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## Relationships Always Matter: Findings from a Phenomenological Research Inquiry

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## Relationships Always Matter: Findings from a Phenomenological Research Inquiry.

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*Abstract: This paper reports on findings from a hermeneutic phenomenological research inquiry which explored the nature of relational experiences in teacher education. Stories of the lived experience of relationships in an educational context were hermeneutically interpreted against the philosophical writings of Heidegger, Gadamer, Levinas, and Buber. The research found that relationships are essential to the experience of education whether they are recognised or not. While the relationship matters to the experience, the relationship lies out of sight and is largely taken for granted. On other occasions, the assumption that relationships matter is called into question. In these times, the relationship is a worry to the student and stressful for the teacher. In these moments, concern over the relationship foregrounds the teaching-learning experience for those involved. It is critically important that teacher educators, and teachers alike, become more attentive to how their relationship is with their students individually and collectively. Teacher educators, and teachers alike, need an attunement to notice how relationships are mattering in their immediate context.*

### Introduction

Recent educational perspectives affirm the relational nature of education. For example, the ecological systems approach describes the relational nature of education as a multi-layered system of influence that moves from those closest to the students and their family, through cultural and community spheres to, ultimately, the influence of socio-political concerns (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998). Educational experiences are seen as contextual, relational and holistic (Buber 2002; Riley-Taylor 2002). The interactions between a teacher and students are seen to have a subjective and relational quality. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, for instance, argues that the teacher's role in a socially mediated learning process is to scaffold the student's learning (Vygotsky 1978). Bridging the perceived gap between a student's present understanding and where potential understandings might exist, the teacher proactively scaffolds intentional experiences for the student towards such an end (Vygotsky 1978). In this process, the student is an active meaning-maker beside the teacher within a facilitated learning environment (von Glasersfeld 1996). Rather than being a passive recipient of information, the student is fully engaged relationally *with* the teacher towards new learning possibilities (Palmer 2000). In this way, the curriculum is a lived experience *between*, and *shared by*, a teacher and a student (Riley-Taylor 2002).

While educational perspectives affirm the relational nature of education, the experience of education appears to have been changed by the emergence of the neo-liberal ideology. The relational context of many educational experiences has been radically altered towards greater contestability and a return to evidential models of teaching and learning akin

to the behaviourist orientation of earlier times (Tompkins 2005). Moreover transactional and instrumental models of education underpin how the educational experience is viewed as a business transaction *from* an educational supplier (teacher) *to* a client (student) (Tompkins 2005). An important implication for the process of teaching and learning is the emphasis on the individual student, at a time when sociocultural developments had been moving educational thought towards the importance of the social, relational and dialectical nature of the educational community (von Glasersfeld 1996).

The challenge for teacher education programmes within the present context does not only relate to the delivery of pre-service, academic and professional programmes in the tertiary context, but also the need to grapple with the ideological implications for the preparation of beginning teachers (Ginsburg & Clift 1990; Macintyre Latta & Hostetler 2003). There is increasing pressure for preservice teacher education programmes to return to a traditional transactional model of learning (Carr & Hartnett 1996).

In the light of this complex educational context in New Zealand, this phenomenological research explored the nature of relational experiences between lecturers and student teachers in the context of teacher education.

## Theoretical Framework

Heidegger (1996) refers to the primordial existence of “being-with-others” as *Mitda-sein* (p. 107). *Mitda-sein* refers to an almost subliminal connection between people. The ontological nature of being-in-the-world is as “being-together-in-the-world”; alternatively, “the world is always already the one I share with others” (Heidegger 1996, p. 118). As such, existence is a co-existence (Nancy 2000). While human beings have some influence as to the “nature” of the relating, we is integral to being human. The relational nature of being-with-others is experienced as mattering to those involved. Mattering is essential to how we are being-with-others relationally (Elliot Kao & Grant 2004; Rayle 2006). The nature of the mattering differs in every situation.

Teachers and students are always in relationship. How this relationship matters to the teacher and student inheres in the experiences of being-in relationship. As such, all teaching is inextricably emotional and shows the nature of the mattering (Hargreaves 2001). In some moments, the relationship between the teacher and student is recognised as mattering, while in other moments the relationship might appear to be one of indifference to one person. Still further, there are other occasions when the teacher-student relationship might not appear to matter to either person. The ways that the relationship matters in the teacher-student relationship is the central focus of this paper.

## Research Approach

This phenomenological research inquiry was underpinned by the philosophical writings of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Giles 2008; Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson & Spence 2008). Their works were critical to my ongoing understanding of the ontological nature of phenomenology and its quest for exploring the *a priori* nature of our everyday experiences (Caelli 2001; Gadamer 1994; Koch 1996). “The lifeworld, the world of lived experience, is both the source and object of phenomenological research ... [indeed] the starting point and end point” (van Manen 1990, pp. 36, 53). Lived experiences are systematically studied as they reveal themselves to us, rather than as we rationally reduce them to theory (Satina & Hultgren 2001; van der Mescht 2004; van Manen 1990). Such

understandings of our life-world are pre-reflective and *a priori*, most often showing the taken-for-grantedness of our everyday experience (Heidegger 1996).

## **Method**

### **The Context, Participants & Data Gathering**

This particular phenomenological research project explored everyday lived experiences of being in relationship in the context of pre-service teacher education in New Zealand (Giles 2008). The eighteen participants in this study were student teachers and lecturers from five different pre-service teacher education providers. The participants were representative of lecturers and student teachers in teacher education programmes in New Zealand. The participants were aged between 20 and 60 years and were interviewed in a one-off conversation that lasted no more than 90 minutes. The participant's stories were crafted into over one hundred stories of specific everyday lived experiences of relationships.

### **Data Analysis**

With the approval of the participant, each story was hermeneutically interpreted towards meanings that might reside within the individual stories and essential understandings of relationships across the stories (Caelli 2001). For van Manen (1990), hermeneutically interpreting the meaning of a text or a lived experience is "more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure-grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning" (p. 79). When all the stories had been hermeneutically interpreted several times, their interpretations became the basis of dialogue with supervisors, colleagues, and shared at conferences. Having reached this stage, I began to engage with the philosophic writings of Heidegger and Gadamer. I carried into my reading of this literature, the interpretive writing that I had completed on the stories. In this way, I searched for ontological understandings that might shed light on the data analysis. I identified a set of initial emerging themes across the stories that appeared to have what van Manen (1990) describes as, "phenomenological power" (p. 90). The themes revealed essential meanings of relational experiences.

## **Findings**

This section presents research findings that show how relationships are mattering and the nature of the relationships in such experiences. Three aspects of how relationships matter are reported. The first aspect presents participant's stories and interpretive comments on when relationship matters. The second aspect focuses on experiences when the relationship is a matter of indifference. The final aspect focuses on experiences that show when relationships are imbued with 'dis-ease'. The stories that are presented have been selected to show the nature of the particular aspect of how relationships matter. Similarly, the interpretive comments that follow each story seek to illuminate ontological understandings of the lived experience of relationships with reference to philosophical writings.

### When Relationship Matters

When the teacher-student relationship matters, the teacher's and student's relational experience is engaged, connected and respectful of the other. This aspect is revealed in stories that show teachers who 'feel for' their students. In other stories, the mattering of relationship is shown in the face-to-face encounters with another person. Still other stories show that what matters in relationship can be minor actions of remembering details from a conversation to the singling out of a teacher. While variously experienced, the relationship matters. In the following story, a student recalls a teacher who expresses her concern about the possible impact of the topic of a lesson on her students.

*I remember one class was on the prevention of child abuse. The first thing this teacher did was to give a very heartfelt and personal speech apologising in advance if someone in the room may have had a personal history of child abuse and if any information that she was going to share was going to bring up hurtful memories. I just thought, she's actually thinking about the people she's lecturing to. She's not just giving a lecture and imparting information. It's actually at a human level. That was one of our first lectures with her. I just thought, "Wow". (I13: S2)*

Prior to the start of a particular lesson, a teacher shares her concern in relation to the topic ensuring that the environment is safe for her students (Frymier & Houser 2000). The topic might challenge some students personally, and her concern anticipates how the students might respond to this information. The teacher arrives in a conversational relation that started in the student's absence and opens this conversation with the student (van Manen 1990). The teacher's concern for the student is evident at the start of the lesson and the student becomes aware of the teacher's prior thinking and concern (Rayle 2006). Importantly, the teacher's care was for the student's benefit and shown as a sensitivity to the student's prior and lived experiences of the topic (Young 2003).

The teacher is concerned about the person, the fellow human being, with whom she experiences this particular course. This concern is broader than an academic consideration and takes into account the student's whole being. This holistic concern is that of a genuine educator (Buber 2002). Buber (2002) writes that, "for the genuine educator ... concern is always the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become" (p. 123). While the content of the lesson is important, the teacher's added concern is the student as a person in this class.

When the teacher-student relationship matters to both teachers and students, they show a caring concern that connects them relationally. This story shows such care from the teacher towards the student's best interests. The teacher shows that she has been thinking about the students in the forthcoming lesson, having a sense of responsibility for their way of being-with the other (Levinas 1969). This student could sense that the teacher was interested in them and their relational experience (Corbiere & Amundson 2007). This student felt that their relationship mattered to this teacher such was the care experienced (Wessler 2003).

In the following story, a student approaches a teacher to withdraw from their academic study but the teacher's "care-full" concern engages the student in an unexpected dialogue. The story is as follows:

*I remember a girl who came to me and said she was going to pull out of her course. I said, "Why's that? What's going to be different when you come back next year?" She said, "Well, I will have solved my problems". I said to her, "Do your parents have problems?" And this kind of stunned look came over her face and she said, "Yes".*

*I said, "Have you got grandparents alive?" "Yes". "Do they have problems?" "Yes" she said. So I said, "What's going to be different next year?" I said, "When I've got problems, what I do is go to the Health & Counselling service; that always makes a difference". We looked up her records. She had about 4 or 5 assignments to complete. She lightened up. I said, "So next time you have a problem, what are you going to do?" "I'll go to counselling". I said "What else?" "Who are you going to ring?" "I'm going to ring you". "And what are you going to do if there's a problem", "I'm going to ring you and leave a message on your phone". (I14: S1)*

Students withdraw from their studies for a variety of reasons. The process typically involves a conversation with an academic staff member and formal resolution of the decision. This student expected and sought such an outcome yet, in conversation with a teacher who cares, is concerned, and is prepared to listen, she decides to stay and try a different strategy. Both the teacher and student want change, but the focus of the change is different for each person. For the student, it is the relief from the pressure of academic study; for the teacher, it is the student's awareness that the experiencing of problems is not unique to the student but rather a certainty of being human. While each person comes to the face-to-face conversation, they share a common concern that the present circumstances for the student need to change.

This teacher felt for the student. While the student was not seeking anything other than the resolution of her decision, the teacher's way of being-with the student reveals what matters. The teacher's "concern-full" responsibility is noticeably awakened and opened in conversation (Levinas 1985). It is as if the teacher is drawn into relating with this student, pulled by the presence of a particular need for assistance. Levinas suggests that this emotional pull shows an authentic self seeking to do more for a person, as we are claimed by the face we are towards (Alford 2007).

The teacher empathises with the student's pressures and problems as part of everyday life. She moves beyond her formal role and personally shares her approach to working through her issue with others that can help (Frymier & Houser 2000; Rayle 2006). Taking the initiative in the conversation, the teacher shows her personal interest in the student as a person and as an individual (Marzano & Marzano 2003; Wessler 2003). The teacher's care is personalised to this particular student. The teacher's concern is for the person who is carrying these pressures and unresolved problems. In this way, the teacher showed her care for the student, a care and concern that were *towards*, and *for*, the benefit of the student (Young 2003). The teacher's care was authentic and focused on the person beyond the student with an academic concern; a care that was in, amidst, and ahead of the present moment (Young 1998).

This student's *stand* as a fellow being-in-the-world was important to this teacher. Not only are this teacher and student alike in that their living involves a dynamic stand in the world, but each encounters the other's particular stand in the world in a moment they share together. In this moment the teacher's care for the student as a fellow human being reveals that they matter.

Experiences are often influenced by what might be seen by some as minor, perhaps trivial issues, yet these experiences matter. In this story, a teacher phones a student to communicate an assessment result the student had been waiting to receive.

*It was quite close to Christmas and one of my assignments hadn't come back. I'd been waiting for quite a long time and the teacher phoned me at home. Carmen, I'm ringing you because I've just moderated your assignment and I can see that you've been waiting a long time. She told me what the mark was and she said it's got to go*

*through college now and be recorded. But she said I just wanted to let you know that I've moderated your assignment and you've got this mark and you've done really well, good on you. No other teacher had ever done that. I thought that was really lovely thing for her to do. (I13: S6)*

Even in the “lesser” moments of our everyday relating our being-in-relationship matters. The teacher in this story knows that the student is waiting for an assessment result and takes the time to communicate this result to the student. The phone call also communicates the teacher’s concern. This personal interest is heard and felt by the student (Marzano et al. 2003).

Everyday situations point to what matters in the moment. It mattered to this teacher that the student had not had her result. It mattered differently to the student as the student concerned herself with the message of respect and interest that teacher had personally shown in action. Even seemingly minor events of our everyday worlds matter. In this way, mattering is integral to our being-together-with another in the world. Mattering reveals how we are being-with another.

When a student realises that a teacher has remembered a prior conversation, students know they matter.

*I remember having a nice discussion with Nadia about one of my children who has special needs. She remembered that the next time I spoke to her. She remembered something that I said in a prior conversation. She took it in (I13: S9)*

In this story, there is reciprocity of mattering one to another (Rosenberg, 1985). While relating in conversation, the teacher makes a connection with the past and in so doing, provides the student with an important connection in the present. Each person notices the other and is drawn further into a relationship. The teacher’s and student’s experience of this relationship accumulates as it is lived. The relationship carries historicity within a shared humanity. This teacher and student are part of each other’s ongoing being-in-the-world (Nancy 2000).

On one hand, this is a simple moment of recalling a previous conversation. On the other hand, the teacher connects with the student in a very meaningful way (Hoffman & Levak 2003). In this moment, the student is a “particular” person, mattering to the teacher as an individual (Wessler 2003). In this seemingly small act of remembering a teacher reveals to a student that they matter as a person, a fellow being-in-the-world.

In the final story of this section, “When relationships matter”, a teacher recalls relating with a student who had learnt that she was not about to graduate:

*This morning I was at the ceremony for the class of 2004. But what was special about the occasion was Janice. I could share her pain and her discomfort. She came brimming with tears, coming to share her story. It was so special. I could see her across the other side of the room and I could see that she was coming over to me. As she was walking over to me, her tears were just filling up. Part of Janice’s tears was that she had learnt that she hadn’t passed the course. That’s why she was very emotional. It wasn’t an easy thing to articulate. In that moment, something happens and you feel a sense of connectedness. (I3: S2)*

When this student finds circumstances overwhelming, she singles out a particular teacher. This student in this story had failed an academic course and amongst the many student-teacher relationships, a particular teacher-student relationship *mattered* to this student. The teacher’s arrival is noticed by the student. Moreover, the teacher’s arrival

matters to this student as someone to whom she might relate in this situation. The student moves to be-with a teacher with whom they felt connected. Very soon they would be engaged in conversation.

The student's actions change the way this teacher behaves at this celebration. Rather than enjoying final farewells with graduating students, this teacher spends time with a student who matters more than the celebration. Drawn by the urgency of the student's immediate need, the teacher enables a student to open her pain of not graduating. Singled out, the teacher connects with the student within a traumatic experience as the teacher gives herself over to the student (Alford 2007). Over and above the celebrations, the teacher is found caring for, and being-with, a student in need of care. The teacher is fully present. Where the teacher-student relationship matters to both, a connected and reciprocal relating is experienced.

The stories in this section open the notion that the teacher-student relationship matters, albeit in different ways. The everydayness of our being-together-in-the-world is laden with mattering that is felt and heard in relationship. The mattering can be shown by an individual's conversation, in the reciprocity of a relational conversation, and in the stand people make with each other in relationship.

The teacher-student relationship rests in the backdrop of teaching and learning. While the relationship can matter more noticeably and is an influence on teaching and learning, the relationship is typically taken for granted in an educational process whose primary focus is on the intentional process of teaching and learning. On occasions, teachers and students pause to savour the nature of their relating, remembering moments when "others" they have been with in particular moments spring to mind. Similarly, when teachers pause, or are provoked, to consider recent teaching experiences with a group of students, they can find themselves lamenting the way they worked with the students. Their concern can include the way they related to the students. In hindsight, teachers who have had an impact are remembered and appreciated.

#### **When the relationship is a matter of indifference**

When students sense indifference from the teacher, this matters to the student.

*I did have one teacher who worked in a totally different way. The teacher didn't seem as into it and onto it as my other lecturers were. It always seemed a bit too laid back. I did tend to get high marks, but I never really knew necessarily if I was on the right track or anything like that because things were very vague. She was very friendly, very welcoming and she was a lovely person but it never went beyond that. Some days, she might be late to arrive. I can remember her not turning up at all once. (I16: S5)*

The teacher's way of relating with the students in this story creates confusion for this student. The student wonders about the authenticity of the teacher's initial welcome. When the teacher seems "too laid back", the student "never really" knows if she is on the right track. The teacher's pattern of relating was vague and indecisive. The student is together with the teacher in the same space but not really engaged and connected. The teacher and her way of relating are of concern to the student. The attention the student gives to noticing the teacher-student relationship influences the learning experiences for the student.

Young (2003) suggests that our care "depends on the character we give to the happenings which is our lives" (p. 59). This teacher's actions were noticed by the character of the care that they communicated. The student felt that the message from the teacher changed from openness to indifference, demonstrating an inconsistent way of being-with the



students. Had the teacher been turned towards the student, expressing openness towards the student, the student might not have been so tentative and reserved about the openness of their relating (Buber 1996; Young 1998). In the interim, the student wonders what is mattering for this teacher. The teacher's late arrivals to class and not turning up on occasions suggest that, on many occasions, the relationship with the students does not matter.

Perhaps what mattered was that this teacher was different to the student. In this way, what appeared to be indifference from the teacher might have manifested itself when the teacher was more focused on concerns outside the classroom. It is the sustained indifference of this teacher that is a matter of serious concern and a lack of care for this student. Contrary to feeling a sense of responsibility in the face of the student, the teacher seems to masquerade in the role of teacher (Levinas 1985). Indeed the teacher's unexplained absence from class heightens the student's awareness of the lack within the relationship. In this story, the teacher's way-of-being in the teacher-student relationship matters, and needs addressing before the student can fully presence themselves in relational experiences with this teacher.

The relationship appears to be a matter of indifference. Perhaps, something beyond the learning is of greater concern than the students and their learning. Experiences like this can engender a lack of safety in the relationship such that the individual wonders about their place with the other person. If the relationship matters to the students, there are occasions when students become distracted from the learning experiences and focus more fully on the way the teacher is relating and why this might be so. Student teachers appear to be less forgiving of lecturers who relate in this way. There is an expectation that those teaching in pre-service teacher education programmes are exemplars of best practice. As such, the thought that a student teacher's preparation as a beginning teacher is anything other than a primary concern to the lecturer is not acceptable to student teachers.

#### **When relationships are imbued with "dis-ease"**

The story below shows the teacher-student relationships to be a concern. In these relationships, one or all of the participants feel vulnerable and ill at ease. Levinas (1969) suggests that such violence might not occur in the form of injury but in making people play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves. In these moments, individuals intrude upon the otherness of the other (Alford 2007).

The teacher in the next story becomes increasingly concerned with a student and personally weary of this particular relationship.

*I think my relationship with Janine is a bit more guarded. Janine struggled with the course. She got quite behind on a lot of assignments. One afternoon, Janine had an epileptic seizure in my class. The other students were so supportive. Nobody was scared. Nobody was embarrassed. One of the girls said, I don't know what to do, what do I do? And, another girl said, this is what you do. When she came out of the seizure, everybody rallied around and said, are you alright? I had known of her condition and she had told me that her only fear was that she might have a seizure in front of everybody. She was very embarrassed by it. Towards the end of the year she wasn't handing assignments in. She missed a lot of classes to the point where I made contact with her and got her to come and see me. She had felt really uncomfortable because of what had happened to her. I granted her extensions for her assignments and then she started missing again. I was concerned and then greatly concerned*

*when one of the students from the class came to me and said, Janine is skiting to everybody that she doesn't have to have her assignments in, she's got an extension. She was away from your class the other day supposedly at the doctors having her medication but she wasn't, she was at the beach drinking with her mates. I thanked this student for sharing with me. I got Janine to come and talk to me again. I got a second colleague in so that it wasn't a one to one buddy sort of thing and we addressed her quite formally. (I5: S4)*

Initially the face needs of this student claimed the teacher's attention. Not only had the student struggled academically but she had had an epileptic seizure in a class. The student's face carried an ethical demand; help me (Joldersma 2006; Marcus 2007). The teacher interacted with the student to establish strategies that might aid her learning. The teacher's care reveals her concern for the student.

The teacher in this story becomes concerned with the way a student relates to her. The student's way of relating has brought an uncertainty into their relating. What has mattered for the teacher up until this experience has been the student's best interests but the feeling of being betrayed has undermined the teacher's confidence and safety with the student. The teacher has been granted another view of what this student is saying behind her back. She has lost her trust in the relationship.

The lack of honesty from the student challenges the relationship from the teacher's perspective (Inwood, 1997). The student does not seem to want to reciprocate a caring concern for the teacher. The uncertainty in relating with a particular student means that this teacher is anxious and guarded; she is concerned about the nature of the relationship. It is the teacher who seeks to create some protection and distance for herself in this relationship. The "other" is now a source of danger and personal threat (Hargreaves 2001) and there is fear in this relationship. As a consequence, the teacher moves to find a safer place in the relationship where she can be more guarded person-ally (Collins & Selina 2006).

Recent relational experiences have led this teacher to reconsider her way of relating with the student to the point where she asks a colleague to join her for such meetings. Previously the way the teacher and student related was taken for granted; this has changed.

The following poem, 'our between' was constructed during the interpretive consideration of the participant's stories and seeks to capture the three different aspects of relationships opened in this paper:

***'Our between'***

When our 'between' matters to you, you show it  
You seem to ignore the label of my role, seeing me as a person, a fellow being.  
As you do, I notice our 'like-ness', not our difference,  
we are of the same kind, like-with beings together in the world.

When our 'between' doesn't matter to you, you show it  
I am held within a label to you, an 'object' in your way.  
You make me separate from you, beings that must be broken relationally  
As such, I must hide for a safer day and safer travellers.

When our 'between' is indifferent to you, you show it  
Who am I to you? Why will you not sustain your attention on me?  
I wonder at my place and the safety of our space,  
for the time being, I must be attentive to messages beyond indifference.  
(Giles, 2008, pp. 111, 113, 116)

## Conclusion

The stories in this paper address what we appear to have forgotten; firstly that we are always in relationship, and secondly, that relationships matter. The primordial nature of being human is one of being-with-others in a relational co-existence that is essential to the world we share with others.

Teachers and students enter the teacher-student relationship with a multiplicity of relationships with other people that are part of their everyday being-in-the-world. Once a student has enrolled in a particular course, the teacher and student are “always” in relationship; ontologically, they cannot exist in any other way. Most often, the ontological nature of this relationship is taken for granted in an educational process where the primary focus is the learning intentions.

Regardless of *how* teachers and students experience their relationship, the relationship matters. The influence of the teacher-student relationship does not finish, it always exists. Relational experiences accumulate within each person’s historicity and, in so doing, influence each person’s becoming and how they view the world. In this way, the nature of the relational experiences between the teacher and student is always in flux.

When the relationship matters, the relational experiences appear to be taken for granted as the teaching and learning happens for the teacher and student. When the teacher-student relationship is a matter of indifference, teachers and students sense that the immediate teaching-learning experience is not important to the other. As a consequence, learning is diminished. When the teacher-student relationship does not appear to matter and the relational endeavour is not valued, teachers and students can be found attuning to the nature of their relating. Some of these experiences occur when students sense that a teacher is overly concerned about the lesson content, when there is no invitation to contribute to a lesson, and when the pace of the lesson shows the content to be more important than relational experiences which let learning happen.

A concern of the current tertiary context is the heightened possibility that the teacher-student relationship will not matter as teaching-learning experiences are constrained by compliance systems and pressures which seek to capture evidence-based and observable outcomes of students learning in the most cost-effective and expedient manner. What is overlooked here is that relationships matter, and the influence of the teacher-student relationship does not end. I argue that it is time to recognise and address the impact of relationship. If relationships are essential to a positive teaching-learning experience then teacher educators need to be showing how a deepening sensitivity to relationships matter in their practice. Opportunities invariably present themselves with students where a shared experience can be opened afresh and reconsidered for its meaning. Such a dialogue can show the complex, complicated, connected and uncertain nature of relational experiences.

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