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**SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AND IMAGINATION
IN NEW ZEALAND STUDENTS**

Kevin Vijay Christopher Kannan

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education,
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Abstract

Teachers in New Zealand schools are called on by documents such as *The Zealand Curriculum Framework* (2007) and *Gifted and Talented Education in New Zealand Schools* (2004) to address the moral and spiritual development of both gifted and mainstream students. This study explores a key issue: the role and importance of imagination in the developmental stages of spiritual intelligence in students within each of these groups. By comparing students in a Catholic integrated school with those in a State intermediate school, it identifies both similarities and differences that teachers need to take into account in carrying out their professional responsibilities.

The study begins by analysing and explaining concepts of spiritual intelligence that are often a source of ambiguity and confusion for teachers. It draws on a well-established hierarchical stage developmental theory of spiritual intelligence, but supplements this with a corresponding account of the role of imagination in the formation of spiritual intelligence at each of these stages. Spiritual intelligence is based on a theistic definition and its development on the imagination side of cognition rather than emotions. This results in the development of a nine stage taxonomy which is tested by analysis of variance (ANOVA). The research design examines seven important social factors, or variables, affecting the development of spiritual intelligence: school age group (intermediate, middle and senior), gender (male and female), school sample type (gifted and talented and average mainstream), areas of giftedness and talent (bodily-kinaesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, interpersonal and environmental), type of school (state and integrated), ethnicity (New Zealand European and others) and religion (Catholic, non-Catholic Christians, other religions and no religion). Using Fisher's Exact Test of variance, current trends in the spiritual intelligence characteristics of students are identified. The study provides teachers with four statistically verified tasks, their respective criterion referenced task assessment schedules (CRS) and exemplars for assessing stages of development of spiritual intelligence in students.

The findings of this research project will help teachers of Values Education and Religious Education, Directors of Religious Studies (DRS) and Boards of Trustees in Catholic integrated schools to understand the theoretical and pedagogical principles of spiritual development, enabling them to design research-based programmes for advancing spiritual intelligence in their students.

Key words: gifted and talented children, imagination, religious education, spiritual intelligence, stages of development, values education, health education.

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