the relationship between teacher and student. Relational thinking is completely imbued with the importance of body language and non-verbal communication. It can be found in the concepts of 'healthy attachment' and 'attunement'. Attunement can occur in any behavioural modality, such as vocal, respiratory, facial, gestural, or movement. Because non-verbal communication can occur in different forms and can serve different purposes, it can be classified under different clusters as well. However, notabilities regarding non-verbal communication could frequently be observed in the classroom practice. Therefore, it is decided to cluster these fragments and present them in the same category, as opposed to breaking them down and classifying them in the categories associated with their purpose.

#### Perceptions

Just as in the Physical contact cluster, the teachers did verbalize the role of non-verbal communication in their perceptions. It was mostly used to stimulate students, to let them know they were seen, to correct student or to establish contact. The forms non-verbal communications were classified in the category that covered the purpose teachers verbalized they had. Therefore, perceptions about non-verbal communication can mainly be found in the clusters 'attunement', 'equality and reciprocity' and 'stimulating and motivating the students'.

#### Behaviour

A great deal of the relational aspects is perceived through the non-verbal communication of the teachers, which can be expressed in different forms. One of the ways in which teachers make use of non-verbal communication is by establishing eye contact. This was mostly followed by a verbal instruction or question, or a form of non-verbal communication. This could be to address the students' behaviour, to ask them a question, or to give them the opportunity to answer questions in front of the class.

Hildreth asks the students a question and then looks around the classroom. None of the students raise their hand to provide an answer. Hildreth makes eye contact with one of the students. When the student looks back at Hildreth, Hildreth nods her head. The student says: "*Uuuhh, I think four*". (Hildreth in Observation)

The established eye contact can be followed by facial expressions. Some of the teachers use their facial expressions to display their opinion about the students' behaviour. Some teachers

did not correct students verbally, but made eye contact and showed through their facial expressions that they were not pleased with the behaviour of the student. The facial expressions could also be used to compliment students, for example, by smiling at them.

The students are working on their exercises, but there is one student in the back of the class who is occupied with something else than his work. Lindsay moves her head, so she is in the line of sight of the student. When she established eye contact with him, she makes a surprised facial expression. The student looks at Lindsay's face and immediately starts to work. (Lindsay in Observation)

Another way to follow the eye contact, is through lip syncing words or a question. This could be used to check whether students were doing okay or finished their exercises.

When Wilma is walking through the classroom, she lip synchs words like "Finished?" and "Done?" to students who seem to be done with making their exercises. The student mostly responded by nodding, or by also lip syncing words like "Yes" or "No" back to her. (Wilma in Observation)

Teachers also made use of gestures. This could either be to let students know they were doing a good job, or to correct them when they showed unwanted behaviour.

Lindsay gives the students who are finished with their exercises a thumbs up and she smiles at them. In response, the students smile back at her and wait until the exercises are going to be checked groupwise. (Lindsay in Observation)

When students come running into class, Wilma makes a slow, downward gesture with her hands, signaling the students that they have to slow down. The students see Wilma's gesture and reduce their pace. (Wilma in Observation)

The gestures could also be used to ask the students questions, or to check their progress.

Birgit is looking at a student, who seems to have trouble with making his exercises. Birgit makes eye contact with the student, puts her thumbs up and lip synchs "Okay?" The student nods approvingly to the teacher and continues with making his exercises. (Birgit in Observation)

Another form of non-verbal communication that was noted in teachers, is that they sometimes winked at their students. This was mostly preceded by a joke, or a sarcastic comment, after which they winked at the student it was addressed to. Most students reacted by smiling or laughing at this.

One of the students is not participating in the circle and stands alone on the side. Sandy says to him: *“Just join us Tom, these girls do not bite”*, after which she winks at him. The student smiles to Sandy and walks towards the middle of the circle. (Sandy in Observation)

A student is moving overly busy on his chair. Hildreth walks up to him, stands behind him, lays her hands on his shoulders and says: *“Other than this, is everything okay Mark?”* The student looks up and Hildreth winks at him. (Hildreth in Observation)

### To conclude

These expressions of non-verbal communication can be recognized in different concepts throughout relational thinking. In the presented fragments, the different expressions of non-verbal communication are mostly used to respond to the students or to initiate contact with them. Through a simple gesture, a student can be notified that he is doing a good job, or that he has to pay attention. It can make a student feel comfortable in a simple way or let the student know that he is seen. The non-verbal communication plays a rather essential role in the entire interactional process between people.

The mother makes contact with the child, the therapist with the client and the teacher with the student. Non-verbal communication is used by the teachers to establish contact with the students, for example through eye contact. Moreover, the use of for example facial expressions and gestures have the ability to dynamically alter the behaviour of someone else. But, as is said in the Introduction: *“A facial expression, such as a smile, does not contain discrete information about the smiler. Rather, the meaning of the smile depends upon the relationship between the smiler and the partner”*. This means that all these expressions of non-verbal communication get their meaning in the relationship between teacher and students and that it depends on the specific relationship, in what way they are perceived and interpreted.

EBL-experts would say that the aspect of non-verbal communication is typically connected to Emerging Body Language, because an EBL intervention or therapy is based on movement and movement is by nature a non-verbal way of communicating. They would

argue that it is rather obvious that perceptions and behaviours regarding ‘non-verbal communication / body language’ are presented as relational aspects. However, non-verbal communication was not discussed as a concept in the theoretical framework and therefore not presented in the section of Pre-defined categories, because the emphasis in the theoretical framework was on the definition of a good and healthy relationship from an EBL perspective, rather than on the principles underlying EBL intervention or therapy. Therefore, the results regarding the ‘non-verbal communication / body language’ can be found in the Additional results concerning relationships.

### ***3.3 Non-relational behaviour***

In the preceding sections, relational aspects that could be recognized in the perceptions and behaviour of teachers were presented. But in some teachers, behaviour that can be interpreted as ‘non-relational’ was perceived as well. The presentation of these behaviours contributes to the creation of an image of the way in which relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting. To sketch how this was observed in the teachers’ behaviour, a couple of field notes regarding some teachers will be presented. The first couple of fragments come from the observation that was conducted with Desiree.

Desiree announces that the lesson will be about ‘communication’, but it turns out to be more of a comprehensive reading lesson from the text book. She starts the lesson with the creation of a word web about communication methods, which has no clear link to the rest of the lesson content. Desiree therefore makes a bit of a confused impression throughout the observation and does not seem to oversee the whole class that well. (Desiree in Observation)

When the students finish an exercise and it is being discussed, Desiree is generally positive towards the students’ contribution (“*Wow, that is nice. Why did you do it like this?*”). In some of these situations, she responds in an overly excited manner, which almost seems a bit like overacting. She can then act extremely positive as a response to a ‘normal’ answer to a question, multiple times in a row (“*Awesome job! That is amazing!*”). (Desiree in Observation)

When Desiree walks away from her students, they often roll with their eyes, or laugh behind her back. This substantiates the idea that the students do not seem to take Desiree very seriously most of the time. (Desiree in Observation)

Some students who talk through Desiree's instruction, she ignores, some she corrects groupwise, and others she addresses individually. The manner in which Desiree reacts to the behaviour of the students, is therefore quite inconsistent. (Desiree in Observation)

These observations suggest that Desiree tries really hard to connect with the students, but does not always succeed. It seems like she does not have a good overview of the class, which makes her come across as messy and confused at times. What is notable about these observations, is that they do not match the perceptions that Desiree verbalized during the construction of the Mental Class Map. In the MCM, Desiree states to find the wellbeing of the students rather important, spends a lot of time talking with the children about how they feel and tries to give them the feeling they are seen. She also states that she tries to be a part of the group process and that she wants the students to let her know what she can do differently. Desiree claims to have a good interaction with her students, that she makes jokes and has fun with them. However, from the observation, a different image arises of her actual behaviour in the classroom. This incongruency between the verbalized principles regarding teaching, as discussed in response to the clips and in the MCM, and the actual behaviour of the teacher, as observed during the observation, can be seen in more teachers. Sofia is another teacher whose behaviour differs from her perceptions. Sofia states that she knows how to best reach all of her students and that she does not really have to put effort in making contact with some students, this goes naturally. Sofia also says that she involves students who are focused on her with the rest of the group and to bring students who are focused on themselves in contact with other students. Sofia tries to bring 'the fun' across in her teaching and wants to let students know that she enjoys teaching them. However, from the observation, a different image arises about Sofia's teaching and the way in which she stands in front of the class. A couple of observations that were conducted in Sofia's classroom practice illustrate her actual behaviour in the classroom.

Sofia is talking to one of her students and another student shouts to her from a distance: "*Teacher, I found some seeds*". Sofia directly stops talking to the student she was having a conversation with and responds to the student with the seeds by saying: "*Then walk by everyone in the circle and show them*". (Sofia in Observation)

The lesson is about to start and the students are waiting in the circle. At the last moment, one of the students from outside the circle yells she has to go to the toilet.



The teacher says to the children in the circle: *“I have to help her to go to the toilet, so I will be right back”* and she walks out of the classroom. She is away for about five minutes, while the students remain seated in the circle. (Sofia in Observation)

During her round through the class, the teacher is helping one of her students with an exercise. In the middle of her explanation, she spots another student who is using too much soap while she is washing her hands. Sofia stops the explanation and walks towards the sink. She says: *“Shantana, you are getting too much soap, can’t you see?”* When the teacher is finished at the sink, she goes to a different student who has his hand up in the air with a question. (Sofia in Observation)

When students get up off their seats, Sofia corrects them only half the time and ignores them the rest of the time. She therefore responds to her students in an incongruent way. (Sofia in Observation)

When a student randomly screams through class, Sofia looks the students’ way, rolls with her eyes and looks away. Sofia often makes a bit of an annoyed or irritated impression during the observation, mostly through her non-verbal communication (sighing, irritated facial expression, rolling her eyes). (Sofia in Observation)

These observations substantiate a rather messy and impulsive atmosphere during the observation, in which Sofia was mainly occupied with responding to the students’ behaviour. Sofia reacted verbally or psychically to almost everything the students initiated and the questions the students asked could count on an immediate response. Whenever Sofia was busy with the content, an action from a student which she would respond to, would immediately distract attention from her teaching. It seemed like Sofia is quite impulsive and responds to many things that are going on in the classroom.

### **3.4 Perceptions - behaviour**

In both teachers from the previous section, the perceptions they verbalized in response to the clips and the MCM could not be perceived in their behaviour during the observation. These teachers show a difference between their verbalized perceptions and their actual behaviour. However, there are also teachers whose perceptions are congruent with their observed behaviour. This was, for example, the case in Wilma’s classroom; she attunes the support she offers to the needs of the different groups of students. Wilma supports the weakest didactical

group by helping them to get started and by providing assistance with the construction of answers and she helps the strongest didactical group by reflecting on the learning process together with the students and jointly checking the answers on the assignment. This is in line with what she stated to value as important, namely that students are all in need of the same things, such as ‘didactical support’ and ‘personal assistance from the teacher’ and that the manner in which these aspect are provided has to be attuned to the particular student. Wilma also addresses the students in a rather positive manner and when she tries to correct students, she initially does this by complimenting other students. This is also in line with the perceptions she verbalized in response to the clips and the MCM. Another teacher whose verbalized principles regarding teaching show great similarities with the observed behaviour, is Sandy. For example, she stated that she tries to have individual moments with her students, by making jokes, giving them a pat on the shoulder or talking to them in dialect. All these different aspects were observed multiple times, with multiple students in Sandy’s classroom practice.

Thus, in some of the teachers, there is a clear congruency between their verbalized perceptions and the observed behaviour in the classroom. In other words, what teachers say they do and find important and what they actually do in the classroom practice matches. In other teachers, this congruency cannot be recognized and the teachers’ verbalized perceptions do not match their actual behaviour. It is not always as clearcut as it is described in the previous examples, but when teachers state that they value certain aspects as important in their teaching, and almost the opposite can be observed in the classroom practice, one can speak of a certain degree of incongruency. There is a big grey area as well, because there are also teachers in which some verbalized perceptions can partially be recognized in the classroom behaviour. This makes you wonder in what way both these concepts, the principles teachers verbalize regarding teaching and the actual behaviour they show in the classroom practice, can be linked to each other. Asking teachers what they find important, turns out to be a predictor for their classroom behaviour only in some cases. This contributes to the discussion about the link between perceptions and behaviour. In what way are these concepts linked to each other and what aspects influence this assumed connection? The fact that in some teachers the verbalized perceptions are rather different from the observed behaviour, contributes to the question what the value of researching perceptions actually is. What are you measuring when you study someone’s perceptions? These are questions that derive from the analysis of the data and that might be interesting for further research.

### **3.5 Conclusions**

#### **3.5.1 Perceptions**

Perceptions are considered a collection of different types and levels of the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, cognitions, and perceptions. It may refer to the teachers' opinion on what is good for the students, what they find important or good for a teacher to do and the teachers' perceptions of their own behaviour. The perceptions that are verbalized by the teachers in which relational content can be recognized, mostly pertain to their personal values and the justification of why they do the things they do. Teachers verbalize what they find important aspects in the teaching practice, for example the wellbeing of the students. They also verbalize the way they give meaning to different aspects within the teaching practice, such as the approach towards their students. The perceptions of the teachers also focus on the role they have within the classroom practice, for example the realization that the teacher should display model behaviour.

Moreover, the teachers' perceptions can be rather concrete and concern their own behaviour: why they do what they say they do in their classroom practice. This is often linked to the enhancement of the students' wellbeing, the achievement of growth in their confidence, establishing and maintaining contact as well as different ways to stimulate and motivate the students. These perceptions derive from certain general thoughts that substantiate a teachers' approach, like putting trust in students, managing an initially positive approach, and attuning to the students' needs. Initiating small, personal conversations and stimulating the students through winks, smiles or small gestures are used to positively affect the wellbeing of the students and to enhance the relationship between teacher and student. All these different aspects are key values that are present in the mindset of the teachers at all-time and that form the basis of their behaviour. It substantiates the way in which teachers perceive and interpret their students as a whole and the way they relate to the student within the relationship. Relational content can be recognized in different levels and in different forms of perceptions. The 'relational perceptions' cannot be seen as a separate area in the teacher's mindset, but have to be seen as aspects in the intrinsic basis of teachers, from which the entire interpersonal relationship between teacher and student is interpreted. This means that teachers who relate to relational thinking, have a mindset that is imbued with relational content. The relational perceptions do not pertain to a specific, separate area, but are intertwined in all areas and levels of perceptions within the mindset of the teacher that regard their relationship with the students.

### *3.5.2 Behaviour*

Relational aspects could be perceived in the verbal interaction between teachers and students during the observation. Personal anecdotes from the teacher or small one-on-one conversations between teacher and student can have a certain relational load to them. Also, the teachers can verbally stimulate and motivate students or make jokes with them. The tone of the voice can be attuned to the students and a message can be brought in a humoristic or sarcastic way. However, the majority of the relational aspects can be recognized in the non-verbal communication and the body language of the teacher. The teacher attunes her posture to the student, lays a hand on the student's shoulders, winks at him or grabs his arms after making a joke.

During the observations teachers make use of a lot of different aspects to create individual moments with the students. These moments can occur in different ways: by making jokes, having a personal chat with the students, giving them a pat on the shoulder, etcetera. It is difficult to clinically and objectively describe these individual moments, but they can best be seen as “moments in which teacher and student share something through their relationship, despite of the rest of the class being present, which lets the student know that he or she is noticed”.

The behaviour that is perceived as relational can occur at different levels and in different forms throughout the observation. It can be as much as a pat on the shoulder or a joke the teacher makes with a student. When this occurs within the relationship between teacher and student in which they are equal to each other and the teacher attunes to the student, it can be considered as relational. Therefore, it is not so much about the ‘what’ (what specific behaviour), but mostly about the ‘how’ (how it occurs) of the behaviour. This is rather similar to the description of positive and negative interactions in the Introduction.

This also leads to the conclusion that decontextualized behaviour does not say that much about the relationship between teacher and student. Behaviour has to be seen within the context of the relationship and therefore, it is within the relationship that meaning is given to behaviour. Analyzing a decontextualized behaviour or interaction does not mean anything: it has to be assessed within the relationship. It is the relationship between teacher and student that enables the interpretation of behaviour.

Most aspects that are observed in the teachers' behaviour seem to be subconsciously implemented in their teaching. It seems to be something that the teachers consider normal or obvious in their teaching and it is unclear whether they knowingly use these aspect to reach certain objectives. The teacher pats the student on the shoulder, makes a joke with the student

or tells a personal anecdote. The use of these aspects is not much of a reasoned process that is cognitively substantiated. These are mostly aspects that come from the teachers' intuitive behaviour and are more associated with the teacher as a person, than with the teacher in her role as a teacher.

### *3.5.3 'Relational aspects' in the educational setting*

To summarize, relational aspects in the educational setting are reflected in different levels and in different forms throughout the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, cognitions, and also the behaviour of teachers. Relational aspects can mainly be recognized in small, informal moments, instead of being explicitly managed by teachers within the teaching practice. They cannot be seen as a separate area in the teacher's mindset and behaviour. The interpersonal relationship between teacher and student is conducted and interpreted from an intrinsic basis, which contains a certain degree of relational aspects. Because relational aspects are involved at the intrinsic basis of the mindset, they are subsequently intertwined at more conscious levels and in more practice-related areas of the teachers' perceptions and behaviour. This means they can be found in the perceptions of teachers and perceived in their behaviour at different levels and in different ways. Relational aspects are therefore considered to be aspects at different levels and areas throughout the perceptions and behaviour of teachers that emerge from the inner urge of the teacher to establish and maintain a good and healthy relationship with the student.

There are similarities recognizable between the verbalized perceptions and the actual behaviour of teachers regarding the reflection of relational aspects. For example, making small, personal conversations, physical contact, and stimulating and motivating the students in various ways. This indicates that teachers consciously implement these aspects in their teaching practice. However, most of the relevant and valuable information concerning the relational aspects in the educational setting derives from the observations. This is mainly because the observations are a way to observe how teachers actually act. It exposes behaviours the teachers do not verbalize when they talk about their perceptions concerning the relationship with their students. In some teachers, it even results in an entirely different image and the exposure of rather different behaviour than they verbalized during the interviews.

The way teachers 'use' the relational aspects in their teaching is not much of a reasoned, cognitively substantiated process, but mostly comes from the teachers' intuitive behaviour. Most aspects that are noted in the teachers' behaviour during the observation seemed to be intuitive, natural behaviours that were subconsciously implemented in their

teaching. The use of these aspects comes from within the teacher herself, more than that it comes from the role the teacher has in front of the class. These findings coincide nicely with the perspective of Emerging Body Language on relationships and the way EBL principles substantiate the concept of therapy. The entire EBL perspective on therapy is based on the use of this intuitive, early-established behaviour by the therapist. In the Discussion section, the characteristics of relational aspects and the role of intuitive, natural behaviours in the educational setting will be discussed further.

## 4. Discussion

By answering the research question “*How are ‘relational aspects’ reflected in the educational setting?*” the results of this study will be recapitulated. We have shown that relational aspects are reflected in different areas and levels of the perceptions and behaviour of teachers. Relational perceptions could be recognized in the teachers’ opinion on what is good for students, what they find important to do as teachers and their perceptions of their own behaviour. Relational aspects appear to be implemented in the behaviour of teachers consciously as well as subconsciously. The aspects that were implemented consciously were the aspects the teachers verbalized to use in their teaching and that could be recognized in their actual behaviour as well.

The results have also shown that a rather substantial proportion of the relational aspects in the behaviour of teachers were more intuitive, natural behaviours which teachers did not verbalize in their perceptions and that seemed to be subconsciously implemented in their teaching. The teacher pats the student on the back, gets at the same height as the students when they talk or winks at him. The use of some of these aspects was verbalized by some teachers in their perceptions, but a great deal of the relational aspects that could be recognized in the behaviour of the teachers were not. These intuitive, natural behaviours that seemed to be subconsciously implemented could not be recognized in all teachers. The use of some of these relational aspects in the behaviour of teachers does not seem to be much of a cognitively reasoned process, but relies more on intuitive and sometimes subconscious behaviour.

The results also show that is not so much about the ‘what’, but mostly about the ‘how’ of the teachers’ behaviour. In other words, the emphasis does not really have to be on what specific behaviour is displayed by teachers, but more on how the teacher’s behaviour relates to the students. The meaning of behaviour always emerges in the relationship between teacher and student, which means that analyzing decontextualized behaviour does not provide valuable insights and information. When the behaviour of teachers is addressed, the focus does not have to be on the decontextualized behaviour, but on the relationship between teacher and student in which the particular behaviour occurs. This is rather in line with the theoretical principles that were presented in the Introduction.

We have also shown in the results that some teachers verbalize that they do or value certain aspects in their teaching, while this cannot be recognized in their actual behaviour. There is incongruency between the verbalized perceptions and the actual behaviour of teacher. Some teachers possess the language to adequately talk about their relationship with students

and verbalize what is important within this relationship, but display different behaviour during the observation of their classroom practice. They possess the professional jargon they might have picked up during preservice and inservice teacher education to verbalize what aspects are important in the relationship with students. Because of the incongruency that is found between the verbalized perceptions and the actual behaviour of teachers, the results of this study would have painted a rather different picture of the way relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting when only the perceptions the teachers verbalized were included.

The results have therefore also shown that the observations provided the most valuable information for this study. Teachers can verbalize a lot of things during the interviews based on the clips and the construction of the MCM, but in the end, it is the observations that show how teachers actually act in their classroom practice. Their actual behaviour sometimes differs from the perceptions they verbalize and it also exposes some forms of intuitive, natural behaviours teachers often do not explicitly verbalize, for example, physical contact, adjusting the posture and various forms of non-verbal communication. Talking with teachers about their perceptions on relational thinking creates a certain image of the way teachers value this way of thinking, but it does not necessarily say anything about their actual behaviour in the classroom. It is their behaviour that shows to what extent teachers actually make use of relational aspects in their teaching practice.

These are the main conclusions that derive from the study results. Next, the implications of these conclusions for different areas will be discussed.

#### ***4.1 Being intrinsically relational - A necessity for working in a relational manner?***

This study has shown that a rather substantial proportion of the relational aspects in the behaviour of teachers are more intuitive, natural behaviours, which teachers often do not explicitly verbalize in their perceptions and that seem to be subconsciously implemented in their teaching. Most teacher verbalized relational aspects in their perceptions, but not in all of teachers these aspects could also be recognized in their behaviour. Some teachers display more relational aspects in their behaviour than other teachers and it can therefore be assumed that some teachers 'are' more relational than others. In some teachers, for example, Wilma and Sandy, a large number of relational aspects were found in their perceptions as well as in their behaviour. These teachers can be considered 'intrinsically relational'. It seems like the relational aspects that were recognized in the perceptions and behaviour of these teachers come from an intrinsic basis; who they are in their core-self. Perceptions and behaviour and therefore the teachers themselves have many different layers or levels. It has already been



described that ‘perceptions’ in this study are considered a collection of different types and levels of the teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, cognitions and perceptions. It may pertain to the teachers’ opinion on what is good for the students, what the students need, but it may also concern more concrete perceptions of what teachers state to do in their classroom. Relational aspects play a part at the most intrinsic level of the teachers’ mindset or being. Because all perceptions and behaviour of teachers emerge from this natural basis, relational aspects have to be ingrained in the intrinsic basis to enable the emergence of ‘relational’ perceptions and behaviour. The role of relational aspects can therefore best be perceived as values and principles of relational thinking being deeply rooted in the most basic layer of teacher functioning, from which subsequently all other, more concrete perceptions and behaviour derive. This means that it is not possible to decontextualize behavior, that is, view behavior without taking into account the intrinsic relational basis it emerges from. When a teacher is intrinsically relational, this also affects the way she engages in the interpersonal relationships with her students, because the way the interpersonal relationship is constructed also derives from the teacher’s intrinsic relational basis. It is shown that some teacher ‘are’ relational by nature, which means that working in a relational manner has to do with who the teacher is, her core-self. The teacher has to be intrinsically relational to enable working in a relational manner. However, the presence of this intrinsic relational basis by itself is not considered sufficient for working relationally. The teacher also needs to possess certain skills and competencies to translate this relational basis to actual behaviour.

#### ***4.2 Easier said than done - Differences between teachers***

Clear differences between teachers emerged from the findings. However, the results’ section only concerned relational aspects that are displayed by teachers, which leads to some teachers being discussed more often than others. This is because the study was conducted in a rather open manner and relational aspects were filtered from the entire data set. Therefore, a lot of teachers who did not really bring up ‘relational’ content are not frequently addressed. To get a sense of the actual differences between the teachers, one can read the Vignettes in the Appendix. In the appendix, a summary of each teacher in this study with respect to all three research instruments is displayed.

To show differences between teachers, let us focus here on two different teachers who participated in this study. The results showed that Wilma is rather capable of verbalizing the way she approaches her students. The perceptions she has of her own functioning and the way in which she utilizes different aspects in the approach towards her students, appear realistic

and similar to the behaviour she displays during the observation. Sofia displays that she, to some extent, also has the ability to describe her relationship with the students. These verbalized perceptions create a certain image of her approach towards the students. However, this image is not congruent with the observed behaviour and the way she actually approaches her students. Wilma and Sofia both have the language to talk about their approach towards the class and their relationship with the students. A major difference, however, is that only one of them is able to translate this into the teaching practice, or at least, in only one of them the verbalized perceptions can be recognized in the teaching practice. There are clear differences recognizable between teachers regarding the way in which they give meaning to the relationship with their students. However, these differences can best be perceived in the actual behaviour of the teachers as opposed to their verbalized perceptions. When we stick to Wilma and Sofia, they actually show similarities in their verbalized perceptions, but differ enormously in their actual behaviour. So, what can we learn from these two teachers?

#### ***4.3 Teachers talk the talk, but do not always walk the walk***

Some teachers show congruency between the perceptions they verbalize and their actual behaviour, but in others there is no such congruency. Teachers can verbalize a lot of things during the interviews, but in the end, it is the actual behaviour they show in the classroom that is most important for assessing how they act. The results revealed that certain teachers possess the language to adequately talk about the relationship with students and verbalize what is important within this relationship, but display different behaviour during the observation of their daily practice. They possess the professional jargon they picked up during for example preservice teacher education, to verbalize what aspects are important within the relationship with students. However, the verbalized perceptions could not be recognized in their actual behaviour and therefore there is incongruency between the different concepts within the teachers' functioning. Different explanations can be put forward for this diverging behaviour.

One is, that it is a natural phenomenon: Human-beings are not congruent when it pertains to their perceptions and behaviours. Ajzen (1991) put forward the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to provide an understanding of how people make decisions in any volitional behavioural domain. He states that *behavioural intentions* are formed by an *attitude toward the behaviour*, a *subjective norm* and the *perceived behavioural control* (see Figure 5). The translation of behavioural intentions into actual behaviour is influenced by the *perceived behavioural control* and the *actual behavioural control*. The perceptions of the teachers in this study mostly correspond with the description of *behavioural beliefs* and *behavioural*

*intention* of the TPB. A *behavioural belief* is an individual's belief about consequences of particular behaviour based on the subjective probability that the behaviour will produce a given outcome (Ajzen, 1991). The *behavioural intention* is an indication of an individual's readiness to perform a given behaviour, which is assumed to be an immediate antecedent of behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). As shown in the schematic description of the TPB, the concepts that are regarded perceptions in this study concern different levels of the TPB. It can also be perceived that many different concepts influence the manner in which a certain belief is eventually (not) translated into actual behaviour (e.g., normative beliefs, control beliefs, actual behavioural control). Successful performance of behaviour depends on the degree of control a person has over internal (individual differences, information, skills, abilities, power of will, emotions, compulsions) and external factors (time, opportunity, dependence on others) that may interfere with the execution of an intended action (Ajzen, 1991).

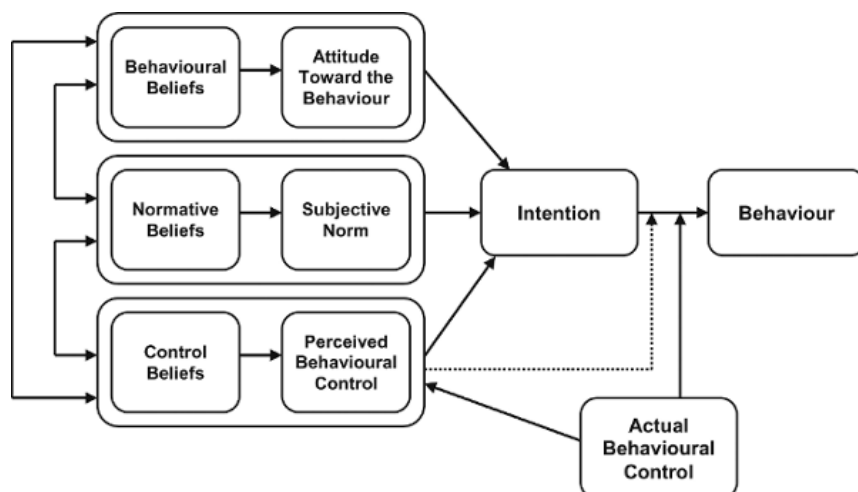


Figure 5. Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

Studies on TPB found that the most important predictors of actual behaviour in teachers are the *behavioural intention* and the *perceived behavioural control* (Jesus & Abreu, 1994). Other studies found that the *attitude toward the behaviour* and the *perceived behavioural control* were the most important predictor of the *behavioural intention* in teachers (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Many different studies regarding different areas show that people often fail to act in accordance with their verbalized intentions. LaPiere (1934) on racial prejudice showed that a Chinese couple was admitted and received at 95% of all hotels, motels, etcetera they attended, yet in a response to a letter of inquiry, 92% of the establishments replied that they would not accept a member of the Chinese race. Fishbein, Ajzen, and Hinkle (1980) showed that in the presidential election of 1976, which pitted Jimmy Carter against Gerald Ford, there

was a difference between whom people said they would vote on and what they actually voted. Therefore, investigators of this domain do not view the construct of intention as a primary determinant of voting behaviour. In the health domain, between 26% and 57% of respondents failed to carry out their intentions to use condoms, to undergo a cancer screening, or to exercise (Sheeran, 2002). A study by Brown, Azjen, and Hrubes (2003) showed that in college students who voted in hypothetical and real payment referenda to contribute a certain payment to a scholarship fund, the proportion of hypothetical yes voters exceeded the proportion of real yes voters by up to 48%. These are all examples of studies in which people show incongruency between their verbalized intentions and their actual behaviour.

As proposed by the TPB, the incongruency may also be due to internal teacher factors, such as a lack of skills, abilities and competences to convert attitudes, beliefs and perceptions into behaviour. The teacher might have the intention to act a certain way and possess the language to verbalize what she wants and what is required in the relationship between teacher and student, but does not have the ability to convert this into actual behaviour. This aspect is a cornerstone of Heider's 'naive analysis of action' (1958) and Jones and Davis (1958) incorporated it into their Theory of Correspondent Inferences. Evidence for this analysis is abundant and it seems self-evident that successful performance of an intended behaviour is contingent on the presence of required skills, abilities and competences (e.g., Weiner, 1974, Azjen, 1991).

The teacher might also think that she actually does behave the way she verbalizes in her perceptions, but at the moment of the observation, estimated that this behaviour was not required or appropriate. The teacher's behaviour thus depends on the context: The behaviour of the students, what she has to respond to, the situation in the classroom, the time of the day, etcetera. The teacher assesses what kind of behaviour is required within the specific context and adapts her behaviour to the context. This can also lead to the teacher assessing that the specific context does not require the behaviour she verbalized. This relates to the internal dialogue of the teacher, in which she weighs different options and determines what behaviour is most appropriate to react to the current situation (e.g., Fenstermacher, 1986). Because this internal dialogue takes place inside the teacher's mind, it cannot be observed by an outsider. Therefore, the options the teacher weighs against each other before she eventually makes a decision, cannot be examined by the researcher. It could be that the teacher deliberately chooses not to use certain behaviour she verbalized to use, due to reasons she included in the assessment of the situation in her internal dialogue.

With regard to the verbalized perceptions, the moment of the interview plays a crucial role as well. This is in line with the importance of external factors, such as time and opportunity, as proposed in the TPB (Azjen, 1991). Whether the teacher has thought about a certain question before or is asked to construct an answer to something she has never considered, affects the response. When the question would have been asked a week later, a different answer might have been provided. Because in the meantime, other relevant situations regarding this aspect could occur or the teacher had time to think about the specific question and let all the information sink in. This might have led to more or different aspects being taken into account and the constructing of a more thought-out answer.

A variety of explanations can be brought up to account for the incongruency between the concepts within the teachers' functioning. This contributes to the discussion about the complexity of the way these concepts relate to each other. The translation of perceptions into behaviour is a complex, indistinct process that cannot be described through a simple linear model. Therefore, the way in which teacher behaviour is approached in some established traditional educational theories and research on teacher professional development is rather incomplete, oversimplified and outdated (e.g., Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko, 2004; Putnam & Borko, 2002). The way relational thinking can add something to the existing educational theories will be discussed in the next section.

#### ***4.4 So now what? – Implications for theory***

It is interesting to review the different theoretical perspectives that are presented in the Introduction and evaluate them in light of the research findings. Is it possible that theories regarding relational thinking can be united with educational science theories and the two can complement each other in the way the relationship between teacher and student is approached within Pedagogical - and Educational science?

In contemporary research on interpersonal teacher behaviour, the perceptions of all students in the class are aggregated to an average perception of the teacher's behaviour. However, the intra-class correlations are rather low, which means that one can wonder what an aggregated average of totally different student perceptions say about a teacher. Within the Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behaviour, only decontextualized teacher behaviour is taken into account. The MITB focuses on the behaviour of the teacher, but not on the response of the students to this behaviour or the way the teacher in turn responds to the students' reaction. This results in a rather simplified, decontextualized and one-sided view on interpersonal teacher behaviour. The research on interpersonal teacher behaviour proposes generalized

statements about ‘the teacher’. The teacher is *directive* or the teacher shows *helpful/friendly* behaviour. However, this teacher does not exist, because she is based on the aggregated perceptions of students of one class.

Relational thinking assumes a different way of looking at teacher behaviour than is managed in the research on interpersonal teacher behaviour. Insights from relational thinking and the results of the study display that meaning arises in the relationship and therefore, teacher behaviour cannot be seen in a decontextualized manner. Relational thinking assesses teacher behaviour within the relationship between teacher and student. Within the MITB, teacher behaviour is seen separate from the relationship and as a decontextualized component, but relational thinking always approaches it as part of the teacher-student relationship.

To classify interpersonal teacher behaviour as different profiles and label them based on decontextualized behaviours is also not in line with the more complex reality that is assumed within relational thinking. The interpersonal profile that is considered a good teacher within the research on interpersonal teacher behaviour (see Figure 2) will not be a good teacher for all students. Relational thinking assumes that every student is different and therefore, every student is in need of an approach that is attuned to him or her. This means that it is not possible to define what a good teacher is in a fixed interpersonal profile, because the behaviour that is required of a good teacher differs depending on the context and the student.

From the perspective of relational thinking, it is not so much about what sort of behaviour the teacher shows, but more about the way this behaviour relates to the student. Teacher’s behaviour has to be attuned to the student and occur within an equal and reciprocal relationship. Therefore, what is considered a good teacher differs from context to context and from student to student. This means that the teacher has to be able to display different kinds of behaviour to always adequately attune to different contexts and students. When relational concepts such as ‘attunement’ and ‘reciprocity’ are included in research on interpersonal teacher behaviour, this would contribute to the change in perception of the teacher-student relationship and the way teacher behaviour is approached. Attunement and reciprocity do explain why teacher behaviour cannot be seen as a fixed concept that has eight different varieties (MITB), but is a changing, adaptive, complex component of the teacher-student relationship that is constantly influenced by various aspects, has to be attuned to different contexts and students and therefore constantly changes.

Also, relational thinking considers the teacher’s relationships with the students in her class as different, individual relationships. Therefore, the aggregation of all these different

relationships in one teacher profile goes against the basic principles of relational thinking and devaluates the teacher's individual relationships with the students. This finding is congruent with basic principles in the work of Molenaar (2004), who points out that psychology theories should focus on explaining the behaviour of individuals and variations in this behaviour, instead of focusing on variations at a population-level and generalizing these for individual cases. He describes the danger of accepting the fallacy that a theory explaining differences between individuals will necessarily explain variations within an individual. Molenaar (2004) states that contemporary psychology is almost exclusively focused on variation between individuals (inter-individual variation [IEV]). Results thus obtained are considered to be generalizable to the understanding and explanation of variation within single participants (intra-individual variation [IAV]). Classical theorems in ergodic theory, a branch of mathematical statistics and probability theory, show that most psychological processes will have to be considered to be non-ergodic. For non-ergodic processes, an analysis of the structure of IEV will yield results that differ from results obtained in an analogous analysis of IAV. Hence, for the class of non-ergodic processes (which include all developmental processes, learning processes, adaptive processes, and many more), explicit analyses of IAV are required to obtain valid results concerning individual development, learning performance, etcetera. The lack of generalizability of IEV can be illustrated in different contexts, such as psychometrics, developmental psychology, and personality theory. Molenaar (2004) argues that psychology as an idiographic science brings the dedicated study of the individual back into scientific psychology, prior to pooling across other individuals. Each person is initially conceived of as a possibly unique system of interacting dynamic processes, the unfolding of which gives rise to an individual life trajectory in a high-dimensional psychological space. Variations occurring within a population cannot be treated as if they applied to individuals and an average score does not apply to any individual within the sample. Molenaar's view is congruent with the criticism on the aggregations of all different student perceptions in one generalized class perception.

The influence relational thinking could have on contemporary educational theories about interpersonal teacher behaviour can be summarized in two main points. From the perspective of relational thinking, research should focus on the interpersonal relationship between teacher and student instead of targeting decontextualized teacher behaviour. Apart from this, student perceptions of the teacher should not be aggregated in a class average, but research should focus on the individual relationship between teacher and student.

The effect of educational science theories on relational thinking can mainly be found in the specific setting that is offered through these theories, namely the educational setting. Relational thinking is a general way of thinking which implies a certain approach to the concept 'relationship' and therefore regards all relationships, such as, between parent and child, therapist and client, teacher and student. By framing the concerned setting, the general principles of relational thinking can be applied and maybe slightly adjusted to the specifics of the educational setting. After all, the relationship between teacher and student can be approached fundamentally in the same manner as the relationship between parent and child, it is neither the same kind of relationship nor are the same aspects and values involved. Therefore, the manner in which relational thinking is realised differs between settings. In the therapeutic setting, methodology based on relational thinking serves a different objective and occurs in a different context than the teacher has to deal with in the educational setting. Educational science theories can help portraying the specifics of the educational setting and determine what aspects set the teacher-student relationship apart from other kinds of relationships, resulting in a more 'context-specific' adaptation of relational thinking.

#### ***4.5 What did this research method bring us? - Reflection***

As was discussed earlier, the results have shown that the observation is the research instrument that has provided the most valuable information for this study. The intuitive, natural behaviour that is rather important within relational thinking can mostly be recognized during the observations of teachers' actual behaviour. Some teachers did verbalize the use of these behaviours in their perceptions, but a great deal of the intuitive behaviours was not addressed. The observations were therefore important in detecting the role of these behaviours in the teacher's classroom practice.

The results have also shown that in some teachers, there is incongruency between the verbalized perceptions and their actual behaviour. Talking with teachers about their perceptions creates a certain image of the way teachers value relational thinking, but it does not necessarily say anything about their actual behaviour in the classroom. The verbalized perceptions of teachers might display a certain level of skill and competence because of the professional jargon the teachers possess, which can create a kind of distorted representation of their teaching practice. It is their behaviour that shows to what extent teachers actually make use of relational aspects in their teaching. In other words, teachers can verbalize a lot of things during the interviews, but in the end, the behaviour they show in the classroom is necessary to assess how they actually act. This means that it is rather important to obtain a more 'full-



fledged picture' of the teacher in which perceptions and behaviour are both taken into account.

The study is conducted by means of three different research instruments that target different concepts within the teachers' functioning. The advantage of this multi-method approach is that perceptions as well as behaviour are involved. On the one hand, addressing both concepts creates a diverse image of the way relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting. On the other hand, this enables research to study the link between perceptions and behaviour. It creates a new level of depth that could not have been accomplished through administering only one research instrument. By targeting multiple concepts in each teacher, a more complete image of the teacher is obtained than when they would have been assessed with only one research instrument or only one concept within their functioning was targeted.

The incongruity that is perceived in some teachers between their perceptions and behaviour, leads to the question what the value of only researching verbalized perceptions would be for scientific research. What if this particular study was conducted solely based on the perceptions of teachers? How realistic would the presented image be, not knowing that in some teachers the behaviour they actually show in the classroom is rather different from the behaviour they verbalized? When perceptions are addressed, it appears that we gather information about what teachers find important in their teaching and how they *think* they act in the classroom, but it does not necessarily say anything about their actual behaviour. To exclusively study teachers' perceptions does not say a lot about the teachers' behaviour and therefore, verbalized perceptions of teachers do not necessarily provide valuable information for scientific educational research.

A disadvantage of the research method is the relatively short amount of time that teachers were observed. Each teacher was observed for one hour and all the results and conclusions regarding the behavioural level were based on this one-hour observation. With regard to their perceptions, teachers had the freedom to elaborate on whatever aspects they wanted. But in the observation, when it concerned for example a 'bad lesson', this 'snapshot moment' defined the teachers' general behaviour in the data. Observing the teachers extensively and repeatedly would contribute to a more valid image of their actual behaviour in the classroom practice. This has to be taken into account with respect to the conclusions and implications of this study.

These different aspects contribute to the discussion on how scientific research into teacher's functioning should be conducted. It is rather difficult to understand the perceptions

and behaviour of teachers through research involving interviews and observations. In this study it is shown that the perceptions and the behaviour of teachers consist of many different layers. Drawing conclusions about why some teachers show certain behaviour they verbalize in their perceptions and others do not, cannot be based solely on two interviews and one observation. In researching and understanding teachers in the teaching practice, it is therefore important to continuously target both concepts, deploy multiple research instruments (interviews and observations) and keep repeating this process to create ‘full-picture’ images of teachers. The congruencies and incongruencies between the teachers’ verbalized perceptions and their behaviour that are found by researchers can be discussed with teachers to gain more insight into their functioning and the link between these concepts. Besides this, teachers display the extent to which they actually work in a relational manner through their behaviour. Further research into the way relational thinking can add value to the educational setting should therefore emphasize observations of the actual behaviour of teachers.

#### ***4.6 Emerging Body Language in the educational setting – Practical implications***

The results of this study have several implications for the implementation of principles of Emerging Body Language and relational thinking in the educational setting. The first one is that the results can influence the education and training of teachers. It is apparent that relational aspects in the behaviour of teachers can mainly be recognized in intuitive, natural behaviours. The use of these behaviours was not always verbalized by teachers in their perceptions and it concerns behaviours they seem to implement to a large extent subconsciously. Therefore, education and training can play a role in making teachers aware of the importance of these behaviours. Teachers might not realize how much influence they have on their students through the relationship and how these intuitive, natural behaviours play an essential role in this process. They are able to control and manipulate these behaviours themselves and use them in their teaching practice. When teachers are more aware of the importance of these intuitive behaviours, they can adjust their own behaviour and positively influence the students through the relationship. Training and education should focus on making teachers aware of the influence they can have on students through their relationship and manners in which they can make use of their own intuitive behaviour. This training should not be about teaching the teachers to ‘play’ these behaviours, but should focus on providing awareness and insight about the influence they have on their own behaviour.

This implication relates to the manner in which the principles behind Emerging Body Language and relational thinking can best be offered to teachers. This has to mainly focus on

the behavioural level of teacher functioning, the ‘doing’ and not so much on their cognitions, the ‘talking or thinking about’. Teachers can be schooled in the theoretical principles underlying relational thinking, but they need concrete tools to convert the values, cognitions, and perceptions they might already have into actual behaviour. Teachers who want to make adequate use of EBL principles have to gain more than just knowledge about relational thinking and therefore solely a ‘theoretical, classical course’ in EBL will not be sufficient. It also concerns awareness of their own behaviour and the acquisition of new skills and competences to convert their knowledge, values, cognitions, and perceptions into actual behaviour.

The results of this study have shown that there is incongruency between the perceptions and behaviour of the teachers. This begs the question of whether teachers have the ability to look at themselves in a realistic manner. The education and training of teachers, as well as their daily practice demands that they are able to reflect on their behaviour. But what if a teacher cannot even look at him or herself in an adequate manner? What is the teacher reflecting on then? And what do these reflections mean when a teacher is not able to realistically look at herself? Maybe the focus in teacher education and training has to initially be on the realistic perception of their own actions, before the ability of self-reflection is regarded. Reflecting on behaviour is more complex than observing: It adds another layer of skills and competency to the process. It is imperative that someone is capable of perceiving her own behaviour in a realistic manner, before demanding the ability to reflect on this. You have to be able to look at your behaviour, before you try to reflect on yourself!

Teacher education is particularly based on reflection and the assumption that teachers are able to perform adequately self-reflection, for example, by making Personal Development Plans (Mittendorff, Jochems, Meijers & den Brok, 2008). Within education and training it is considered that self-reflection enables teachers to learn from their mistakes and to develop themselves. By making Personal Development Plans and constructing conversations about their functioning, teachers internalize the language to adequately describe what behaviour is desired of them (Stein, Smith & Sliver, 1999). They can talk about their behaviour and functioning in a certain manner, but this does not make them able to convert these verbalized perceptions into behaviour. This way, the process of self-reflection becomes more about ‘professional rhetoric’ than that it serves an actual objective, namely enabling teachers to reflect on their own behaviour.

This information naturally has consequences for the way the principles of relational thinking can best be taught and how teachers can be trained in adequately implementing these principles in their teaching. Teachers may have to participate in a practical training for a considerable amount of time, for example, in the form of coaching on the job. This could mean that the teachers try to look at their functioning in the teaching practice along with an EBL-expert to perceive, analyse, and gain insight into their own behaviour and become more aware of the impact their behaviour has on students. This could be done together with an EBL-expert through intensive conversations, evaluating class observations, or video-interaction guidance. The teachers can analyse lessons of their own (“self-viewing”) and receive feedback on their behaviour. This has a more positive effect on their functioning than observing lessons of other teachers (Seidel, 2005). The trainer is also able to guide the teacher’s attention in the analysis process by asking specific questions and targeting certain aspects of the teacher’s functioning (Zhou, 2004). These methods can be used to make teachers more aware of their behaviour, but can also be used to monitor and guide the teacher when she starts practicing with the adjustment of her behaviour in the teaching practice. Moreover, this information also has implication for the way teacher-trainers give meaning to coaching teachers. There are several different ways to coach teachers, for example, provocative coaching, video-interaction guidance, co-teaching, etcetera. It is important for a teacher-trainer to help teachers increasing the congruity between their perceptions and their behaviour. Finally, the principles of relational thinking could also affect the manner in which the teacher-trainers give meaning to the concept of coaching. Relational concepts such as attunement and equality very likely require a different way of shaping the coaching process than is currently practiced.

## *Epilogue*

With this study I presented a rather elaborate description of the way in which relational aspects are reflected in the functioning of teachers and the potential of relational thinking for the educational setting. During the entire research process, I have encountered several issues that I wanted to share with the readers after the content of the research is presented. They are discussed in this epilogue.

Through the entire research process, it is important for the researcher to put oneself up for discussion. Because the researcher who conducts the study is an essential aspect of the process. Prior to the research and to administering the research instruments, I expected more congruency between the verbalized perceptions and the behaviour of teachers. In the beginning of the data-analysis process, I was rather focused on finding congruency between the teachers' perceptions and behaviour, but the conclusion that this congruency differed between teachers was unavoidable. While writing this thesis, the question that came to mind was: Why did I expect a congruency? The fact that I expected this, reveals some kind of perceptual bias towards the way teachers function in the educational setting. What does that say about me as a researcher?

This expectation is most likely the result of the educational curriculum. Within the study of Pedagogical- and Educational science, several different views on human beings and the world are discussed throughout the curriculum. For example, in the course 'Developmental psychology' various psychological theories are presented (Dynamical Systems Theory, Freud, Vygotsky, Chomsky, etcetera) and the different views on the world (atomistic-mechanistic versus holistic-organismic) and human beings (active versus passive) associated with these theories are discussed. However, in this course and in the rest of the curriculum, the focus is mainly on the role of the human being within these theories and the approach towards human beings is to view them as a distinct component that can be analyzed by itself without taking the environment into consideration. The role of interactions and relationships among human beings and with their environment are hardly elaborated on. Assuming that the relationships a person has with its environment and the context in which the person is situated affects the manner in which he or she is perceived by other people is at odds with the presented relatively restricted and narrow view that is omnipresent in the curriculum. Moreover, the focus in the curriculum is mainly on deviant developmental processes and characteristics and treatment of psychopathology, such as characteristics of a child with ADHD or the best way to set up an intervention for an adolescent with autism. There is only limited attention for 'normal' developmental process and the individuality and

uniqueness of people. I believe that this view affects students' perceptions and the way students conduct research.

Another issue in the curriculum related to the above, is that there is a rather large emphasis on quantitative research. Scientific educational research is often based on surveys and questionnaires that are administered to large numbers of teachers at the same time. But what do the answers on these surveys or the results of studies actually say about the individual teacher? These surveys often present statements that have to be valued with a score, for example between one and five. What does a 'four' on a statement say about a teacher's thoughts on that subject? How do teachers interpret the statements? What information can be actually derived from the calculated scores and what do the final results of these studies say about teachers in general?

One may wonder what kind of researchers and practitioners are educated when this form of research is used predominantly in the curriculum and when there is little attention for qualitative research. In the four years that I attended academic courses, I have had two Educational Science master courses and one small section of a Bachelor course that involved data-collection by means of qualitative research. By solely focussing on quantitative research, students grow to accept this as being the established form of approaching scientific research and the only respected way to collect data. Students are shaped in a certain manner and are not accustomed to being critical towards deficits or shortcomings this type of research possibly has. One becomes rather blind for the actual objective of data-collection and the underlying thoughts of performing scientific research: One just 'goes with the flow' and conducts research, because research has to be conducted. Instead of looking for significances in statistical data crunching or thinking of ways a bulk of data might be generalizable to a greater public, it is more important for students to enhance their insight on how data are collected, how results are constructed from this, and what this information actually says about the initial participants. What are the consequences of the use of certain research instruments or certain statistical analysis for the results of the study or conclusions and implications that can be drawn from it. It is more valuable for students to experience different types of research, for instance to see what different methods can add to one another. There needs to be more attention for qualitative research within the curriculum to add meaning, depth, and understanding to research findings, to provide more insight into the manner quantitative research has to be interpreted and to put conclusions and implications of this research into perspective. This demands a reflection of the current curriculum and might affect the future organization of the study.

Something else I experienced first-hand, was that it is essential for a scientific educational researcher to give careful thought to what he actually wants to investigate and what the consequences are for the research method he chooses to apply. This is slightly associated with the issue that is discussed above. The researcher has to be clear on what he wants to study, what research instruments he is going to administer, what these instruments actually measure and to what extent conclusions can be drawn from the study results. The researcher has to realize that the information that is conducted through the administered research instruments is limited to the specific teacher, context, situation, behaviour, statement, etcetera, the instrument focuses on. This is particularly important when perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, and beliefs of teachers are involved in the study. This study has shown that perceptions by itself are not particularly valuable information for scientific research in the educational setting. The incongruency that is recognized in the results can also be found in a plethora of attitude-behaviour studies. To give meaning to perceptions, it is important that they are always connected to behaviour. Therefore, I discourage exclusively researching teachers perceptions without connecting them to behaviour or discussing the perceptions with teachers.

Another remark I wanted to make regards *the dilemma of the scientific researcher*. ‘Doing research’ is creating a reduced representation of the world we experience around us. Simplifying the reality, for example through the construction of a scientific model or theory, does not do justice to the complexity of the real world. The reduction and concentration of the data and trying to present the collected data in a concise manner does not do justice to a reality that is rather versatile and complex. However, if you want to do justice to this reality, it is not possible to perform scientific research ever again. This is a dilemma all scientific researchers probably encounter multiple times during the research process.

Finally, it is important to note that I do not claim, or do I believe that it is possible to sketch an objective representation of the teacher’s functioning in this study. Because of my background, the experiences I have had in the past, my interest in relational thinking, and the EBL internship I participated in, I already have a certain perspective from which I approach the world and from which I have conducted this research. When a different person would have conducted this study, he or she would probably have come up with different results and connect these results to different conclusions and implications. But by trying to explicate my understanding of relational thinking and, as much as possible, describe the perspective through which I perceive the world and through which I have conducted this research, I hope that this study does provide valuable insights into the functioning of teachers and the way relational aspects are reflected in the educational setting.

*“In our culture we have been trained for individual differences to stand out. So you look at each person and the immediate thought is...Brighter, dumber, older, younger, richer, poorer.....And we make all these dimensional distinctions, put them in categories and treat them that way. And we get so that we only see others as separate from ourselves in the ways in which they are separate. And one of the dramatic characteristics of experience is being with another person and suddenly seeing the ways in which they are like you, not different from you. And experiencing the fact that which is essence in you, which is essence in me is, indeed, One. The understanding that there is no other. It is all ONE.”*

- Richard Alpert (1964)



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## Appendix A: Vignettes

Vignette 1 *Desiree*; Grade 3/4; 62 years of age; 32 years of experience

### MCM

Desiree provided a rather comprehensive description of her students, by focusing on every student individually and elaborating about every student's characteristics. Desiree based her MCM on the 'emotional part', the ability to cooperate and if the students can offer each other something in the cognitive area. This resulted in four groups, that are complimentary towards each other and of which Desiree thinks they are balanced. About her MCM, she says: *"I think everyone will feel pretty good this way, is able to work together and has the guts to correct one another or ask each other something."* Desiree states that the classification that is used in the MCM benefits the wellbeing of the students. She says: *"The wellbeing, it all starts from there. So we talk a lot about what the students think of things and how they feel. And every day I try, when the students enter the room in the morning, to talk a bit and to have a chat during the first half an hour. And if this considers if mom is home again, it does not matter. I try to give them all the feeling that they are seen."* Besides that, Desiree states about her role in the class: *"I ask the students if they think that I should do something differently, because that is allowed as well. I am the teacher, but I still try to be a part of the group process. I talk to the students, we do that in circle talks, but not just from my initiative, we do it together. I keep saying 'me', but someone is the discussion leader at some point, right? I let them talk amongst each other about how they feel. And if they do not feel good, how do you cope with that?"* Desiree states that the students are clustered based on different aspects, on different occasions. In the group plans, there is a clustering on cognition, because *"differentiating and working in level groups is the most pleasant for students during some lessons and works best for the instructional moments."* Desiree knows which students are in most need of help, which makes it more practical for her to organize. Desiree makes a motivated impression throughout the MCM and chatters away. She sometimes gave the impression that she verbalized the things she really believes in, instead of the things she actually acts out.

### Interview

Desiree states that, based on her feelings, she would prefer the approach from the second clip. But because you work in a 'learning environment', you also have to apply the formal side some of the time as well. So she prefers an average between the two, because both the approach from clip one, as the approach from clip two are eventually not it. She states: *"I think that the wellbeing is rather important, but at some point, a performance has to be delivered as well. It is what it is."* Further, she states: *"The first clip has too little interaction and in the second clip, it is all great fun and really nice. But the pace is high and ultimately, this way does not give you the results or you do not teach the students enough so they will be able to continue along the road. (...) Because we have to prepare them for a society that is not just nice and sweet. You have to perform, otherwise you have to pay for this at some point."* Desiree describes the actions she sees in the first clip extensively. She thinks that the therapist distracts the client with the television, so he does not see what he eats. Desiree thinks that interaction is present during some moments, but certainly not during the entire clip. She

describes the interaction between the two as “professionally formal”. Desiree thinks that it is the therapists’ job to teach the client how to eat and therefore, she has to keep some sort of distance, because she encounters a lot of different clients in her profession. Otherwise she noticed that the therapist is nice to the client as well and talks in a sweet way. This indicates that there is some kind of emotion involved as well. In the second clip, Desiree perceives a lot more interaction, more eye contact with the client and an immediate response to every move the clients makes. Besides that, it is more positive, there are more compliments and movement of the client is reacted to and imitated. She also perceives ‘mirroring’. It seems like both therapist and client enjoy the contact and the interaction between them is positive and fun to see. From the first clip, Desiree recognizes she can be a bit formal in her own teaching as well. She recognizes that she does take the non-verbal communication of students in account and will always do something with this. From the second clip, she recognizes that she still enjoys the students a lot sometimes. Making jokes, having fun about little things, enthusiastically sharing something. Desiree made an open and honest impression. It seemed like she verbalized what was on her mind and she could therefore elaborate extensively about what she saw in the clips and her opinion on this.

### Observation

Desiree makes a bit of a confused impression throughout the observation and seems not to oversee the whole class that well. She announces that the lesson will be about ‘communication’, but it turns out to be more of a comprehensive reading lesson from the text book. She starts the lesson with the creation of a word web about communication methods, that has no clear link to the rest of the content. Desiree asks the students a lot of questions and she lets them reflect on the answers they give. When a student provides an incorrect answer in front of the class, Desiree says it is wrong and provides the correct answer herself. With regard to textbook exercises, Desiree has a positive approach, in which she respects the students’ answers and lets them know that *“this answer in this exercise is sufficient, if you think it is”*. When the students finish an exercise and it is being discussed, Desiree is generally positive towards the students’ contribution (*“Wow, that is nice. Why did you do it like this?”*). In some of these situations, she responds in an overly excited manner, which almost seems a bit like overacting. She can then act extremely positive as a response to a ‘normal’ answer to a question, multiple times in a row (*“Awesome job! That’s amazing!”*). When the students are working individually, Desiree makes rounds through the class. She kneels down alongside some students, but most she just looks over their shoulders and gives feedback (*“That is a nice story, but a lot of spelling errors. Please reread that.”*) Desiree seems kind of distant from her students and the students in turn, do not seem to take her seriously most of the time. When she walks away, they often roll with their eyes, or laugh behind her back. When a student talks through her instruction, she says in a strict tone: *“Ow Naomi, was I done talking? No, right? Than please pay attention, otherwise you do not know what you have to do in a minute.”* The manner in which she reacts to the behaviour of the students is quite incongruent. Some students who talk through her instruction, she ignores, some she corrects classically and others she addresses individually.



Vignette 2 **Wendy**; Grade 1; 28 years of age; 7 years of experience.

### MCM

Wendy based her MCM on ‘independency’, because she finds this a rather important aspect students should possess in a combination class. The class will become a combination class in the following school year. Wendy created three groups based on the level students are able to work with the ‘traffic light’. This leads to an ‘above average’ group, an ‘average’ group and a ‘below average’ group. The above average group can work for themselves quite well, need little support and are fast in recognizing task structures. When they encounter problems, they consult peers before they go to the teacher. About the ‘below average’ group, Wendy says: *“These are children who, one is rather insecure, one requires a lot of attention, the other has trouble with certain subjects, why they cannot continue by themselves. Or they consciously start reacting to other students and distract them from their work.”* Wendy states that the level groups that are being used in the daily practice do not fully match the ‘independency’ division from the MCM. The most intelligent students are all in the ‘above average’ group. But there are also students in lower level groups, that are good at working independently. About this, Wendy states: *“There are students the basic – and in the remediating group that can work for themselves very good. I try to use these children to help other children from their level group. Or I try to encourage them, if only by tapping them on the shoulder, to remind them of what they have to do next, or to look at the traffic light. That is how I try to involve them in my classes.”* The advantage of this approach is that the students’ strong qualities are taken into account, so they can display that they master something. The disadvantage is that students might start to compare themselves to each other. Wendy also mentions that she makes use of objectives, mostly didactical, but sometimes pedagogical as well. She gives students an objective before the lesson starts and then evaluates this with them afterwards. This can be objectives for students individually, for groups or for the entire class. Students have to reflect with help of a pedagogical card at least once a day. They have to discuss with peers what went well and what could have gone better regarding pre-defined pedagogical objectives. Besides this, Wendy mostly focuses on the didactical part of the classroom practice. The independence is at service of the students’ didactical performance. The role of the teacher, or the relationship between teacher and student is rarely discussed during the construction of the MCM.

### Interview

Wendy prefers a combination of both methods that are shown in the clips. She appreciates the compliments from both clips and notices that children really focus on these and are willing to make an effort for them. In the daily practice, she has different reward systems, through which she tries to give compliments to her students: one of the systems matches the approach from clip one and another system kind of matches the approach from clip two. Wendy indicates the therapist in clip one as being neutral towards the client, based on the quiet tone of her voice. Wendy states that there is not a lot of contact between therapist and client. The therapist just explains what is happening, but does not pass a judgment on this, at least not verbally. Wendy indicates that the first clip affects her emotionally and at some point, it even seems as if it is too much to handle for her. Wendy says about this: *“It is not so much the*

*interaction, but the clip affects me when I see it. With the little boy and everything. I don't know what it is, but when I see that little boy sitting there and everything. Pppff...*" Later she states that it might have been the hormones involved in her pregnancy that almost made her cry. In the second clip, Wendy sees that the therapist is rather physically involved in the contact with the client and that they are trying to perform a skill together, during which the therapist encourages and compliments the client. Wendy notices that there is a lot of mutual contact and there is a nice, calm and good atmosphere. The therapist encourages and stimulates the client by performing the skill first. About the interaction, she says: *"There is a positive interaction between the two. It strikes me as very professional, so actually a professional situation. What I feel personally? Well, they are just nice and busy together."* Wendy recognizes in her own teaching from the first clip that she addresses the behaviour of the children very concretely, or lets the children address it themselves. She notices that she sometimes prematurely has a verdict about children, while afterwards this turn out not to be accurate. Wendy states that she tries to have an objective perception of students and that she has the idea that the therapist did this as well. From the second clip, Wendy recognizes the distinction between a professional attitude and the jovial, friendly attitude that can be adopted from time to time. She tries to vary these different attitudes during her classes.

### Observation

Wendy starts the lesson by complimenting the students that are already sitting in place and ready to go to work. To check if students paid attention during a cooperative workform, Wendy asks them what their partner talked about (*"Shanique, what did Jarno learn yesterday?"*). She directly and verbally addresses students who are not paying attention (*"Hans, I want you to assume the listening position"*). Wendy gives responsibilities to the students, by letting them explain tasks to their peers, or making them time-manager within their group. When students participate in a reading contest in front of the entire class, Wendy asks the other students to provide feedback and give tips and tops to the readers. She asks the students a lot of questions, to see if they understand the content (*"How did this character end up in the maze Hildreth?"*). She also has a rather positive way of addressing the students and compliments them a lot (*"Wow, another good one!"*, *"Very smart of you Arwen!"*). At the instruction table, Wendy helps student to master the content, by asking them questions and by giving them tips. To one of the students, she says: *"Look, this is how you do it now. But you can also do it like this. Try it."* Wendy manages her class in a strict but fair way. When she sees something she does not like, for example students who are talking to each other instead of working on the task, or talking to loud during cooperating, she will confront the students with this immediately (*"Alright you, this is not a normal discussion. I am going to give you a warning if you do not keep it down."*) The students get little space to move outside of what is being asked of them during the lesson. They are addressed very quickly when they start walking through class, or stare in the distance during work time. Wendy approaches the students in a kind and polite way, but she stays strict during the entire lesson and does not really involve humour of some sort. This leads to the impression that she always keeps some sort of distance from the students.

### Vignette 3 *Megan*; Grade 1; 60 years of age; 24 years of experience

#### MCM

Megan provided a rather comprehensive description of her students, by focusing on every student individually and elaborating about the characteristics of every individual student. In the various individual descriptions, the most notable aspect of every student is pointed out. In some students, this is something regarding their behaviour and in others, this is focused on cognition. Examples of descriptions provided by Megan: *"She is rather quiet and a young student. She has a small posture, but she is able to pick herself up very well"*, *"He is a bit of a braggart and he likes attention a lot"*, *"He is rather independent and can work on assignments individually"* and *"Emotionally, she does not really feel good about herself. She is mainly occupied with other kids a lot and snitches a lot."* Megan based her MCM on the way students fit together socially, how far they are socio-emotionally and how far they are didactically. She formed groups based on these aspects, so the students have something to offer each other, can help each other and are able learn from one another. This resulted in four groups, that are complimentary towards each other and of which the teacher states they are the best possible fit, taken the before mentioned aspects into account. An example of how the groups were constructed: *"Dylan is quite an active boy, who needs lots of structure. I mostly put him with a child that is calm. Shantalee for example, they can handle each other quite well. Maria could fit in here as well, because she is not really preoccupied with other kids. And Storm as well, because I cannot easily put her with every child."* Megan states that this division brings calmness, because otherwise students are going to respond to each other a lot. The advantage is that students learn how to deal and cooperate with other students in a good way. The disadvantage is that Megan thinks that she might influence the students too much, because she is the one who determines the composition of the groups. Megan seemed to be determined about the objective of the exercise and immediately started to work on an 'ideal group division'. She analysed afterwards what 'learner characteristics' she used to reach her final result of the MCM.

#### Interview

Megan preferred the approach from the second clip, because "it is about making contact and the child enjoys it". She says: *"Even when the child does not get the exercise done, it is important that he enjoyed it. And that is what it is all about, and then he will also succeed at one point."* Megan describes what she sees in the first clip rather extensively. She notes that the client was quite independent and found it weird that he was not allowed to feed himself. Besides that, she thought it was a rather heavy clip and says: *"There is no interaction. The client watches the therapist, but she only talks over his head. She makes contact with somebody else and not with the client. I think that is very weird. She only says, well 'now he is going to do this' and 'now he is going to do that'. There is absolutely no contact with the client whatsoever."* Megan states that this makes her feel bad for the child, because there is no rapprochement and nothing affectionate about it. She found it "cold" from the therapists side. About the second clip, she says that there is definitely contact with the client, in which he is directly addressed this time. The environment is not important to the therapist, just the client. The therapist makes physical contact, constantly talks to the client and stimulates him. The

client tries to respond to this in his own way. About the interaction, Megan says: *"The interaction is optimal, good. The therapist really makes contact with the client, even though this is very hard. But he does it and the client enjoys it, that really shows."* Seeing this interaction makes Megan feel happy and gives her a sense of satisfaction. She says: *"People who see this, who have a child like this, that gets this kind of help, are very happy I think."* From the first clip, Megan does not recognize anything in her teaching. She says: *"I make contact with the children and allow them to take initiative as well. I talk to the child, and not over his head."* From the second approach, Megan recognizes that she approaches students who have difficulties this way. To eventually take that step and if the student does not dare, to take the step together and to support the student. Megan made an honest impression during the interview and showed in all of her posture that she disliked the approach from the first clip.

### Observation

Megan makes little jokes with some of the students who are already in the class before the lesson starts (Student: *"My uncle came in second with his cross motor"* Other students: *"Who, his grandmother?"* Megan: *"No, I do not think grandmother still rides her cross motor"*). Megan involves the students in decisions regarding the content and gives them responsibilities in the lesson. For example, she starts the morning by asking one of the students what story they should read with the entire class. While reading words, the students come across the word 'shepherd' and Megan says: *"Peter, you can explain this! You just learned what it means, you know this one for sure"*. When a student tells Megan that he thinks it is kind of noisy on his side, she says: *"Yes, well I spotted Jop not paying attention during the reading. You have the right to confront him with this, as a group, you know."* Megan does not sit at her desk, but joins the students at their table during the reading. She gives turns, but also asks the students for help when she thinks she is forgetting something. When Megan sees something she does not like, for example students who are drawing instead of working, or students who are not participating in the lesson, she confronts them immediately (*"You are not paying attention Jop, I am sorry to see that"*). Megan compliments the students a lot, when they give a good answer, or when they read words correctly (*"Good job guys, well read!"*). Megan makes a warm, kind and involved impression during the observation and approaches the students in a respectful and humorous way. When a student pronounces a word in a wrong way, Megan interrupts her and says *"What are 'helen'? That does not sound right now does it?"* Megan smiles and the student gets a chance to correct herself and then continues reading the words. While making her round, Megan notices that a student keeps making the same mistake. She says to her: *"Maria, can you say 'self'? Yes, with an 'f'. You have to make sure you write it down like this as well."* When the students are cleaning up their stuff after the exercises, and Megan sees one student doing a very clumsy job, she says: *"This is only the first time you do this right?"* and she smiles at him.

#### Vignette 4 **Wilma**; Grade 5; 27 years of age; 9 years of experience

##### MCM

After hearing the assignment, Wilma responded by saying she wanted to put all the students on one pile and then tell everything she found important. Because students, in general, are all in need of the same things. Wilma names different aspects she finds important: the right to learn, ownership, problem-solving skills, wellbeing, the socio-emotional part, being challenged and motivated, personal attention and assistance from the teacher and the didactical support. About this last one, Wilma says: *"You work with level groups within the class. You have the below-average group, who need extra attention and instruction. But the students that are working independently, need feedback and the teacher to question them about their work. I do that during my rounds. And the above average group, who you can let go off very easily, need that piece of feedback on their process or product. So that is why I put the group all together."* About her decision to put all students on one pile, she says: *"It is not that one student needs more of this, or more of this. I think that you have to keep a balance in the classroom, not that one child gets more of something. It can be in a different manner than another child, but I think it has be distributed evenly."* Furthermore, she says about it: *"Regarding the attention of the teacher, students are in need of the same things, just in different ways. You divide your attention over all of the students. And the same goes for the wellbeing. Students who are doing great at home, you ask them how their doing as well, you show interest in them as well."* Wilma finds it an advantage that she does not make a distinction between students. She does apply different styles to approach different students, but she does not pay attention to some more than others. She experiences that this leads to students easily approaching her. A disadvantage of her approach is that, when a substitute comes in the class, the students fall back in old, sometimes negative behaviour. Wilma made a rather honest, warm and open impression. She really showed insight when she decided not to base her MCM on one aspect and verbally illustrated why she did not do this and what aspects were important to her. This way, she created a vivid picture of her perceptions of the students and the relationship she has with them.

##### Interview

Wilma found it difficult to decide which approach she preferred and said "this depends on the child". She stated: *"Some children, you can keep showing them what to do, but they have to walk into a wall and then they think: "Okay, I am going to learn from this." From my personal point of view, I would say the second approach, but it relies on the child itself, whatever is necessary."* About the first clip, Wilma notices that the therapist gives compliments when everything goes as planned. But when it goes wrong, she does not say anything and lets it occur. She notices that the client takes a bite, while the television is on and thinks he is distracted by the television. Wilma finds the interaction rather pleasant in the first part and says there actually is no interaction in the second part. Wilma says: *"The first part felt quite warm, like "Wow, you do that so well!". If he understood all that, you do not know. He was preoccupied with the television. But the second part, I felt a very cold connection. You see something happening and there is no response. Well, she is looking and he keeps vomiting."* In the second clip, Wilma perceives 'model behaviour' from the therapist

that is imitated by the client. She notices: *"In the beginning there are few words, but the therapist looks at the child. He pats him on the back and gives him compliments when he succeeds. It is a pleasant form of interaction. You can see some kind of connection."* The verbal and non-verbal communication is warm and Wilma finds the therapist a pleasant and warm man. From the first clip, she recognizes that stimulating and motivating students works far better than punishing them. To exemplify, she says: *"When I say, I only see two fingers, well I automatically get ten up in the air. But when I say, I only see two and emphasize on the negative.. Yes, students are very sensitive for the aspect of reward, I must say."* She also recognizes that sometimes, she just lets things happen and does not interfere. From the second approach, she recognizes the 'model behaviour' of the teacher, regarding interacting with each other. She says that she also finds the non-verbal aspect rather important: *"I do that a lot, it does not have to be so that everybody can hear me, but a wink or a pat on the back, just to let someone know he is doing well. Or I just say 'good job', to show that I have seen it."*

### Observation

Wilma addresses the students in a rather positive manner. She starts the lesson by saying: *"Wow, I can see some of the students already have their stuff on their desk."* This leads to the other children getting their stuff ready as well. When Wilma asks which books the students are reading, she responds to one of them: *"Hey, but that is very good that you are reading that book. You do not like reading that much, do you? That is awesome!"* Wilma is not afraid to correct students, but she does this in a positive and respectful way. She is also not afraid to act when students do not participate correctly. To two students who are late and still have to get ready, she says: *"I am going to wait just a second, two of you are still getting their stuff and I find that a bit annoying."* Wilma asks the students a lot of questions, instead of telling them what to do. Before they start a cooperative workform, she asks: *"How can you show your partner that you are listening?"* After the exercise, they directly evaluate how it went and Wilma compliments the students on their effort. Throughout the lesson, Wilma is rather interested in the opinion and preferences of the students (*"What did you like the most/least?"*). When a class discussion gets off topic, Wilma goes along with it at first. After a couple of minutes she takes control and leads the discussion back to the content. Wilma also shares personal stories with the students. One of the exercises is about nicknames and Wilma asks the class if they want to share nicknames they might have. Because none of the students really respond to this question, the teacher starts to tell a personal story about a nickname she had in middle school. After she is finished, a lot of hands go up in the air, because students want to share their stories as well. Students respond sufficiently when Wilma addresses their behaviour, listen to her very well and want to share personal stories or experiences with her. Wilma seems to have a good overview of the classroom and the students know what is expected of them. When she finished the instruction, students who have to work in the hallway, directly pack their stuff and go to their place, without the teacher verbally notifying them. Students who want extra instruction at the instruction table, do the same thing. The positive, warm contact the teacher has with all of the students is rather striking throughout the entire observation. She makes contact with her students through facial expressions, laying her hands on the students' shoulders or winking and smiling at them. This makes her have 'individual moments' with almost every student during the observation.

Vignette 5 *Noelle*; Kindergarten; 55 years of age; 12 years of experience

MCM

Noelle provided a rather comprehensive description of her students, by focusing on every student individually and elaborating about student's characteristics. One of the descriptions was as following: *"A very active child in the group, is slightly older now. Entered the group last year, is a rather smart kid, knows a lot. Can express himself tremendously well and has an adequate response to everything. Her parents have a grocery store and she is therefore accustomed to communicate with adults. This is noticeable in the way she deals with adults and she is also quite mature for a child who is five years old."* These individual descriptions resulted in a MCM that was not really based on one specific learner characteristic, but was more a classification in three, sort of equal groups in which Noelle combined the students characteristics she assessed complementary towards each other. Some of the aspects Noelle took into account when creating the groups were intelligence, assertiveness, abiding rules, predominance, didactical performance and the ability to organize. About the classification, she says: *"We always try to classify them by the group level they perform at, based on their tests and so on. But we rarely work in those exact groups, we mostly add one or two from a better group to provoke the others a bit. Because otherwise, nothing is going to come of it, if they all remain at that same level. And we also do this regarding behavioural characteristics; an introvert child with an extravert child, one who is good at arranging stuff, one who stands up for himself etcetera."* Noelle takes many different aspects into account, which leads to a more instinctive classification in three groups. She also mentions: *"If I would make a distinction of different groups in class, I would want to rotate as much as possible so the children would have to deal with everyone. But you can also look at the characters and assess which characters are most complementary to each other."* Noelle used a lot of different characteristics in her gradually arising MCM. Noelle continuously indicated that she did not know what she had to do and that she did not have a clear image of the aspects she wanted to take into account. This made her expatiate about individual students and led to her composing an 'ideal and equal distribution' of her students in three groups.

Interview

Noelle prefers the approach from the second clip, because she sees that the therapist *"just goes along with the client"*. In the first clip, there is something wrong with the 'pre-processing', in which the client is supposed to be made enthusiastic. She says: *"And that is also in a group. When you do not enthuse children for something, information is not going to come across."* With regard to the first clip, Noelle wonders if she would have dealt with the situation in the same manner. She elaborates: *"If I had a child with an eating disorder and the child was going to try something new, I think I would let the child explore the food himself first. Just put it in front of him and let him experiment with it for a while. Just put a finger in it, taste it myself. I would not serve it to him and just shove the spoon in his mouth. That is how I would address this situation, but hey, everyone has his own approach."* Noelle does not feel very comfortable with the interaction she perceives in the first clip. She feels like something is being forced upon the child in an unpleasant and rapid way. In the second clip, Noelle notices the enthusiasm of the therapist. She sees that the client is stimulated and gets a

good example from the therapist, who is very positive towards the child and rewards him when he does something correctly. She states about the interaction: *"The interaction is very positive, you just feel a real connection. A rather positive feeling comes from that. I think the therapist has a good relationship with the client. However the contact is built up, maybe mostly visual and maybe also physical. I do not get the idea that he makes a lot of contact through talking."* Noelle feels a rather strong, good connection, in which the client feels safe. From the first clip, Noelle recognizes that as a teacher, sometimes you "just offer things to the students". Therefore, it also happens that you offer content students are not yet ready for, no matter how hard you try to prevent this. It should be an objective to offer content that connects to the level of the students, but in a group this is not always possible. From the second clip, Noelle states that it is important to empathize with children, to connect to the child's level of thinking and to look at the abilities the child has. It is also important to analyse the way the child best picks up information. A child can be very communicative, visual, or learn best through cooperating. You can try to talk to a child to teach him something, but if he is not sensible to this, it does not work. It is not possible to take this into account on every occasion, but you have to try it as much as possible. Noelle seems very emotionally involved in both clips. She based her preference on the feeling the approach gave her and was able to verbalize the thought behind the preference rather well.

### Observation

The observed lesson is a math lesson that was provided to a group of eight children. While Noelle was reading a story to the students, she responds to the students' reactions by repeating them or by nodding. When students complete a task correctly, Noelle smiles at them and compliments them enthusiastically. Through this, she has individual moments with the students in which she reacts in a nice, warm and accessible manner. When students disrupt the lesson by talking through the instruction or standing up in the middle of the story, Noelle corrects them verbally (*"Stop it please!"*), gently pushes the student back to his seat, or gestures with her hand. Noelle involves the students by asking them questions (*"What would you have done in this situation?"*) and making eye contact with the students while reading the story. The students get the chance to make remarks, point something out, or complete an exercise one by one, so everyone in the circle gets a turn equally often. Noelle asks the students a lot of questions throughout the lesson, through which she covers the content (*"Do you find this cube big or small?"*) and in which she checks if students understood it (*"So now which one is biggest/smallest?"*). When students make a mistake on a task, Noelle says: *"Just look at it again, but now together"*. To a student who falls off his chair for the third time, she says: *"You know what the arrangement is Diego. I might have to take your chair."* Noelle makes an experienced impression throughout the observation and constantly keeps an overview of her class. She gives the students a chance to complete an assignment in the group circle on their own, under the coordination of one of the students. Noelle points out who the coordinator is, but she does not get involved with the course of the assignment. When the assignment seems to not be completed correctly, she assists the coordinator, but she does not take over his task.



## Vignette 6 *Lindsay*; Grade 2; 26 years of age; 5 years of experience

### MCM

Lindsay based her MCM on the ‘didactical aspect’ and the ‘behavioural aspect’. This resulted in a MCM that consists of five groups: a ‘busy, behaviourally intensive group that requires a lot of attention from the teacher’, a ‘behaviourally very calm and quiet group, that is easily snowed under and forgotten about’, the ‘didactical upper layer group, with very smart and independent students’, the ‘didactical under layer group, with students who need a lot of guidance and for who it is important that the teacher is nearby’ and a group that is ‘in between all this, with regards to both aspects’. The advantage is that Lindsay has a clear image of how she should approach her students and she has sufficient previous knowledge to address them in the best possible way. A disadvantage could be that Lindsay has a particular image of a student and because of this image, approaches the student in a certain way, while the student might benefit from a different approach. Lindsay makes an open impression and comes to the final result rather quickly. She does not really elaborate much about students individually, but describes them as the groups they are divided in. Except for the students from the ‘busy, behaviourally intensive group’ who she describes individually and extensively. She mentions that she often has problems with these students and that she can react to them in a biased manner because of the behaviour they mostly show.

### Interview

Lindsay preferred the approach from the second clip, because “it is very clear and gentle as well.” She said that the approach from the first clip was not bad, but she prefers the second approach. In the first clip, Lindsay perceives that everything goes “very friendly, calm and gentle” up till the moment the client deliberately starts vomiting. The therapist then turns off the television to let the client know that this is unwanted behaviour. About the interaction, Lindsay says: *“The therapist addresses the client, but the client gives little reaction. So did he understand everything? I thought the therapist stayed rather calm and sweet towards the client, even though something happened that was not supposed to.”* The interaction evoked a “friendly, calm” feeling in Lindsay. In the second clip, Lindsay notices that the client responds to the therapist very much. She perceives trust from the client in the therapist and says she “almost became mollified by the sweet way the therapist acted towards the client.” Lindsay thinks the therapist applies a rather sweet and positive approach towards the client. She stated about this: *“This is all that is necessary, just verbalizing the steps the client has to act out. I think it is very good that there is not much being said and done around it.”* About her feelings on the interaction, she stated: *“I feel a lot of love and dedication from the therapist towards the client.”* From the first clip, Lindsay recognizes the “verbalizing what the students have to do” in her own teaching. She also noticed the “preparing the students for what is coming”, so that they are not surprised by something they have never been confronted with before. Lindsay also recognizes the “peace and patience” from the first approach in her own teaching. From the second clip, she recognizes the gentle approach and the attempt to be loving towards her student. She says: *“To give them the feeling that they are important in this group and for this group.”* Lindsay made a rather gentle and pure impression throughout the

interview. She followed her gut feeling and described the feelings that came to her with the different approaches.

### Observation

Before the lesson starts, students are individually reading their books. When one of the students raises his hand and says he finished the book, Lindsay responds by saying *“Well, then you can start over.”* She later explains that this particular student is rather quick with asking questions. Lindsay tells the students that they have to finish one page of exercises. When students who finished the page raise their hand, she responds by nodding or smiling at them. After five minutes, Lindsay asks the class if they are all finished. She asks the students to applaud for the students who are ready. The students who are not finished yet get positive attention from Lindsay as well (*“You worked hard”*, *“Ow, you came quite far”*). When students talk through the instruction, Lindsay addresses the entire class and says that she does not like the disruption. While the students are working individually, Lindsay makes contact with them by smiling, giving them a thumbs up or saying *“good job”* whenever they finish an exercise. She constantly makes contact with the students through little gestures and verbal comments, which makes her come across as warm and approachable. When a student tries to snitch on another student, Lindsay says: *“I can check that myself as well, you know.”* She does not respond to the accusation and tells both students to go back to work. When students complain that one particular student used a bad word, Lindsay confronts this student and discusses the allegation with him. She says: *“I do not like this”* and after an apology from the student he can go back to work. When students frequently raise their hand to ask a question, Lindsay responds beforehand through her facial expressions, making it clear that the students should try it themselves first. When one of the students says she is ready with the exercises, Lindsay responds by saying that it is impossible to be ready with the exercises on the computer and that she has to continue. To a student who seems to be more occupied with colouring his book than making the exercises, Lindsay says: *“Well, this is not a colouring book, were are you already?”* to confront him with his behaviour. Students seem generally at ease in Lindsay’s presence, approach her whenever this is necessary and respond to her corrections in a sufficient way. When she addresses a student and asks: *“Should we scroll through this together”* the student reacts enthusiastically and says he really wants to cooperate with Lindsay. When a student talks through the class rather loudly, Lindsay tries to make eye contact with him and says: *“Sil, when you talk you have to take off your headphones.”* The student does not hear her and continues to talk. Lindsay has to laugh and makes eye contact again. She says: *“Remove headphones”*, while she clarify her statement with gestures. The student sees her, laughs and takes off the headphones.

Vignette 7 *Cora*; Grade 2/3; 32 years of age; 10 years of experience

MCM

Cora based her MCM on ‘independency’ because she finds this a rather important aspect students should possess, especially in a combination class. Cora divided her MCM in three separate layers. The first layer consists of students that are rather independent and need little teacher guidance. The middle layer consists of two groups of students: students that need little guidance and seldom ask for this and students that ask for little guidance, but do need it. And the third layer consists of children that need intensive teacher guidance. Students can work at three different levels that mostly correspond with the levels of independency indicated in the MCM. The different level groups are established based on the results of Cito-tests and the evaluations of group plans. This takes place three times a year and Cora says about this: *“Cognitive-, independency-, work pace- and socio-emotional aspects are included. I am checking if the students are in the right level groups and if I approach them in the right way”* Cora further elaborates: *“This division can be recognized during lessons. The children of the bottom group are often in the extended instruction, the children of the middle group are in the supervised practice and the top group can start almost immediately after the instruction.”* This means that students who are good at a certain subject need little teacher guidance during these lessons. Cora also states that there is a difference between students who are rather independent and can actually do it on their own and students who are rather independent and cannot do it on their own. She finds it important that ‘asking for help’ is not always teacher driven, but also comes from the students. This is also an important part of ‘independency’: the ability to ask for help. The teacher finds it important that the students are comfortable enough to ask questions when they do not understand the content. She says: *“Of these three students, I know they are not going to ask for help rather quickly. It is important that I take this into account when I do my round through the class, by checking up on them.”* She notices that the students are better able to indicate when they need help than in the beginning of the school year. Almost all of the comments the teacher makes during the construction of the MCM are in some way related to the didactical development and the cognitive level of the students. When Cora talks about her view on the students or specific groups, she describes what she does to achieve better didactical performance. She states that working with different levels has advantages for every of the groups, for example: the ‘smart and independent group’ does not have to wait for the other groups.

Interview

Cora prefers the approach from the second clip, because this is ‘more attuned’ to the client. About the interaction in clip one, she says: *“Well, she (the therapist) just verbalizes what she sees the entire time.”* In clip one, the therapist gives the client a compliment when he puts the spoon in his mouth, but furthermore she just verbalizes everything she sees. When the client starts retrieving the food, the therapist shuts off the television and does not directly speak to the child, but more to the camera. About the feeling this interaction gives Cora, she says: *“It is cold and frigid. The language she uses is not directly focused at the child. The only positive thing was the ‘good job’ at the first bite. That was it actually...”* Cora is more into clip two and notices the enthusiasm in both therapist and client. She says there is rather positive

communication and a positive atmosphere between the two. The interaction gives her a positive feeling and she thinks it is a positive boost for the client. Cora says: *"I think it is very nice how they respond to each other. The therapist encourages the client with his voice and the client responds with sounds and by waving his arms. And also the physical part, the therapist gives him a pat on his shoulder or a stroke over his back when it goes well and this makes the child wanting to try again."* Cora recognizes the positive approach, giving compliments when they succeed and the occasional pat on the back from clip two in her own teaching. About clip one, she states that she gives compliments, but she does not recognize the more 'distanced' part of the clip in her lessons. Cora follows her emotions when judging the interaction and different approaches in both clips. She literally describes what she sees, but bases her judgment on the feeling these observations give her.

### Observation

Cora asks the students a lot of questions to clarify the content from the previous lesson. She lets a lot of students say what they want. When a student talks through her instruction, Cora corrects the student by saying: *"Ow no, that is not Elsa that I hear talking, now is it?"* After a small test concerning tables, Cora notices that the scores on the test are pretty bad and says: *"This is a big difference from yesterday class. This kind of scares me, how is this possible guys? We have until Thursday to get everyone in the green."* Within the instruction to the group, the teacher compliments some of the students when they respond to questions (*"I think it is very impressive that Davy makes jumps of 20 instead of 10. Very good!"*). When students ask questions, they get a sufficient answer and the teacher really puts time into checking if students understand the content. When a student gives an incorrect answer to a question, the teacher really goes into the exercise and tries to figure out what the correct answer is, along with the student. This can take quite some time, while the rest of the class is waiting on the teacher and the student involved. During her round, Cora addresses students on their work and asks them if they understand the content. To one of the students, she says: *"Do you find it hard Ryan? Come sit with me at the instruction table for a while, we can look at it together."* During her round, Cora is also open to personal stories the students want to share with her. One of the students tells her that something unpleasant happened in the home situation. She tells the story and Cora stays at the desk to listen. When the story is finished, she says: *"That is bothersome"* with a sad expression and continues her round. Cora makes a rather strict but accessible impression. She emphasizes that students should focus on their work (*"Check that again"*, *"Come on, you can work a bit faster"*), but she has individual contact through encouragements she makes (*"Alright, you can do this one"*, *"Think about this one for a bit"*) and smiles at the students a lot. During her rounds, Cora divides her attention between the different level groups equally, enabling her to give all of the students feedback and answering their questions.

Vignette 8 **Hildreth**; Grade 6; 29 years of age; 7 years of experience

MCM

Hildreth based her MCM on the ‘social aspect’ combined with the way students function within the group and how they can cooperate with each other. This resulted in a MCM of six groups which Hildreth entitled as following: ‘social students’ who are rather considerate and want to help everyone, ‘performance minded students’ who compete with each other a lot and are rather perfectionistic, ‘loners’ who are rather quiet and sequestered, the ‘jokers’ who are all about a good atmosphere, the ‘model students’ you do not hear and who are more introvert, always listen and do everything the teacher says and the ‘students who are a bit more though’ and the opposite of performance minded. Hildreth made a rather instinctive MCM on how she perceives the students in class. The students are clustered based on the area they stand out in. Hildreth thinks this can also be recognized in her teaching and she says: *“I think it is rather important that children feel comfortable in the classroom. I find this more important than the performance. So I prefer that children love coming to school, that they feel good, they feel comfortable in the classroom, they get along with everybody, that there are no arguments and that there is no bullying. This is more important to me than performing didactically. I would rather see them getting a bad grade, than not being comfortable with themselves.”* Hildreth states that she tries to accomplish this by pairing up stronger and weaker students in didactical - as well as in social situations. She states that she is always looking for the areas in which a student is able to excel. The performance minded students can excel didactically, but the less intelligent students can excel in, for example, cleaning the classroom. Because they enjoy doing it and they are good at it as well. Another example is that some of the students from the ‘loner group’ are rather good with younger children. Hildreth states that she sometimes sends them to the younger children to give these teachers a hand. The students enjoy this a lot and they get great feedback from the teachers. About the advantage for students, she says: *“They can be themselves and they do not have to act like they are something they are not. They can do their own thing. They can do the things they are good at and they feel that they do not have to be equally good at everything.”* A disadvantage could be that the students are not challenged enough. That Hildreth thinks “they cannot do this, so I just let them do their own thing. While the students would want to try it”. Throughout the entire MCM, Hildreth made a rather open and honest impression.

Interview

Hildreth prefers the approach from the second clip, because it is brought in a more positive and spontaneous way than the first clip. She minds the fact that the television is turned on in the first clip, because the therapist cannot really focus on the child this way. Hildreth does not realize that the television is used as a reinforcer. Hildreth notices that the therapist in the first clip repeats a lot of the things she is saying. About the interaction, she says: *“You can notice that the therapist does not get a response from the client, the child actually does not react. He looks, but he does not talk or make sounds or something. He is focused, more on the television than on the therapist.”* Hildreth feels like the interaction only comes from one side; the side of the therapist. Therefore, she does not recognize any aspect from the first clip in her own teaching. She says: *“I always try to involve the children and make sure that we are*

*interacting with each other. So not that it is just me talking.*" About the second clip, Hildreth states that it seems like the client knows the therapist better than in the first clip. She also notices that the client has more fun and likes to practice the skill. The therapist seems motivated to teach and applies a rather positive approach. Hildreth states about the interaction: *"It seems like the therapist is helping the client, by touching him, by complimenting him. So the client feels that someone is with him. It feels warm."* She recognizes this approach in her own teaching as following: *"I always try to approach the students in a positive way and compliment them. I try to emphasize the positive more than the negative. Of course this happens, you have to address them as well, but I try to take out the positive and often reward them when they do something right."* The lack of this positivism and the fact that the television was involved made her dislike the approach from the first clip. She did not really perceive the underlying structures from the approaches in both clips, but she focuses on the manner in which the clips were brought.

### Observation

Hildreth frequently asks the students questions and tries to let them anticipate about upcoming topics and questions. When a student provides a correct description, Hildreth responds positively (*"Good job"*) and when an incorrect description is given, she responds more neutral (*"Okay, but do you know another one?"*) or smiles and says: *"Mmmh not quite"*. When it gets a bit more noisy in the classroom, she addresses the class as a whole (*"Pay attention you guys!"*). Hildreth only gives turns to students who raise their hands. When she notices that the same students are answering questions every time, she says: *"I am seeing the same hands in the air every time."* Hildreth comes across as kind and approachable towards her students. When Hildreth puts the students to work, she jokes around with them a bit and acts like she cannot reach the books, so students come to help her get them of the cupboard. While she makes her round, one of the students says to her: *"Teacher, we might move soon."* Hildreth says: *"But your mom has the business at home right?"* Student: *"Yes, but she wants to go somewhere else"* Hildreth: *"Ow that sounds exiting. Alright, continue your work now"* and she smiles at the student. Hildreth approaches her students with a sense of humour. While the students are working, she goes and stands behind a student who is busily moving on his chair. She lays her hands on his shoulders and says to him: *"Other than this, is everything okay Tom?"* and winks at him. The student smiles back at her and sits still on his chair. When students have questions, she sometimes answers them herself, or she recommends that the students discuss it with peers (*"Pieter, do you want to look at this exercise with Erik for a bit please?"*). Hildreth shares things about herself with the children as well. When the class has a discussion about breakfast, Hildreth asks a Sri Lankan student what they eat for breakfast in her home country, because she is going to Sri Lanka over the summer. Afterwards she says to the class: *"So that is what I'm going to eat over the summer? I will let all of you guys know when I get back"* and she smiles to the students. When the class wanders off about the topic of breakfast, Hildreth says at one time: *"Alright, one more person can tell something about breakfast and then we are going to continue the lesson."* Hildreth guards the topic and makes sure the planned content is discussed during the lesson time. When Hildreth addresses the children's work attitude, they listen to her and adjust accordingly (*"Come on Nouri, start working now!"*, *"When you start writing here, you can fit much more on the page"*).

## Vignette 9 *Birgit*; Grade 6; 26 years of age; 6 years of experience

### MCM

Birgit based her MCM on the 'didactical level groups' in which the students work in class. She mentions that there are many aspects she could have based the MCM on, but this was the first one that came to mind. This results in three groups: the 'above average' students, the 'average' students and the 'below average' students. These groups are based on the general image of the students, plus the image of what level of secondary education the students will go to (HAVO/VWO, VMBO-T or Basis/Kader). Birgit says: *"This distinction is made, so that you do not approach them as one group, but look at their educational objectives and learning goals and respond to this"*. This division 'is' the way Birgit teaches and it determines the entire image of the way she fills in her education. She says: *"You can take this division into account in different ways. You can put them together as groups, or you can chose to connect an 'above average' student tot a 'below average' student"* About that same subject she further elaborates: *"By letting students work together, I get a lot more from it as well. You can provide the instruction yourself and think you clarify something, but the students can teach each other a lot as well."* The advantage is that every student is approached at his own level, so the students that are good at a subject do not get bored and the students who struggle, get the extra help they need. A disadvantage could be that the teacher judges the students in a wrong way, leading to some of the students being in the wrong level group. Birgit does not really address the role of the teacher in the educational processes during the construction of the MCM. She is rather focused on the level groups and how every level group has to get the appropriate and fitting education. The didactical aspect is most important and the role of the teacher is not explicitly described.

### Interview

Birgit prefers the approach from clip two, and she says about this: *"The first clip started rather positive with giving compliments. But it was more like the therapist had a certain objective and had to achieve this objective at all costs. She did not look at the way the client responded. And the second clip, I felt more like there was an objective, but the client determined whether he could handle it or not. So that appealed to me more. You can have an objective, but if it does not work at that moment, it does not work and you should adjust your goal."* Birgit elaborated extensively about what she perceived in the first clip. The interaction in the first clip is characterized as "the therapist who is telling something and the client who does not respond to this". No questions are asked by the therapist. Birgit got the feeling that the therapist treated the client like he was an object. That was the main reason she got mixed feelings from the perceived interaction. The entire situation was rather positive at first, but Birgit did not understand why the therapist started talking at a different level at some point (*"one acceptance"*). She found the fact that the therapist complimented the client when he swallowed the bite rather positive. Birgit got a bit emotional during the viewing of the first clip. She made it clear through her body language that she did not enjoy this approach and that it gave her shivers. In the second clip, Birgit notices the following: *"The therapist is not a therapist but more like, he is just playing with the client. They are going to roll together."* About the interaction she perceived, she says: *"I think they function at the same level."*

*Because the therapist does not use much words, but the child seems to enjoy it. So he has a certain way of communicating, which is nice to see. Something like, come on, we are going to roll, come on. And the client responds to this.*" The interaction from clip two gave Birgit a good feeling. She stated that it was not forced but felt comfortable and nice. She did not feel the distinction between therapist and client, something she explicitly felt during the first clip. From the first approach, Birgit recognizes giving compliments in her own teaching. From the second approach, she recognizes that she addresses students at their own level, by adjusting her language and empathizing with them.

### Observation

Birgit asks the students a lot of questions throughout the lesson (*"Can you give me an example of..?"*, *"What is the past tense of ...?"*). At some moments, it looks like she is testing students in front of the whole class. For example, she says: *"Alright, one, two, three. Dylano, tell me. When is something a past participle?"* When Birgit asks a student a question, she values it when he comes up with his own answer, even when this takes a lot of time or if the answer turns out to be wrong. This sometimes leads to long pauses after the questions she asks, but this gives the students the opportunity to come up with their own answer. Also, Birgit encourages students to ask questions to their peers first, before asking questions to the teacher (*"Go and discuss this topic in the learning environment. When you still cannot find an answers, you can come back and ask again."*). She gives compliments to the entire class as well as to students individually (*"Alright, good job. You all had this one correct as well I believe right?"*). Birgit approaches the students in a positive manner. For example, when she wants the class to be quiet, she compliments the kids that are already quiet, instead of addressing the ones that are still talking (*"Three, two, one, and the last one is zero. Alright Selma, good job"*). When the talking between the students gets too loud, Birgit smiles to the class and says: *"Sssh, not too loud guys."* This makes her come across as kind, but not afraid to act when necessary. When Birgit helps her students, she does the first exercises together with them and then leaves them to continue themselves (*"Alright, now try these ones yourself now."*) When Birgit makes her round, she asks the students a lot of questions to check if they understand the tasks and are able to make the exercises (*"Do you know what you have to do in task four?"*). She addresses the students personally, to check if they continue their work (*"Is everything clear Hoi-Sun? Alright, good job, continue then"*). Birgit brings the feedback she gives the student mostly in a positive way (*"You guys do get it, but you have to apply the rules more consequently. Do you know what I mean?"*). Birgit emphasizes the didactical aspect throughout the entire lesson and continuously tells the students to "keep applying the rules, because that is most important".



## Vignette 10 *Sofia; Kindergarten; 29 years of age; 8 years of experience*

### MCM

Sofia based her MCM on 'the place the students have within the group'. She asked herself questions like 'What position do they have in the group?', 'How do they make contact?' and 'Are they mainly focused on themselves, others, or everybody?' and started to create groups with matching characteristics. This resulted in a MCM that includes a 'social group that gets along with everybody', an 'introvert group that is mostly focused on themselves', an 'extravert group that mostly focuses on others', a 'group that is mostly focused on the teacher', a 'group with abnormal or deviant behaviour' and a 'group of three kids that the teacher cannot classify in one of the other groups'. About the 'social group', Sofia states: *"This is actually a rather large group of students who are rather social, rather helpful and focused on everyone, not just me or only one student. They get along with everybody and no-one has a problem with them."* Sofia thinks it is important to take 'the place within the group' into account and says: *"I think it is rather important to know that the majority of the group is 'good': rather social and helpful. The others have that as well, but in a different way."* She states that she tries to help the students who are focused on her by involving them with the rest of the group and the students who are focused on themselves, she tries to bring in contact with other students. She says this has the advantage of her knowing how to reach all of the students the best way. The social group is easy to reach and this goes naturally, but reaching the other groups requires something extra. However, the disadvantage is that the students outside of the 'social group' are automatically approached in a different manner than the children within this group. Sofia reached the final result of her MCM rather quickly and created a structure around the group that she thought was 'good' and social. This group consisted of about half the students. The rest of the students were classified based on their deficits and oddities.

### Interview

According to Sofia, the main difference between the two clips is the fact that in clip one, client and therapist were both not having fun and in clip two, client and therapist were. She also addresses the extent to which the therapist is interacting with the client and the moment the interaction stops. Sofia notices that the therapist is rather sweet and friendly towards the client at first in clip one, but stops interacting the moment the boy eats the first bite. There is contact from the therapist's side in the first clip, but not from the client's side; he is more focused on the television. She interprets the interaction in the first clip as "a bit fake from the therapist's side" and thinks that she only acts nice so that the client will take a bite. About the second clip, Sofia states that there is "interaction throughout the entire clip" and the therapist does not stop interacting when the client fulfils the task. It looks like they are both having fun doing what they are doing. The interaction in the second clip is 'more pleasant' than the interaction in the first clip. Sofia explains: *"I prefer the approach from Clip two, because in that clip you can see them both having fun. In the first clip, the boy does not look like he is having fun and I get the feeling that the woman was done with the whole thing pretty quickly."* Sofia recognizes aspects from the first clip in her own teaching, namely the fact that she can 'take less' from the kids when she is tired, but that she will always remain friendly

towards them. From the second clip she recognizes that she always wants to transfer everything she does in a fun and exciting manner. She elaborates: *"I try to let the children see that I have fun myself and I also like it when they have fun and I do not do it just for myself."* Based on these statements, Sofia shows that she values the 'amount of fun', the excitement she perceives from the therapist's point of view. Sofia mostly stated aspects that were in sight and obvious, without going deeper into the interaction in the clips. Sofia emphasized in her verbalizations on the level of enthusiasm of the therapists.

### Observation

The observation consists of a math lesson that was provided two times; every time to half the class. Sofia collectively starts the afternoon in a big circle with all the students. During the big circle, she responds to almost anything the students initiate. For example, when Sofia is talking to one of her students and another student shouts *"Teacher, I found some seeds"*, she directly responds by saying that the student can walk by everyone in the circle and show them. This creates a rather messy, impulsive atmosphere in which every event gets a response from Sofia. When Sofia forms the smaller circle that she wants to start the lesson with, she says to one of the students: *"Sean, come sit next to me. Because it is much easier for you to pay attention that way."* Also, before she starts the actual lesson, while the students are ready and waiting for her, Sofia first accompanies one of the students that has to go to the bathroom and says to the rest of the class: *"Just wait a minute guys"*. When she is helping a student with a math exercise and she sees that another student has trouble washing her hands, she stops attending the student with the math problem and directly goes to help the student who is washing her hands. When students get up off their seats, Sofia responds in an incongruent way by correcting them only half the time and ignoring them the rest of the time. When it gets too loud in the classroom, Sofia addresses the class by saying: *"I think we should review the rules once more. What does this say here?"* A student responds by saying: *"Listening"* and Sofia says: *"Correct! We have to listen to each other"*. When Sofia gives a compliment, she addresses the entire class (*"You did well guys!"*), but when she corrects someone, she often addresses students individually (*"Arren, do not reveal the answer. Demy can do just fine on her own!"*). When the teacher asks a question to the students and does not get any response (*"Where do you think the seeds will go?"*) she rephrases the question (*"When I throw these seeds in the wind, what direction will they go?"*) so the students are able to provide an answer. A student who is working individually on a drawing, keeps on talking to his peers. Sofia punishes him by placing him next to her in the circle (*"Please, come join us in the circle, right next to me"*).

Vignette 11 **Sandy**; Grade 2; 30 years of age; 7 years of experience

MCM

Sandy based her MCM on the ‘socio-emotional aspect’ which resulted in a division in three groups: a ‘rather social group, of students who are cheerful and who feel good about themselves’, a ‘more withdrawn group, who are harder to read regarding their thoughts and feelings, but of whom parents say they feel good about themselves’ and a ‘group that has slightly more difficulty making contact with others, who wants to make contact with others a lot, but who are not always as convenient’. About her choice for this classification, Mau elaborates: *“It is important that students feel good about themselves, before you even start teaching. If a student does not want to come to school and has stomach aches, I can teach him anything I want. But I think it is a good start, if you just feel good about yourself.”* Sandy tries to stimulate students to cooperate in different pairs and different groups to achieve that students work together with as many different students as possible. She says: *“This can make students change the way they look at each other and the way they perceive their learning. Through working together, students can realize that others are nicer than they had expected, or they can cooperate better than they thought.”* The advantage of this way of looking at students, is that their differences can be taken into account and the focus does not have to be on the negative side. Sandy also knows which students she has to keep an eye on, because they are more vulnerable than others. Besides that, she finds an open communication with parents rather important regarding the wellbeing of her students. The disadvantage of this way of looking is that you might start to compartmentalize the students a bit too much. Sandy made a rather honest impression throughout the MCM and elaborated extensively about her instinctively constructed division.

Interview

Sandy prefers the approach from the second clip, because “this approach is closer to the child, instead of reaching an objective.” She states: *“I think you have to look at the child first and if you accomplish the objective, even if it is for 50%, the child must come first and not the objective.”* In clip one, the therapist verbalizes the clients’ actions in his presence and Sandy doubts that this is a sensible thing to do. She suspects that the client is more aware than the therapist may think. Sandy notices that at one point, the client gets tensions in his face and grabs on to himself. She also mentions that she does not understand the part with the television. About the interaction, she says: *“The first time she rewards him. But the words she uses are more from ‘this is how I am supposed to do it’, than from her emotion. I do not know exactly what she said, but it was not at the level of the child. And then she says something like “good job” and I do not know which word she puts after it. But when I do not even know what she means, then how should the child respond to that.”* About her feelings regarding the interaction, Sandy says: *“I am glad that I do not have a child who has to sit there with such a therapist. Because you entrust your child to her and she has to make sure that the child starts eating again. And she is sitting there, almost clinically, like I am going to stuff this in his mouth and say “good job”. And what struck me the most, is that she said: “I am going to turn it off and he is going to vomit now.” But what do you know about what the child is aware of? And because you say it, he might do it. So it does not give me a good feeling.”* In the second

clip, Sandy perceives that the therapist does not only compliment in words, but also takes the time to look at the child and to interact with him. Sandy notices that there is psychical contact as well, something she finds rather important. She notices that the client has a totally different posture from which she interprets he is having fun, although he finds the exercise difficult. About the interaction, she says: *“The therapist seems to have more eye for the child, instead of what he wants to teach. The child comes in first place and not the thing he wants to teach. In the first clip, it is about the child having to eat and not about the impact this has on the child.”* Sandy experienced the second approach as more pleasant and “also as a parent, you can leave your child with a good feeling to this therapist. Because that is not always easy.” From the first clip, Sandy recognizes the fact that sometimes, she also ‘just’ gives a compliment, without really going further into it. Also, when something does not go well the first time, maybe subconsciously, doing it exactly the same the second time. From the second approach, she recognizes the occasional individual conversations with students, one-on-one time, having a quick laugh, a chat about sport or speaking in dialect. Off the record, Sandy stated that she found it difficult to react to the first clip, because she never worked in a similar situation before. She verbalized the feeling it gave her as a mother as well. The clip gave her a knot in her stomach and shivers down her spine. She mentions to find it difficult to see someone teaching front of the class, who she thinks is unfit as a teacher.

### Observation

Sandy starts the lesson in a rather free and open manner, by organizing a cooperative work form, in which she has a guiding role. She makes contact with her students throughout the entire observation by winking at them, touching them on their shoulders, or making explicit eye contact with them. To a student who is standing on the side all alone, Sandy says: *“Just join us Tom, these girls do not bite”* while she winks at him. Sandy addresses the students with a sense of humour and she can be a bit sarcastic sometimes as well (saying *“No that is very smart of you”* when something is clearly not). The students seem to understand her message, because they listen to her however she brings it. When Sandy asks the students to clean their desks and when some students do not do this correctly, she looks at them intensively and asks: *“Okay, what did you have to clean again?”* When Sandy asks to the class if someone can finish the table exercise, one of the students responds by saying *“Three times eleven, four times eleven, five times eleven”* Sandy starts laughing and says: *“Oooh no, the outcomes please”*. A couple of peers laugh at well, but Sandy winks at the student and he takes it well. While Sandy is explaining an exercise, two students are acting a bit funny. She addresses them by saying: *“Daan and Jort, you do not have to dance now, alright?”* and the students stop. When some students remain busy later on, Sandy is not afraid to act and removes them from the circle (*“You two, please sit down, because you do not fully understand it I believe”*). Sandy addresses students when she experiences behaviour she does not like. For example, when Sandy asks a student a question and another student answers, she says: *“Okay, it is a bit weird that you are the one responding..”* Sandy comes across as approachable and addresses the students mostly in an informal manner (*“Mister van Kepburgen, please tell me how I can be of assistance?”*) When the students are working individually, Sandy makes a round through the class. Either she responds to questions from the students or she arranges students to help their peers (*“Mitch, can you explain exercise fourteen to Eric?”*).