Journaling to research the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of bringing a mindfulness-based intervention into a junior school to support pupil wellbeing

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Abstract

Research on mindfulness in education for supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing has predominantly focused on potential psychological and behavioural benefits. Broader, more philosophical issues regarding the purpose of its implementation and associated ethical dilemmas are neglected areas. Consequently, little research exists regarding the *acceptability* of mindfulness in schools. This qualitative study reports on the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of mindfulness taught via an MBI (mindfulness-based intervention) in a junior school. This study adds an extra critical dimension to the findings by exploring how the MBI is experienced by the recipients, i.e., teachers and pupils. It is an unusual aspect of research on mindfulness and education, as demonstrated by the notable lack of in-depth qualitative data offering such perspectives.

The study's qualitative research methodology is the autoethnographic method of journaling synthesised with a method influenced by action research. Thus, researcher reflexivity is woven throughout the research process via auto ethnographical journal entries. Data was gathered using semi-structured pupil focus group interviews and one-to-one teacher interviews. The findings relating to the teachers' and pupils' perspectives on the potential for mindfulness to support pupil wellbeing align with current research; however, the data reveals differences in teachers' and pupils' perspectives regarding acceptability*.* Attention is also drawn to numerous psychological, social and functional factors impacting the participants' experiences and ethical dilemmas, contradictions and concerns that emerge.

The findings have implications for practice: - there is a need for a different approach to teaching and learning, one embracing a more contemplative pedagogy. The necessity for more detailed investigations of MBIs aims in education alongside greater transparency. Greater consideration of the ethical dilemmas, contradictions and concerns inherent when introducing MBIs into schools, invariably consisting of a vulnerable and conscripted audience.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my much loved and greatly missed mother, who spent a lifetime seeking peace of mind; sadly, it remained just out of her reach.

CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Published Work Arising from Thesis

Crawford, A., Joseph, S. and Sellman, E., 2020. A Quiet Revolution? Reflecting on the Potentiality and Ethics of Mindfulness in a Junior School. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 69(2), pp.237-255.

Crawford, A., Sellman, E. and Joseph, S., 2021. Journaling: A More Mindful Approach to Researching a Mindfulness-Based Intervention in a Junior School. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, p.1-11.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research rationale

Children's mental health and wellbeing are critical concerns of public health today; concerns that have likely been the catalyst for increased research into the use of mindfulness practices for children and their potential, when applied in the context of school settings, for supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing (Felver et al., 2015). However, the increasing desire to transfer mindfulness initiatives into classroom settings (Shapiro et al., 2014) does not come without challenges, a significant one being bridging the science-to-practice gap. Practices shown to be effective in controlled environments tend to be implemented without integrity when translated into school environments (Owens et al., 2014), ones that are particular, unique and diverse.

The rationale for carrying out this research rested on two issues.

- The first issue was focused on the concerns, tensions, contradictions and ethical dilemmas that emerge when bringing mindfulness, a paradigm with many dimensions appearing to be inherently unquantifiable, into education, a paradigm where the emphasis is placed on measurement and outcome.

- The second issue rested on recognising the need to adopt a more mindful approach towards the research process itself on mindfulness and education; chapter two, section 2.10, provides a full discussion in this respect. To date, feedback gained is invariably obtained via questionnaires, structured interviews, or, increasingly, via mindfulness measurement scales. These are all research methods more closely aligned with quantitative methods of research which are usually confirmatory and deductive (Ochieng, 2009). Adopting journaling as the primary method, see chapter four, section 4.6 for a detailed definition of journaling, allowed for a more mindful approach towards the research process by moving away from quantitative methods. As such, it presented an opportunity to

research with greater openness and awareness, attitudes more closely aligned with the spirit of mindfulness. Indeed, as a powerful and perceptive real-life research method, journaling offered greater potential for more nuanced and detailed experiences by those taking part in the study than would otherwise have been obtained using self-report rating scales or questionnaires.

1.2   Thesis aims and questions

Research on school-based mindfulness initiatives is only at the beginning stage (Weare, 2018); consequently, it is limited. To date, the discourse has focused on clarifying, demonstrating and studying the effects of mindfulness in education (Ergas and Hadar, 2019). However, two areas remain under-explored: - the first is the realities faced when practices adapted from clinic-based mindfulness interventions are utilised in an educational context; the second is the unique perceptions of those experiencing a mindfulness intervention in such an environment. This thesis, therefore, aims to provide insight into these two neglected areas of research. I hope to achieve this by sharing journal reflections on my experiences and perceptions as the mindfulness teacher and the researcher and by gaining and sharing the pupils' and teachers' perspectives, i.e., those receiving the mindfulness training. In order to do justice to these perspectives and demonstrate loyalty and respect for the participants, many of whom I had previous knowledge of, a critical part of this thesis was to demonstrate a high level of transparency throughout the research process. A transparency that also ensured the research was carried out in an ethically responsible way.

The central question of the research was 'what is the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of an MBI for supporting pupils' wellbeing in a junior school'?

The sub-questions were: -

- What are the children's and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* of mindfulness?

- What are the children's and teachers' perceptions of the *acceptability* of mindfulness?
- What is the role of education as revealed by mindfulness research?
- What are the challenges to education that mindfulness presents? Does mindfulness fit within the context of the current educational climate where signs of spirituality such as deepening connections with others, experiencing compassion and empathy for others, feelings of interconnectedness, awe and wonder and asking deep questions are replaced by a tendency toward spiritual bypassing, i.e., turning away from what is difficult or unpleasant and finding ways to avoid or transcend basic human needs, feelings and developmental tasks (Welwood, 2002)?
- Will mindfulness be perceived as a fad, or can it be taught authentically in schools, and is the incentive to do so related to its intrinsic essence and transformative potential?
- Can mindfulness taught via an MBI be exploited, for example, used as counselling on the cheap? Or can it be used in such a way that it becomes harmful, for example, used for purposes of schoolification? Schoolification is the notion of a child's ability to conform to the kind of behaviour deemed suitable in a school, e.g. follow instructions and rules, pay attention to taught activities and display appropriate emotional responses (Farran, 2011; Albrecht et al., 2012). Alternatively, can mindfulness assist in the pathologising of pupils (Flores, 2016); or be used to support a neoliberal agenda which encourages pupils and educators to self-regulate and become autonomous, emotionally adjusted beings able to function and flourish in a market-based consumerist society (Lavelle, 2016) choosing their happiness, wellbeing and safety (Reveley, 2015; Purser, 2018).

However, before discussing the research questions, I think it is worth sharing my motivation to conduct this research and to state my positionality.

1.3   Motivation

My interest in mindfulness developed over the last six years, initially due to attending an In-Service Training Day (INSET) for professional development as a primary school teacher. Mindfulness was mentioned for supporting children's wellbeing, academic achievement and improving behaviour. At the time, I had additional responsibility as whole school subject lead for pupils' Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). Therefore, I considered any new initiatives or interventions relating to this subject worth investigating. It also sparked an interest that ultimately led to me embarking on a PhD with mindfulness at its core and, at the time, a misconception that mindfulness could provide a 'miracle cure' for challenging behaviour in the classroom and improve academic performance; indeed, it seemed to me that mindfulness was a miracle cure for everything.

It was a misconception that was supported by reading the book *Mindfulness for Beginners - Reclaiming the Present Moment-And Your Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn. The book discussed how mindfulness meditation could be a powerful way to realise transformative and healing properties in ourselves and the world.   My misconception was further supported by how mindfulness is portrayed as a 'cure-all' in the popular media. At that time, I never considered questioning how paying close attention to the present moment without passing judgment would have the revolutionary power to change the world. Or how mindfulness, something that seemed to offer success in an unjust society without attempting to change it, would be able to do anything more than just help people cope or perhaps even make things worse (Purser, 2019b).

So, in the summer of 2016, with my misconceptions firmly in place, I joined a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course for eight weeks. As Grossman (2008) states, at best, we can only obtain a vague understanding of mindfulness by reading about it; to understand mindfulness, we need to cultivate this way of being in our life. Attending the course began rectifying the misconception that mindfulness was a miracle cure for behaviour

management and academic performance. My other misconceptions regarding the transformative potential of mindfulness without radical action being necessary were rectified later during the research process and are discussed in chapters seven and ten.

In keeping with the reflective nature of this thesis, some reflections from the journal I kept throughout the MBSR course are shared in chapter three. The journal documented my thoughts, feelings and questions as they arose. Such early sharing highlights the reflexive researcher's role throughout the research process and sets the tone for what follows throughout this thesis. After completing the MBSR course, I continued my mindfulness practices every day for the next eight months. The regularity of the practice increasingly came to fulfil both my personal and professional needs. Personally, it met my need for a more measured and calmer approach to my own life. As a teacher, my work-life balance had become completely eroded; work had become my life, and I was convinced there was little time for anything else. Professionally it fulfilled the requirements for being accepted onto the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP, 2013) Paws.b training course to gain the qualification to teach Paws.b, a classroom-based mindfulness intervention consisting of six taught lessons for children aged between seven and eleven years (see appendix 1 outline of Paws.b lesson aims). Like before with the MBSR course, I kept a journal while attending this course; reflections from this journal are also shared in chapter three.

During the Paws.b course, the focus was primarily on training us to teach the six-lesson programme. A somewhat neglected area was how acceptable it would be, a prerequisite when implementing and sustaining any intervention within a school context. Indeed, when a course trainee queried how to overcome specific challenges using examples of ones they had already faced when trying to introduce mindfulness into their school, their queries were, at best, answered in a pacifying way, thus allowing us to move on, or, at worst, sidestepped. I was left wondering just how acceptable MBIs are in the real-world setting of a busy school and, if they were not, what it would take to make them acceptable.

As the three-day course progressed, I listened to trainees' comments on how they had been the 'lone voice' in their school when trying to implement mindfulness; or met with ridicule or rudeness. It led me to think about how other people's perceptions of mindfulness impact its acceptability. As a teacher, I knew the lightning speed with which interventions come and go and why. For example, some fail in their bid to get staff 'onboard', others because progress and results do not come quick enough, some due to time constraints and others as they are too difficult to measure so cannot be justified in taking precious limited time away from the busy curriculum.

I completed the course, became a qualified Paws.b teacher and immediately began teaching the MBI to the pupils in my class. In 2017, I left the school I had taught in for several years and started teaching mindfulness at the junior school featured in this thesis. At the same time, I started to review the literature on mindfulness and education and noted how most studies concentrate on the efficacy of MBIs in relation to affected brain regions and individual results (Felver et al., 2015). In terms of their *acceptability*, I found a paucity of research, with studies of MBIs often only briefly mentioning it, usually by stating that they are feasible and enjoyable interventions. Yet, as Durlak and DuPre (2008) warn, when developing interventions, the most significant challenge is often transferring them into real-world contexts.

1.4   Personal position

In order for readers to trust the researcher's perspective, as presented in qualitative inquiry, the researcher needs to disclose their research position regarding the data. 'Positionality' describes an individual's worldview and position concerning the research as well as its social and political context (Rowe, 2014). According to Bourke (2014), positionality denotes a space where objectivism and subjectivism meet, which Freire (1970, p. 6) suggests exists in a "dialectic relationship". Based on it being impossible to completely divorce ourselves of subjectivity, trying to achieve pure objectivism is a naïve pursuit; indeed, we can only try to remain objective while being constantly mindful of our subjectivities (Bourke, 2014) and aware of how our positioning

and fundamental assumptions impact the research (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Thus, as Hart (2014) stresses, we do not see things as they are but as we are; therefore, studying something has everything to do with who we are and how we know it.

Indisputably a person's principles, opinions, morals and so forth are influenced by their political affiliation, faith, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical position, culture, race, class, (dis)abilities etc. (Marsh et al., 2018). My positionality is a white, middle-class, privately educated, non-disabled and heterosexual female. Although I am from a privileged social and educational background, my work in schools as a communication support worker with the D/deaf and subsequent work as a teacher in inner-city schools in less privileged areas has provided me with insight into an education very different to my own.

Undeniably, when doing my research, I initially made assumptions concerning access and my positionality relating to the concept of insider/outsider (Bourke, 2014). I assumed I was primarily an insider as I was a teacher and shared common bonds with the teachers in the study and already knew some of them. I also believed that I was an insider as I had taught many pupil participants before the research and reasoned that I had already achieved a sense of solidarity with them too. Early in the research process, I realised my assumptions about being an insider were naïve. I was, in reality, both insider and outsider.

While positionality refers to what the researcher knows and believes, reflexivity refers to what the researcher does with this knowledge (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Indeed, reflexivity informs positionality; it requires us to question our preconceived ideas, views and positions and how they may directly or indirectly influence how the research is designed, carried out and how the findings are interpreted (May and Perry, 2017). In the same way that the participants' experiences are framed in social-cultural contexts, so too are the researchers, thus necessitating sensitivity by the researcher to their cultural, political and social context (Bryman, 2016). The individual's

morals, integrity, values, and competency significantly impact the research process (Bourke, 2014). Therefore, the research may not be conducted ethically without researcher reflexivity, and no researcher should participate in unethical research (BERA, 2011). Consequently, reflexivity and being clear about one's positionality can be regarded as vital features of the research process (Darwin Holmes, 2020).

Undoubtedly reflexivity is the main component running through this thesis due to the chosen method of autoethnography, more specifically, journaling. At times, the reflexivity involved in journaling prompted me to confront uncomfortable questions about my collusion in the problems revealed by the research. It led me to reflect on them and admit how I, too, as a busy teacher, had primarily concentrated on the academic curriculum and ignored the emotional and spiritual curriculum. It was an acknowledgement accompanied by an awkward awareness that my response as a teacher would not have differed from the teachers' responses in this study. While it would have suited me to think my response to mindfulness and the MBI would have been more supportive, I cannot deny that my initial interest in mindfulness was based on the belief that it was another form of behaviour management and could lead to achieving better academic results. By continually questioning my reflections and interpretations of the data in this study, I often observed a more judgemental tone creeping in. It made me confront feelings of guilt as I was well aware that such a tone could be construed as an act of betrayal towards the busy teachers in this study and teachers more generally; perhaps it is a betrayal of sorts, albeit an unintended one.

Ultimately, this thesis can be viewed as documenting a personal journey of self-discovery. My journey started from a place of no real or deep understanding of mindfulness but purely a superficial one. It was accompanied by a lack of awareness of my own life and how I had allowed it to become mostly filled with stress and little enjoyment. However, from this starting position, through a constant process of asking questions, seeking answers and continuously reflecting, I finally arrived at a place that afforded me a more profound understanding of mindfulness. Not only was I afforded

this, but the journey also led to my becoming more socially and personally aware, which impacted my life and consequently changed and improved it both personally and professionally.   It is this journey that provides the overarching structure for the thesis.

Considering the reflexive nature of the research now, it prompts me to provide an early definition of autoethnography, the primary research method for the study, as it will ensure clarity and understanding regarding the research process and lay the foundation for what follows.

1.5   Defining autoethnography

The term ethnography connotes a frame of mind, an intent to be open to everything unknown, and a suspension of belief (Charmaz et al., 2001). Autoethnography provides a broader lens to view the world while avoiding inflexible explanations around what comprises valuable research (Ellis et al., 2010).   For Ellis and Bochner (2006), an auto ethnographer is primarily a 'communicator' and a 'storyteller'. By welcoming personal thoughts, feelings, stories and observations to understand the social context under study, auto ethnographers also reveal their total interaction with the setting as they make visible to the reader all their emotions and thoughts (Ellis and Bochner, 2006). Proponents of autoethnography believe you cannot discount the researcher's role and biases in the research process; indeed, the chance to be co-participants in the story and engage the storyline ethically, emotionally and intelligently are the advantages of auto-ethnographical studies (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

Thus, auto ethnographers discard the concept of social research as objective and unbiased knowledge resulting from scientific methods, characterised and achieved by the researcher's detachment from those being researched (Ellingson and Ellis, 2014). The essential supposition is that reality is flexible and not solely external rather, it is shaped by and changes with the viewer's fluctuating insights and views (Duncan, 2004). Consequently, when researching, it is crucial to recognise that human existence and research is a

continuous process of interpreting oneself and others (Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

As a method, autoethnography tries to disrupt and move away from the accepted norms of scientific dialogue by emphasising the lived experience, personal details, subjectivity and personal viewpoints (Ellis et al., 2010). It participates in the ongoing social construction of research norms and practices while simultaneously influencing the social construction of specific phenomena (Ellingson and Ellis, 2014). Atkinson et al., (2003) note how the auto ethnographer, as the author, interprets their report with their reflexive views of the self; as such, their data is located within their knowledge and understanding. As a result, they become part of the representational processes they are involved in and, as such, become part of the story they are telling; they are also in part formed by those processes as the cultural meanings they co-create are constituted in conversation, action and text (Atkinson et al., 2003).

Thomas (1993) highlights how autoethnography, as a method, allows the researcher to explore in more depth within a culture due to their extended participation with the group being studied. In this respect, for Ellis (2004), autoethnography is an answer to the isolating effects, both on the researcher and researched, of detached, intellectual claims of what is the truth presented in "exclusionary scientific discourse" (Ellingson and Ellis, 2014, p. 450). In direct contrast, autoethnography wants the researcher to be seen, present and active in the text and reflexively engaged (Anderson, 2006). Consequently, there is a noticeable and potentially more profound and revealing exchange between the researcher and the researched (Anderson, 2006).

However, it is a level of involvement that does not come without criticism. Some regard it as narcissistic and not fulfilling the scholarly obligations of hypothesising, analysing and theorising (Ellis et al., 2010). Others consider its experiential nature means it is not analytic but all experience (Atkinson, 2006). As a response to such criticisms, Ellis and Bochner (2006) argue that

the task of analysis and theorising is accomplished by stories that are meaningful phenomena. The power of stories was highlighted very eloquently by the literary scholar Barbara Hardy (1968, p. 5), who stated:

> We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love in narrative.

Gergen (1994) uses this quotation to emphasise an important potential use for narrative, i.e., the possibility of locating all our actions within stories. Narrative recognises the unavoidable communal nature of any action and provides the opportunity to develop action in the light of others' narratives (Ramsey, 2005). To elucidate further, autoethnography presents an opportunity to use the participant's stories to understand our own lives while simultaneously using our own experiences to comprehend better the participant's stories (Bochner, 2000). Such stories capture significant moments that can lead an ethnographer to rethink or re-evaluate a situation, maybe even resulting in a change of direction (Bochner and Ellis, 1992), a new perspective, or close a gap in existing stories (Goodall, 2000).

According to Duncan (2004), even though autoethnographic reports are presented as personal narratives, they do more than just tell stories; they provide scholarly reports that can be defended as they result from numerous sources that provide proof. Consequently, autoethnography can be as scientific and meticulous as a quantitative social science; it adheres to the same basic rules of logic, replication, validity, reliability, theory construction and other characteristics that separate science from other forms of knowledge (Thomas, 1993). An autoethnographic account does not just comprise the researcher's views; it is corroborated by other data confirming or triangulating these views (Duncan, 2004). Such data includes participant observation, interviewing, gathering documents, artefacts and reflective writing.

Journaling was the form of reflective writing used in this investigation, with the resulting reflections used in several ways: - to inform each cycle of the

research process; inform the mindfulness teacher on the delivery of the MBI and provide an in-depth insight into the researcher's experience of bringing mindfulness to a junior school and the realities accompanying this. Journaling is defined and discussed in depth in chapter four, where an argument is made that as a research method, it adopts an approach towards the research process that is more consistent and harmonious with mindfulness' stress on terms such as 'awareness' and 'being'. In support of this argument, a description of the harmonious links between journaling and mindfulness is provided.

1.6   Navigating this thesis

The eleven chapters in this thesis follow a conventional academic sequence. This first chapter introduced the background to the thesis, provided a rationale for the research and presented an outline of the research aims and questions. The chapter also outlined my personal trajectory leading to my composing the thesis. It highlighted my role as the reflexive researcher in the process and made my positionality clear. Autoethnography, more specifically journaling, a research method used for the study, was defined and briefly discussed, signalling the study's reflexive nature.

Chapter two begins by clarifying what a literature review is and its importance, followed by a concise description of how I carried out the literature review for this thesis. Critical reading is highlighted as an essential part of the research process. An early detailed description of mindfulness considered from an interdisciplinary perspective taking into account historical and present-day depictions is provided to pave the way for a better understanding of the research topic. A brief consideration of the current educational climate and pupils' mental health and wellbeing within this climate follows. It gives a more general context for the research and justification. The chapter also presents an overview of the growing body of research in mindfulness and education, more precisely regarding the perceived benefits of mindfulness in various populations and settings and research relating to MBIs. Issues and gaps in the research are identified, adding further justification. The final part of the

chapter includes a discussion on the need to take a qualitative approach to the research, thus providing the rationale for choosing the method of journaling and an approach informed by action research.

Chapter three defines reflection and briefly describes Gibb's (1988) model of 'learning by doing'. I turned to this model for structural guidance when writing my journal reflections during the MBSR course; these reflections are shared in this chapter and represent cycle one of the research processes. They provide insight into my initial foray into mindfulness, where the term 'Mcmindfulness', as coined by Neale (2010) and described in chapter eight, would be a fair description of my starting position at that time, a position which later moves towards a more integral understanding. Further reflections from the Paws.b training course are also shared in this chapter. They represent cycle two of the research process and illuminate three main issues:

- The participant versus the researcher dynamic.
- The product versus its implementation.
- The concept of mindfulness versus the culture of schools.

Chapter four details the research methods for this study and justifies the choice by demonstrating that journaling, an auto ethnographical method carried out in a cyclical manner informed by action research, provides greater coherence between the epistemology and ontology in the research design. As Maynard (1994) explains, epistemology is concerned with offering a philosophical basis for determining what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can guarantee that they are sufficient and genuine. The epistemological stance adopted in this study is constructionist. Therefore, the central premise is that meaning is not inherent; it is constructed and not discovered. Consequently, the primary concerns of constructionist inquiry are 'what people "know" and how they create, apply, contest, and act upon those ideas' (Harris, 2006, p. 225)

Ontology is defined by Crotty (1998, p. 18) as "the study of being"; it is concerned with what kind of world we are investigating and the nature of

existence, and it raises fundamental questions about the nature of reality. This study uses an ontology that is essentially of a social world of meanings; thus, as the researcher, I assume that the world I am investigating is inhabited by people with their own thoughts, interpretations, and meanings. My investigation of this world is manifested in the use of the research methods chosen to interpret the teachers' and pupils' perspectives. In this study, therefore, journaling offers a way of illuminating the impact of mindfulness upon the pupils and teachers, i.e., the recipients of the MBI.

Chapter five shares reflections from the third cycle of the research process when I introduced the MBI to the year four pupils. This cycle allowed me to practice teaching the MBI before teaching it throughout the school and gain an insight into initial pupil and teacher perceptions. My reflections focus on observations relating to the three main issues that emerged in earlier reflections discussed in chapter three, i.e., the participant versus the researcher dynamic, the product versus its implementation and the concept of mindfulness versus the culture of schools. Later in the chapter, due to the limited word count, a brief commentary is provided instead of sharing more reflections on the next three research cycles resulting from introducing the MBI to years three, five and six.

Chapter six provides an overview of the methods used for collecting the data, i.e., focus group interviews with the children and one-to-one interviews with the teachers. Hierarchical focusing is discussed as it informed the semi-structured interview questions resulting from the literature review. Thematic analysis, the data analysis method, is then described, followed by an explanation of how the issues concerning trustworthiness and ethics were dealt with. The chapter finishes with a short account of the boundaries of the study.

As their chief objective, chapters seven, eight and nine analyse the selected fieldwork data. The chapters present the findings and discussion via three detailed themes: - theme one, discussed in chapter seven, explores the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* of mindfulness in school; theme

two, discussed in chapter eight, examines the pupils and teachers' perceptions of the *acceptability* of mindfulness in school, and theme three, discussed in chapter nine, considers pupils and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of journaling in school. These perspectives, alongside my reflections, are woven throughout the relevant literature.

Chapter ten considers in greater depth mindfulness and ethics and the implications for practice. It begins by querying the role of education, as revealed by mindfulness research. A discussion follows on how education will need to function in the twenty-first century and how mindfulness poses significant educational challenges. An argument is established for a radical rethink of education's role and the need for a fundamental change in our approach to teaching and learning. A case is also made for the need for critical inquiry in mindfulness research and for providing an ethical framework. A discussion follows on how adopting a more explicit approach to mindfulness provides the vehicle to move mindfulness away from an instrumental approach toward an integral one (Forbes, 2016a, 2019). Such an approach, it is argued, would address some of the concerns regarding ethics and mindfulness being unable to realise its full educational potential.

Chapter eleven presents an overview of the study's key findings and outlines the most significant contributions to knowledge. While, in line with other studies, this study explores the positive effects of mindfulness in education and acknowledges its potential to support pupil wellbeing, more uniquely, it also explores a neglected area in education and mindfulness research, i.e., the *acceptability* of mindfulness in a school context in the current educational climate. Exploring the everyday realities in such a context, in turn, reveals fundamental and less investigated ethical concerns and dilemmas, which ultimately contribute to a better understanding of mindfulness in schools. Examining the personal, social, emotional and environmental elements also offers fresh and valuable insight into how mindfulness, taught via an MBI, is received first-hand by the recipients it targets, i.e., pupils and teachers. Such perceptions also tend to be under-explored, yet they are indispensable to ensuring that MBIs are delivered in the most appropriate ways. Building on

this insight, I offer recommendations for future research and briefly discuss current research and developments in education and mindfulness.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Section 2.1 starts with a discussion on the importance of the literature review process. In section 2.2, to meet my desire for transparency throughout this study, as expressed in chapter one, I detail how the information was gained during the literature review process and how the subsequent research was carried out. Sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 provide a review of the literature on the origins of mindfulness, its definitions, conceptualisation and operationalisation, thus providing an early, in-depth description to lay the foundations for a deeper understanding of the analyses, critiques and discussions that subsequently arise. Section 2.6 considers the educational climate the research is situated and critiques current pedagogy concerning pupils' mental health and wellbeing; this provides context to the research and justification. A synopsis of the findings relating to pupils' mental health and wellbeing in the UK is presented in section 2.7, and a brief consideration of the difficulty of defining wellbeing.

The synopsis ultimately provides evidence discussed in section 2.8 for needing more effective interventions and establishes a connection for mindfulness in schools to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing. It leads to an overview in section 2.9 of current research on mindfulness in education and the implementation of MBIs. It highlights the need for a more qualitative approach to researching mindfulness, thus paving the way for a discussion in section 2.10 on the reasons for embracing the qualitative method of journaling for this study.

2.1   Importance of a literature review

A literature review is essential; without one, it is impossible to understand your topic, the key issues and what has already been done on it and how (Hart, 1998). However, according to Hart (1998), the perfect review does not exist as they are all, regardless of topic, written from the reviewer's particular

perspective, which is influenced by their thoughts, views or ideological position within which they are located. Consequently, they are not impartial. With this in mind, it is worth considering the work of seminal philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953); he suggested that some things are accepted as true within certain institutional frameworks, whereas others outside of that way of thinking are deemed false. Although Wittgenstein was not critical of science or the stress placed on general explanatory frameworks, he was concerned with the amount of stress placed on generality such that other ways of understanding the world are excluded (Hart, 1998).

Offering another approach, the influential philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949), when analysing the routes used for putting together an argument, showed that how we think about the world is based on long-standing mistakes; for example, when we treat facts as though they are alike and so can be studied in the same way. Ryle (1949) used the example of a bird and a man and the logic that as they are both things and, therefore, objects, if we were to assume all birds and all men are the same, it would cause confusion, be a reductionist argument, be wrong and, therefore, meaningless. According to Ryle (1949), a similar supposition can be directed at some analogies, for example, defining society by comparing it to an organism, leading to the belief that it is a real object instead of an abstract term. Such misplacement can also occur when using words like beauty, justice, equality, wisdom and so forth, as demonstrated when using the expression 'one is born beautiful'. It is a generalisation that assumes a universal understanding of the concept of beauty; as such, it excludes pertinent questions like what beauty means, who defined it and when, or what comparisons were made or could be made to establish criteria (Ryle, 1949).

Indeed, beauty is a concept, not a fact or object in the world; consequently, as Ryle (1949) pointed out, we cannot all collect information on it and then ultimately arrive at the same stipulate definition. It is equally applicable to mindfulness, for it is also a concept and not a fact or object in the world. In essence, as Hart (1998) clarifies, we need to be cautious when trying to compare things; decisions, conclusions and values cannot always be decided

this way. Indeed, it is not easy to compare the usefulness of one social theory to another by subjecting each to a comparative exercise (Hart, 1998). With this in mind and the impartial nature of a literature review, as suggested earlier, critical reading is an essential element of the literature review process.

2.2   Critical reading

The purpose of critical reading is to assess the strength of the evidence and argument rather than find fault. Critical reading requires awareness by the researcher of their positionality and constant reflection on this to maintain an ethical, balanced and unbiased view. It is helpful to return to Wittgenstein (1953), who made a simple but helpful distinction between puzzles needing more information and those needing clarification. Wittgenstein (1953) maintained that when enough literature has been gathered, the problem of understanding it begins; in this respect, there are two main problems: ignorance, i.e., not knowing enough about some things and needing more information, and confusion, i.e., having the information but not understanding it. Wittgenstein (1953) insisted that clarification be sought rather than acquiring more information. Thus, according to Hart (1998), emphasising description and carefully analysing core texts clarifies our understanding and saves time on relentless searching for more information that only compounds the confusion. Another consideration is that many search strategies produce far more literature than any researcher can read, so care must be taken when choosing where to focus. Indeed, there are ethical dimensions to the choice, and undoubtedly, bias can creep in.

2.3   An ethical literature review process

With ethical dimensions in mind, I considered it essential to read literature representing a variety of understandings, sentiments and opinions, not just those I agreed with. Furthermore, to read the work carefully to understand the arguments presented and what they were based on, thus ensuring I knew how much weight they should carry within my research. Referencing the work was carried out diligently to avoid plagiarism. I began with a systematic

literature search to select the relevant publications. For the electronic searches, I used the following search engines: Google Scholar, Science Direct, EBSCO host (including PubMed, PsychINFO and ERIC), Mendeley, Springer and JSTOR. I am aware that Google Scholar for academic literature does not index everything and that its search function is not neutral. I also subscribed to ResearchGate; this ensured I was alerted to any relevant recent publications.

Several cross-searches were conducted on the term 'mindfulness' merged with various terms connected with education, e.g., primary, secondary, schools, and teachers. An auxiliary manual search of the reference lists in key publications was also carried out, leading to additional journal publications, books and reports I regarded as potentially applicable to the review. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were based on the simple decision to include peer-reviewed publications in English. Papers, book reviews and reports published in non-peer-reviewed journals were excluded. Notably, before 2002, peer-reviewed papers on mindfulness and education are scarce (Schonert-Reichl and Roeser, 2016); consequently, most peer-reviewed publications tend to be after this point.

Without a doubt, mindfulness is enigmatic and, therefore, having conducted a review of the literature, I consider it helpful at this stage to explore the concept of mindfulness to ensure a better understanding of what follows in this thesis. Indeed, there is much literature on the challenge of defining and conceptualising mindfulness resulting from the numerous practices associated with its cultivation. Consequently, abundant definitions and applications of mindfulness are often determined by the author's understanding of the concept and meditative experience (Albrecht et al., 2012).

2.4   Origins of mindfulness

According to Bodhi (2013), examining the etymology of 'mindfulness' reveals how it is essentially a translation of 'sati', a word in ancient India's Pali language that many original Buddhist texts were written. The Pali text scholar

T.W. Rhys Davids was the first to translate the Pali word sati as 'mindfulness' (Sun, 2014). It was meant as memory or recollection; however, 'lucid awareness', i.e., using all the senses, was included later, thus establishing the link between the chief canonical meanings of recollection and clear awareness of the present (Bodhi, 2013). To elucidate further, Bodhi (2013) describes how Sati makes what he terms the 'apprehended object' vivid in the mind; therefore, when the object being cognised relates to the past, its vivid presentation takes the form of memory. Conversely, when the object is a bodily process like in-and-out breathing, or a sensation, emotion or thought, its vivid appearance becomes lucid awareness of the present (Bodhi, 2013).

Mindfulness, as a concept, originates in numerous Eastern meditative traditions (Baer et al., 2006), often being connected to ancient meditation practices, predominantly, but not entirely, in the Buddhist tradition (Shapiro et al., 2006). Traditional Buddhist practice is built on the Dharma of the Four Noble Truths (Gethin, 1998), and in early Buddhist texts, the noble truth of the path to end suffering is summarised as the "noble eightfold path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration" (Gethin, 1998, p. 164). The combined eightfold path factors create a systemic structure that relies heavily on ethics for teachers and practitioners (Gethin, 1998). Mindfulness, the seventh element of the noble eightfold path, is not a marginal practice among Buddhists (Batchelor, 2017); indeed, it is usually conceptualised as a spiritual capacity that, when nurtured, leads to enlightenment or the end of repeated patterns of suffering (Crane, 2009). Thus, for some, mindfulness is the core of the Buddha's teaching (Nhất Hạnh, 1999), and meditation is critical for following the dharma, which includes, as explained by Forbes (2016a, p. 356):

> Wisdom about the insubstantial nature of the self and the impermanence, interdependence, and non-duality of all things in the universe, the moral demand to promote a compassionate life free of suffering for all beings, and the quest to realise non-duality, enlightenment or awakening.

Despite the most highly developed articulations of mindfulness throughout history coming from the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha himself was not

Buddhist (Kabat-Zinn (2003). The term Buddhist was established in the 18th century, at which point it was used by European religious scholars who did not understand what the statues on the alters represented. According to Kabat-Zinn (2006), what these statues did and do signify is a state of mind that the Buddha spoke of as being awake or aware; these are common competencies within us all but often not used. So, while at present, there is an overall consensus on defining mindfulness as present-moment awareness/attention, from a Buddhist interpretation, awareness/attention is part of any discriminative mental state (Dreyfus and Thompson, 2008). They are regarded as facets that serve as prerequisites of mindfulness instead of being the equivalents of mindful (Dreyfus and Thompson, 2008).

2.5   Definitions and conceptualisations of mindfulness

A literature review reveals that it has proven challenging to define and conceptualise mindfulness due to the numerous differing practices used in its development. An ongoing dialogue has existed for years between experts in science and religion seeking to offer theoretical and operational definitions that would allow for meticulous scientific examination of the procedures and mechanisms underpinning mindfulness and its professed benefits (Bishop et al., 2004). According to Albrecht et al., (2012), capturing and defining mindfulness in words is complex; it requires similar consideration to defining human consciousness. Undeniably, most adults in the Western world have barely any or no understanding of the term 'mindfulness' (van Dam et al., 2009), and there is only a vague agreement and understanding of it in the research literature and elsewhere (Grossman, 2008).

Since the 1970s, as secular mindfulness has developed in the West, mediation has primarily been the focus and been offered as a potential cure-all for numerous issues ranging from dependence to pain, reactivity to managing anxiety, as a means of producing more productive workers and even as a way of generating more efficient soldiers. Amid this hype, far less attention has been paid to the meaning and origins of the concept compared to the amount of attention given to what it can do for you (Sun, 2014). Secularisation has

also led to most people understanding mindfulness in no other way than how it is popularly portrayed, which typically takes the description of mindfulness provided by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994, p. 4) as "a helpful, secular technique that involves paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgemental way". The non-judgmental nature of mindfulness, where the present moment is accepted as neither good nor bad, right or wrong, important or not, also has much significance (Hooker and Fodor, 2008). Jon Kabat-Zinn is credited with creating the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programme, with his definition becoming the 'gold standard' in secular settings such as schools, hospitals and the armed forces (Forbes, 2016a).

In an effort to break mindfulness down into a simple, comprehensible construct, Shapiro et al., (2006) suggest it comprises three components, i.e., intention, attention and attitude; all three are crucial to understanding mindfulness. According to Shapiro et al., (2006), the much-favoured contemporary definition of mindfulness provided by Kabat-Zinn represents these axioms. Building on Kabat-Zinn's definition, Williams et al., (2007) stress that this type of attention brings increased awareness, lucidness and acceptance of the here and now, the present being the focus, not the past or future. For Brown et al., (2007), while attention is an essential factor, so too is the quality or nature of attention adopted, as this is what distinguishes mindfulness with its concern for the accuracy, rather than content, of our attention. Therefore, instead of trying to control the content of our attentional field, mindfulness is a 'bare attention' of phenomena, lacking conscious transformation or judgement (Brown et al., 2007). This bare attention provides clarity and detachment to one's awareness, encouraging balanced and lucid thought and cognisant flexibility (Brown and Ryan 2003).

Similarly, de Mello (1992) maintains that mindfulness is not just concerned with paying more attention but paying attention more wisely, utilising all the body's means and senses. It includes self-observation, i.e., being aware of what we are doing, saying and thinking, which, as a result, means our lives are less mechanical (de Mello, 1992). Mindfulness, therefore, can be defined as a totally intentional awareness, unlike rumination, the equivalent of

unawareness and being disengaged (Williams et al., 2007). However, while acknowledging the value of cultivating bare attention, Wallace (2008) also emphasises the mistake of equating mindfulness solely with it, suggesting that cultivating mindfulness has no relationship with ethics or fostering wholesome states of mind and lessening unwholesome states.

For Wallace (2008), the ethical foundation of mindfulness is heartfulness, i.e., generosity, compassion, openness and 'loving-kindness'; all are important for calming the mind, relaxing the body and ultimately gaining insight. To illustrate the importance of ethics and fostering wholesome states of mind, Wallace (2008) uses the example of a sniper hiding in the grass waiting to shoot an enemy, silently aware of whatever arises at each moment; the intent is to kill so the sniper is practising wrong mindfulness and bare attention without an ethical component. Therefore, according to Wallace (2008), right mindfulness has to be integrated with introspection involving clear comprehension, as without being guided by right view or motivated by right intention, one could be practising bare attention without it ever developing into right mindfulness.

In essence, intention, i.e., why one is practising mindfulness needs to be included; indeed, it is a central component of mindfulness and crucial to understanding its process as a whole (Wallace, 2008). However, contemporary mindfulness usually lacks an ethical component (Purser, 2015), with intention often overlooked (Bishop et al., 2004), the consequences are considered in chapters eight and ten, and their implications for practice are discussed in chapter ten. According to Bishop et al., (2004), a more precise explanation of mindfulness requires an additional component, i.e., adopting a specific approach or view towards one's own experience so that mindfulness can be characterised by honesty, inquisitiveness, and acceptance of all aspects of conscious experience. Gethin (2011) likewise considers how contemporary secular mindfulness approaches depict a simplified version of the process, unlike original Buddhist accounts of mindfulness, which include the features of memory, recollection, reminding and presence of mind; these are all usually understated or lost in contemporary mindfulness.

Deepening the discussion, Dreyfus (2011), in his work on the cognitive elements of mindfulness, concludes that the non-judgemental aspects of contemporary interpretations need modifying when considering the original Buddhist emphases; indeed, understanding mindfulness/sati as "present-centred non-evaluative awareness" (Dreyfus, 2011, p. 46) is difficult because it only echoes some of how the original terms are used. For Dreyfus (2011), mindfulness focuses attention on an object, which leads to retaining data to comprehend better the information received by our cognitive apparatus. Therefore, instead of mindfulness being limited to focusing on the present and avoiding passing judgement, it is also a cognitive activity linked to remembering, enabling us to keep relevant information active and integrate it into meaningful patterns and use it for goal-orientated pursuits (Jha, 2010).

So, while numerous contemporary definitions and representations of mindfulness programmes implicitly include the active dimension of awareness (Hyland, 2016a), according to Dreyfus (2011), the importance of the cognitive features of meditation must also be emphasised. By paying close attention, practitioners can improve their cognitive control via an increased ability to hold on to information, thus, seeing their true significance instead of being influenced or overcome by their reactions (Dreyfus, 2011). Through constant practice, such insightful awareness enables us to evaluate our mental states and understand the fluctuating quality of our bodily and mental conditions' which helps liberate our minds from the behaviours and inclinations that tie us to suffering (Dreyfus, 2011).

2.6   Operationalisation of mindfulness

Contemporary efforts to operationalise mindfulness have been repeatedly unsuccessful in providing an unambiguous definition of mindfulness that considers the complexity of the earliest definitions (Chiesa, 2012). As Davis (2012, p. 31) contends:

One of the difficulties in attempting to define mindfulness is that it cannot be easily placed in any one distinct theoretical framework or category such as 'method', 'perspective', 'experience' or 'cognitive process'; mindfulness traverses all of these concepts.

Consequently, mindfulness is mostly referred to as 'a way of being' with prescribed characteristics, activities and programmes intended to encourage this state and ancient meditation techniques rooted in various religions (Albrecht et al., 2012). Davidson (2010) notes how the term 'mindfulness' is used and operationalised differently, i.e., a state, a trait or an intervention. As a trait, it can be measured by the Mindful Awareness Scale (Brown and Ryan, 2003), where participants are required to rate items such as 'I find it difficult to stay focused on what is happening in the present'. It is a strategy based on the assumption that individuals differ in a dispositional quality of mindfulness; these differences arise via a complex interaction of genetic predisposition, environmental circumstances and explicit training (Davidson (2010).

Mindfulness can be viewed as a state when training designed to strengthen mindfulness through mental exercises has been used and where participants are tested before and after this training (Davidson, 2010). Alternatively, where long-term meditation practitioners have been tested to assess the likely impact of the cumulative training on both behavioural and neural measures, the term 'mindfulness' refers to quite different types of processes (Davidson, 2010). According to Davidson (2010), while it is acceptable to infer mindfulness is operative in some form in each of these different ways, it is also essential to not assume mindfulness operationalised in each of these ways is the same.

Regarding the operationalisation of mindfulness, in recent times, its related practices have been employed effectively with clinical populations of adults to treat various illnesses such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder (Baer, 2011) and chronic stress and pain-related disorders (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Such effectiveness has seen mindfulness shift towards non-clinical adult populations and become increasingly popular. It is being employed in a

proactive, preventative way in line with positive psychology, which, instead of focusing on pathology, aims to understand and build those factors that allow individuals, communities and societies to flourish (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). Positive psychology interventions, therefore, aim to increase positive feelings, behaviours and cognitions; these are aims in common with secular mindfulness.

According to Allen et al., (2021), applications of MBIs for hedonia or hedonic wellbeing i.e., the pursuit of pleasure, comfort and reducing pain, are employed far more frequently than MBIs for eudaimonic enhancement, i.e., the pursuit and/or experience of virtue, personal growth, self-actualisation, flourishing, excellence and meaning. Arguably, research within applied positive psychology also tends to focus on personal wellbeing, with communal wellbeing often neglected (Allen et al., 2021). Further still, in common with secular mindfulness, positive psychology also aligns itself well with neoliberal responsibility, where people are encouraged to ignore the social conditions contributing to their own and others' unhappiness and focus instead on themselves, their brain, and just to carry on and be happy (Forbes, 2019). Promoting social conformity and adaptation is a criticism levelled at both MBIs and positive psychology.

According to Wong and Roy (2017), a positive only focus is based on dichotomous thinking, i.e., one can only focus on the positive or the negative. In reality, however, the positives and negatives cannot be separated; they frequently co-exist in various combinations and, from a Yin-Yang perspective, opposites often complement and nurture each other to contribute to our existence and wellbeing (Wong and Roy, 2017). Indeed, research reveals there are upsides to the negatives (Kashdan and Biswas-Diener, 2015) and downsides to the positives (Forgas, 2013). More critically, it could be argued that emphasising only positive feelings to children teaches them to judge any thoughts or feelings contrary to those which are optimistic or happy as being unwelcome, even harmful, as well as how to avoid the warnings of their conscience such that they can feel good even when they have done something bad (Wickelgren, 2012).

Allen et al., (2021) highlight the importance of developing interventions that focus on enhancing positive potentials, particularly eudaimonic enhancement. Studies indicate that physical pleasures derived from hedonia are not enough to experience wellbeing (Aknin et al., 2009), particularly when, for example, chronic illness, physical or psychological pain, financial insecurity, social or political unrest and bereavement are involved. Allen et al., (2021) stress that eudaimonia is inevitable to maintain general wellbeing, contentment, happiness, and a sense of meaning and purpose.

Nevertheless, to date, research has supported the shift toward mindfulness being employed in a more proactive and preventative way in line with positive psychology. It demonstrates the benefits of mindfulness on psychological and social functioning (Fredrickson et al., 2008); indeed, it helps in understanding the nature of our emotions and what causes them, thus promoting a more stable and healthy comprehension of positive and negative emotions (Brown et al., 2007). While not preventing negative emotions, mindfulness changes how we experience them and respond to them (Farb et al., 2010). Consequently, mindfulness is considered helpful for cultivating enhanced emotional wellbeing and mental health (Weare, 2012, 2013), promoting less harmful and more positive emotions (Brown et al., 2011) and reducing rumination (Kumar et al., 2008).

In sum, however, there is no agreement on a precise definition of mindfulness (Davidson, 2010). Conceptualisations differ between authors (Grossman, 2008), with the very meaning of the word 'mindfulness' remaining elusive, open to interpretation and morphing into different dimensions in diverse contexts and settings (Grossman, 2019). Nevertheless, despite this lack of agreement, due to the success of mindfulness in clinical settings, it has become increasingly popular in non-clinical settings such as business, the armed forces and education for supporting mental health and wellbeing.

2.7   Current educational climate

It has long been recognised in education how essential it is for emotional and social needs to be met before pupils can concentrate on intellectual matters (Maslow, 1970). Goleman (1995), in his ground-breaking work, redefining intelligence and success, highlights how emotional and social competencies are more influential than cognitive abilities for personal, career and academic success.   More recently, Weare (2015) has reiterated how children with greater wellbeing, lower levels of mental health problems and greater emotional attachment to school attain higher grades, better examination results, better attendance and are less likely to drop out of school. Undeniably, childhood and adolescence provide essential opportunities to develop foundations for positive mental health and prevent mental health problems; schools are unique places to help achieve this (Weare and Nind, 2011). Undoubtedly, a school focus on mental health and wellbeing provides a happy environment, prepares pupils for the future and directly supports effective learning (Weare, 2010).

Unfortunately, though, as Todd (2015) points out, within formal education, due to league tables and high-stakes testing, the tendency is to emphasise gaining skills, acquiring competencies, and obtaining facts.   While comparatively benevolent aims, when accompanied with scant or no appreciation for the unpredictable happenings and doubts that are a part of life, schools run the risk of not creating the opportunities for engaging pupils' awe, enjoyment, interest and inquisitiveness about their life experiences (Todd, 2015). Gouda et al., (2016) likewise suggest that modern schools often represent a source of stress and a miniature depiction of an overbearing society's demands on its future, fully functional citizens.

Evidence of this can be seen in the constant changes made by the government to raise academic standards. For example, the national curriculum has endured many changes, initiatives, an update in 1995, an overhaul in 1997, further changes in 2007 and more flexibility introduced in 2008. It was followed in 2010 by instruction from a new government to disregard the latest

changes and return to the 2000 version. Other alterations have included the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) for seven, eleven and fourteen-year-old pupils, A* grades, AS levels and the baccalaureate. In addition, the debatably negative effect of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) - the new inspectorate as of 1992, with a continued focus placed firmly on targets, planning and restricted syllabus (Hanson, 2018). Consequently, tension exists between existing school structures, roles and cultures, and promoting mental health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to the curriculum, pastoral care, discipline, and teacher/pupil relationships (Spratt et al., 2006).

Watkins (2008) stated more than a decade ago, a view that remains equally valid today, that the national system of standardised testing, constant evaluation and monitoring, league tables, tight budgets, reputations and recruitment potential all result in a narrowing of the teacher's role to one of deliverer with an associated reduction in their pastoral roles and connections. It directly opposes the evidence on the links between wellbeing, learning and school improvement (Weare, 2015). Therefore, for teachers, this "climate of performativity" (Watkins, 2008, p.7) increases tension between meeting government requirements and pupils' needs. Undoubtedly, in a competitive scenario, including mental, emotional and wellbeing issues contrasts sharply with the world of curriculum objectives and targets, leaving them to appear mutually exclusive (Spratt et al., 2006). As a result, due to time constraints, schools often attempt to address wellbeing by bolting fragmented initiatives onto existing systems (Spratt et al., 2006), with each new initiative struggling to be timetabled in the school day. It can leave teachers wondering how to help pupils develop coping strategies while simultaneously achieving a good grade in a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Maths (Spratt et al., 2006).

Consequently, it is as Claxton (2008) maintains, we have all now become very familiar with the perspective of qualifications, i.e., monitoring and measuring how much of the curriculum has successfully entered a pupil's mind; we are also equally familiar with the perspective of content, i.e., the concern for selecting and organising the subject matter of schooling. However, we are

far less familiar with what Claxton (2008, p. vii) terms the perspective of the "epistemic apprenticeship", i.e., the opinion that school is a long-drawn-out training in specific ways of thinking, learning and knowing and acquiring skills and attitudes to ensure pupils are prepared for the future. It raises the question of what kind of education would meet the needs of pupils in the twenty-first century? In chapter ten, it is a question I return to where the role of education, as revealed by mindfulness research, is examined and where the suggestion of a different kind of pedagogy, a more contemplative and transformative one, is considered.

In sum, it would appear the current education system seems woefully inadequate for preparing children to manage what is an increasingly erratic and uncertain society and live contented and productive lives. It is particularly so when considered in the light of data relating to the issue of education and pupils' mental health and wellbeing, as discussed in the next section.

2.8   Education and pupils' mental health and wellbeing

Wellbeing is a term often used in education as it takes away some of the apprehension prompted by the expression 'mental health'; indeed, mental health tends to be put alongside wellbeing, i.e., mental health and wellbeing, to help lose some of its medicalised and negative connotations. Undoubtedly, wellbeing is a complex concept with no universal agreement on a definition (Dodge et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that it is a multi-layered construct (Seligman, 2011) that comprises emotional, social and functional components (Forgeard et al., 2011). Dodge et al., (2012, p. 230) explain wellbeing as "the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced". It means that each time an individual meets a challenge, the system of challenges and resources becomes imbalanced, necessitating that the individual changes their resources to meet the particular Challenge (Kloep et al., 2009). If someone has the psychological, social and physical means needed to deal with specific psychological, social and physical challenges, they have stable wellbeing; when a person has more

challenges than resources needed to deal with them, the balance tips unfavourably impacting negatively their wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012).

Mental health issues are frequently in the news headlines, with children and young people particularly vulnerable. The Mental Health Foundation (2018) reported that around one in ten children and young people would be affected by a mental health problem; worryingly, seventy per cent of them will not have had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age. In 2015 the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) reported that in Britain, the number of young people seeking counselling had increased by two hundred per cent recently, with education being one of the predominant causes of anxiety for children (Adams, 2015). A survey carried out by Barnardos in 2018 revealed that almost half of the children in England aged between twelve and sixteen feel sad or anxious at least once every week, worrying over their future with school being their primary concern. Barnardos (2018) also reported that stress at school is a worry for eighty-three per cent of pupils aged sixteen.

Children's environments can be highly influential in promoting or damaging mental wellbeing (Denman et al., 2002); thus, a school environment can enhance or damage pupils' wellbeing (Spratt et al., 2006). Schools play an essential role in children's development, from peer relationships and social interactions to academic achievement and cognitive process, emotional control and behavioural expectations, and physical and moral development. These are all reciprocally affected by mental health (Fazel et al., 2014). Undoubtedly, as children and adolescents spend more time in school than in any other formal institutional structure, their mental health should be acknowledged within the education system (Zenner et al., 2014).

Indeed, research supports the need within educational curriculums to promote wellbeing and mental health. In 2007 UNICEF assessed pupil wellbeing across twenty-one countries; British pupils were among the saddest in the Western world. In 2013 a comparative report by UNICEF on pupil wellbeing in twenty-nine countries revealed a similar picture. A report by Manchester University

in 2017 titled 'Suicide by Children and Young People' identified suicide in the UK as the leading cause of death in young people, accounting for fourteen per cent of deaths in ten to nineteen-year-olds. Many mental health problems, e.g., depression, anxiety and eating disorders, tend to peak during adolescence and have similar risk factors. School-based prevention programmes provide an opportunity to access a wide range of the population during a critical period of development (Johnson et al., 2016).

The significance of school for mental health and wellbeing and the opportunities for programmes to support it has been apparent for a while, with the last twenty years seeing substantial growth in mental health research and programmes (Weare, 2010). Indeed, applied developmental, psychological and educational sciences are increasingly considering innovative programmes and practices that address problems before they begin or as and when they arise, as well as building strengths like resilience and compassion that contribute to the wellbeing of others and are linked with human progress (Durlak et al., 2011). Consequently, and following the recognised success of mindfulness therapies with adults in clinical settings, school-based psychologists have advanced towards incorporating and adapting mindfulness for specialist treatment with children (Semple et al., 2010), regarding it as a potentially useful way of re-envisioning education (Schonert-Reichl and Roeser, 2016).

2.9   Mindfulness in education - overview of current research

Practices considered a decade ago by mainstream educators as fringe or marginal are now welcomed and openly seen as essential for managing a flourishing classroom (Albrecht et al., 2012), as demonstrated by the growing interest in the transference of mindfulness initiatives into classroom settings (Shapiro et al., 2014). Studies claim that such a move could improve pupils' brain functioning and change brain structure that supports academic competence (Lyons and DeLange, 2016) by positively impacting various outcomes. Outcomes such as improved attention, ability to better regulate emotions and greater cognitive processing (Brown et al., 2007; Schmertz et

al., 2008; Weare, 2012, 2013;); higher self-esteem (Brown and Ryan, 2003); and a decrease in negative affect and improvement in metacognition and executive functioning (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Vickery and Dorjee, 2016).

While beneficial in terms of supporting academic success, several studies have also shown the benefits of mindfulness training for children with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and high anxiety (Napoli et al., 2005) and for improving mental health and wellbeing (Huppert and Johnson, 2010; Felver et al., 2015). Introducing mindfulness into schools could provide an inexpensive and powerful tool to meet some of the aims listed (Kenwright et al., 2021). Currently, though, in terms of school-based implementation, while reference has been made to implementing mindfulness as a feasible and acceptable modality of intervention (Weare, 2012, 2013; Felver et al., 2015), data is minimal (Gouda et al., 2016; Semple and Droutman, 2017).

Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010) point out how the success of clinical studies rests on clear, very distinct outcome variables connected to reducing or improving specific clinical symptoms; however, in contrast, research within schools is potentially more complicated. As Carsley et al., (2017) highlight, focusing on the effectiveness of an intervention does not take into account the impact of particular developmental periods and other potentially critical considerations for delivering these programmes in schools, e.g., the person presenting the programme, teacher versus an outside facilitator, developmental period and type of intervention to ensure pupils experience optimal benefits of the MBI. In short, therefore, there is a need to account for the various social and contextual variables and targeting a more extensive range of positive and negative outcomes (Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor, 2010; Zenner et al., 2014).

2.10 The need for a qualitative approach to researching mindfulness

In response to minimal data available on school-based implementation of mindfulness, this study sought to explore the reality of introducing

mindfulness into a school context. In contrast to the few studies that have been carried out, it explored in-depth not only the *potentiality* but also the *acceptability* of mindfulness, most notably from the perspective of the recipients of the MBI, i.e., the pupils and teachers (Crawford et al., 2020). Further contrast to other studies comes by way of the research methods employed. Most approaches to researching mindfulness are contrary and antithetical to its real meaning and origins (Crawford et al., 2021). The qualitative methods of autoethnography, more specifically journaling informed by action research, adopted and championed in the study featured in this thesis provided a more holistic way of gaining in-depth access to the unique and often underexplored inner life of those experiencing an MBI (Crawford et al., 2021). They illuminated the impact of mindfulness upon the individuals receiving the training, their experience of the process of learning mindfulness and implementational issues for the school.

The methods chosen for the investigation are also particularly synergistic with mindfulness; a synergy examined and discussed in chapter four, where the benefits of employing a more qualitative approach to researching mindfulness are discussed. The methods align with the social constructionist and interpretivist approach to research which focus on the process in which meanings are created, negotiated, sustained and modified, the aim being to comprehend the world of lived experience from the viewpoint of those who reside within it (Schwandt, 1998). These approaches also regard the researcher as much a part of the research as the participants and acknowledge social settings impact and provide meanings to experiences (Schwandt, 1998).

As the reflexive researcher in this investigation, I influenced all stages of the research, bringing to it my own beliefs, interests and concerns. The researcher's influence is noted by Koch and Harrington (1998), who emphasise how the researcher's existence in and authority over the creation of the research project determines how the research question is framed, the methodology adopted and eventually, the type of knowledge generated. By becoming immersed in the research in this way, I considered I would be able

to offer greater depth and richness in the description of the phenomena denoting the complicated and multidimensional nature of the subject and the necessity to consider the varied explanations and meanings given to explain it (Burr, 2015).

As Ochieng (2009) suggests, the best way to comprehend what is going on is by becoming absorbed and engrossed in it and by being adaptable in the inquiry of people in their setting. Undoubtedly, therefore, in choosing these methods, my research was underpinned by an anti-positivist epistemology where knowledge is viewed as personal, subjective and unique (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Anti-positivism's epistemology is against using objective scientific inquiry to try and find generalised truths (Burr, 2015). From an anti-positivist perspective, the social world is fundamentally relativistic; it is understood by the individuals directly involved in the activities under study (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). There is the recognition that it is only possible to understand by inhabiting the frame of reference of the participant in action; "one has to understand from the inside rather than the outside" (Burrel and Morgan, 1979, p. 5). From this perspective, social science is essentially a subjective rather than an objective enterprise.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an early in-depth description of mindfulness to understand better the issues discussed later in this thesis. The educational climate within which the research took place was described, and a brief discussion followed on children's mental health and wellbeing, undoubtedly a catalyst for the growing popularity of transferring mindfulness into educational settings. An overview of current studies on mindfulness in education was included in the chapter to illustrate how research on mindfulness has been dominated by medical research over the last two decades (Brown et al., 2007), thus, paving the way for the suggestion that more qualitative approaches to researching mindfulness are needed.

Chapter 3: Reflections

Introduction

Reflection was an essential and ever-present element of this thesis; I recorded my reflections in a journal throughout the research process. Ultimately journaling, influenced by action research, became the primary research method. Reference is made to both methods in this chapter, particularly action research in terms of the researcher's dual role; however, a complete definition and discussion of journaling and action research are provided in chapter four. This chapter starts with a brief definition of reflection. In section 3.2, there is a diagram of Gibbs's (1988) Reflective Cycle and description as it was the model that guided the structure of my reflections written during my attendance on an MBSR course. In section 3.3, I share the reflections with discussion and reference to the relevant literature entwined throughout.

Further reflections from my attendance on the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP, 2013) Paws.b course are shared in section 3.4; Paws.b was the MBI used to introduce mindfulness to the junior school featured in the study. Again, commentary and reference to the relevant literature are woven throughout; however, the reflections follow a different format to the reflections guided by the Gibbs model to allow consideration of the three critical issues that emerged during the literature review and my attendance on the course.

3.1 Defining reflection

For Gibbs (1988), in order to learn, just having an experience is insufficient; we also need to reflect on the experience, or we may quickly forget it, or its learning potential limited or lost. While the concept of reflective practice has existed since ancient times, more recent times have witnessed a renewed interest in reflective practice for understanding and learning from experiences (Hickson, 2011). Returning to the main sources of the notion of reflection, primarily in Dewey, Schön and Wertheimer's work, reflection is a descriptive

notion instead of a prescribed or narrow one and refers to spontaneous, every day, real thinking (Clarà, 2015). It is defined by its role of affording coherence to unclear situations and working as a constant interplay between inference and observation (Clarà, 2015). Johns (2013) describes reflection as a 'window' the practitioner can look through to observe and focus on self within the context of their own life experiences. As such, it enables the practitioner to confront, comprehend and work towards correcting inconsistencies that exist within their practice between what is desirable and actual practise (Johns, 2013).

For Moon (2005), reflection is a kind of mental processing used to fulfil a purpose or accomplish an anticipated outcome; by reflecting, we better understand complicated or disorganised ideas. Thus, it is primarily based on the reprocessing of information, comprehension and emotions we already possess (Moon, 2005). Ultimately, however, while it can be argued that reflective practice does not have a precise definition and comprises diverse theoretical perspectives, what can be agreed upon is the value of reflective practice and that there are various ways to go about it (Hickson, 2011).

3.2   Gibbs Reflective Cycle

The structure for my reflections from the MBSR course shared in this chapter adheres to Gibbs's (1988) Reflective Cycle, where a 'structured debriefing' exists to support experiential learning. Although primarily designed as a constant improvement cycle for a repeated experience, it is also useful for a one-off experience. The structured debriefing consists of: - a description of the experience, feelings and thoughts about it, an honest evaluation of the experience, an analysis to fully understand the situation, a conclusion, i.e., what was learnt and what could have been done differently, and an action plan for how a similar situation in the future could be dealt with differently, or how general changes considered appropriate could be made (Gibbs, 1988).

The diagram below relates the stages of a complete 'structured debriefing' to the stages of the experiential learning cycle:
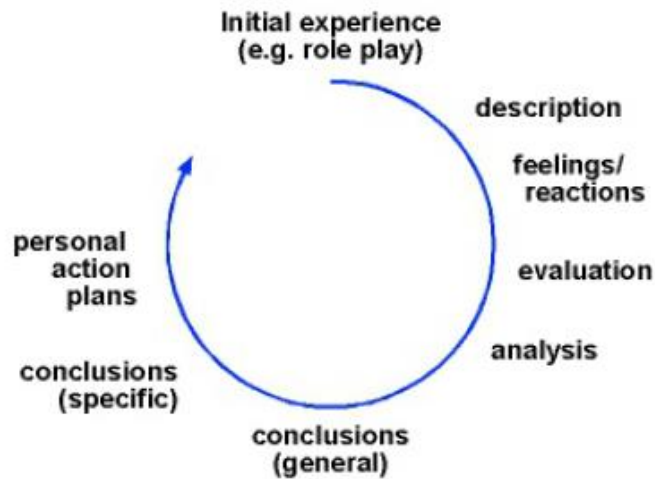
Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988, p. 50)

3.3 Reflections from the MBSR course – cycle one

The following reflections result from the journal I wrote while attending an MBSR course during the summer of 2016 and follow the Gibbs model.

3.3.1 Description

In 2016 I attended an INSET day for professional training and development, which included a presentation on the benefits of mindfulness for pupils. My role as the whole school lead for behaviour and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) led me to think that implementing mindfulness could be beneficial to the school for improving behaviour and raising academic standards. It never occurred to me that mindfulness could play any part in my own life; on the contrary. However, had it occurred at that time, I know I would have dismissed it because of lack of time; after all, I had no time to even think about my unhealthy work/life balance and how it was making me ill. Regularly I was evicted by the school caretaker wanting to lock up, after which I would go home and continue to work for most of the evening.

For months, while intermittently ill with one virus after another, I dragged myself into work with a strong sense of teacher's duty mixed in with what I now see as the mistaken, probably egotistical, belief of being indispensable until I was finally too ill and unable to do so. According to Jennings (2015), new levels of accountability mean teachers are required to show academic progress frequently without the support systems in place that they need and under challenging circumstances. Under these stressful conditions, they become more likely to burn out (Schussler et al., 2015). Burnout was where I was heading; I often worked a seventy-plus hour week, sixty-five being around the average number of hours for a primary school teacher (DfE, 2014).

Upon recommendation for research purposes in the summer of 2016, I attended an eight-week MBSR course once a week for two hours. My desire to implement and research mindfulness was considered solely for its use to me as a teacher and potential researcher. Reading my reflections now, my complete lack of self-awareness about my own life is astonishing to me. For centuries self-awareness has been accepted as key to leading a successful, well-balanced life. Self-awareness is about paying close attention to the quality of our thoughts, communications and behaviour and understanding how we are as individuals (Emotional Intelligence Institute, 2007).

3.3.2 Feelings

The reflections in this section focus on journal entries written during weeks one and seven of the MBSR course, as they contain defining moments for me in terms of developing greater self-awareness and changing my life. The reflections from week one record mixed feelings; ones of discomfort at my inability to sit still during the mindfulness practices and inadequacy that as an adult, not only was I unable to sit still, but I could not focus on my breathing. Reference is made to how my mind wandered incessantly with thoughts of what I needed to plan, prepare and do, a constant and endless passing of thoughts that felt noisy to me in the quiet room.   I found focusing on my breathing for even five seconds virtually impossible. The reflections in my

journal conclude by describing feelings of stress, a clenched jaw and tight shoulders, lying there in unfamiliar surroundings with unfamiliar people, feeling uneasy as I gained an increased awareness of my inability to focus on one thing for a few seconds; of ultimately having no control over my own mind.

In week seven of the course, I gained some much-needed enlightenment regarding how I lived my life. I realised that I had stopped noticing small things that can bring enjoyment or a sense of peace. I had fallen into the habit of ignoring present moments, favouring ones that might come in the future, which, according to Kabat-Zinn (2004), results in a lack of awareness of our lives and a lack of understanding of our own mind and its influence over our perceptions and actions. It limits our views on what it means to be a person, how we are connected to each other and the world around us (Kabat-Zinn, 2004). While my journal documents how my uneasy feelings with the group subsided over the eight weeks, my overly busy mind remained constant, as did the feelings of annoyance accompanying this, albeit in varying degrees of intensity depending on how kind I was feeling towards myself.

3.3.3 Evaluation

The first entry in my journal states that I felt things had not gone well, having spent most of the session feeling in a state of heightened anxiety. Reflecting now, I realise I had unrealistically high expectations of myself. Mindfulness had sounded simple in theory, yet I had found it challenging and the mind wandering annoying in practice. Our tutor's constant gentle and reassuring emphasis on being kind to ourselves and expecting our minds to wander 'as that is what the mind does' went some way to persuade me that I was not a lost cause. Indeed, as Kabat-Zinn (1990) explains, mindfulness is not about pushing thoughts away or trying to stop them. It is about making room for them, observing them as thoughts, letting them be, then using the breath as an anchor for observing and a reminder to stay calm and focused.

3.3.4 Analysis

Week one of the course revealed my lack of control over my thoughts and minimal ability to be still and focused. However, by week seven, I caught a glimpse of the beginnings of an understanding that mindfulness is a way of helping you regain control of your life (Williams and Penman, 2011). It provides a way of guiding us towards taking charge of the direction and quality of our lives, including relationships within our family, our connection to work and the larger world and planet and, most fundamentally, our relationship with ourselves (Kabat-Zinn, 2004). For me, a significant moment occurred in week seven, stemming from a simple activity involving reflection and resulting in greater self-awareness and a realisation of what my life had become. Our mindfulness tutor gave us a sheet of paper containing two columns and told us to think of a typical day and list the things we felt nurtured us in one column and the things we felt depleted us in the other.

While being realistic and expecting to have a few things written in the deplete column, I had not expected to have only one thing written in the nurture column. At this point in my life, on a typical day, going to sleep at night was the only thing I considered nurturing. It was a defining moment where I knew the balance was tipped and not in a good way and that I, as a person, not me as the teacher or potential researcher, needed mindfulness. But not the kind of mindfulness-based on it just being a good idea, and why did I not think of it before? As Kabat-Zinn (2011) warns, that kind of mindfulness is at best a fleeting idea and hardly ever gains sustained traction. Mindfulness is a practice rather than a good idea; its development is a process that grows with time and deepens with commitment. It was this kind of mindfulness I needed in my life.

3.3.5 Conclusion

Throughout the course and subsequent reflections, I have realised that only over time and with practice can we become more aware of our thoughts and feelings, both those that gain our attention and those we find easy to let go

of. While this sounds simple, it is deceptively challenging. Sometimes, we may barely be able to keep our mind focused on one breath before it wanders off in thought (Jennings, 2015). A truth also observed by Kabat-Zinn (1990), who describes how challenging it is to sit at home with nothing to watch but our own breath, body and mind, nothing to entertain us and nowhere to go, and how soon we notice that at least part of us does not want to stay doing this for long.

I am now gaining a better understanding of how the mind works. How it constantly seeks satisfaction, plans to make things happen how we want and protects against what we do not want to happen or things we fear (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). I also have a better understanding of how this impacts how we fill our days. The constant chase to do what we think we should but with little enjoyment due to time constraints, being overly stressed or overwhelmed by too many commitments, responsibilities and, at times, our roles, even when what we do is essential, and we have chosen to do them all (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). With this understanding, alongside acknowledging how very fortunate I am to have the agency to do so, I have reduced my working hours considerably and taken on other challenges, ones more welcome in my life.

3.3.6 Action plan

The mindfulness 'journey' I find myself on has evolved and continues to evolve. The concept of mindfulness is less confusing, and I have developed a greater self-awareness. I will continue practising mindfulness with a kinder, more patient and less judgemental attitude towards myself.

3.4   Reflections from the MiSP Paws.b course – cycle two

After completing the MBSR course, I continued to practice mindfulness daily for eight months. The regular practice fulfilled both personal and professional needs. Personally, it met my need for a calmer and more measured approach to life; professionally, it fulfilled the requirements for being accepted onto the MiSP (2013) Paws.b course. In February 2017, I enrolled on a three-day

training course in London. The course consisted of around fifty participants comprising mainly teachers, educational psychologists and counsellors, most from the UK, others from Europe and some from further afield. The course aimed to teach the participants how to teach six one-hour mindfulness sessions to children between the ages of seven and eleven (see appendix 1 outline of Paws.b lesson aims). While I was there as a trainee mindfulness teacher, I was also there to research.

It was through listening to the other trainees' stories on implementing some form of mindfulness into their school, how they had been the lone voice or met with cynicism, disrespect or referred to as 'tree huggers', I became increasingly interested in the impact of people's perceptions of mindfulness when introducing it into a school. As a mainstream teacher, I was well aware of the lightning-speed interventions come and go and the various reasons why. I was also well aware that I was preparing to take yet another intervention into a school, and while I believed the beautifully packaged Paws.b programme, 'sold' with conviction and passion, would be too good for a school to disregard, I wondered if, in reality, this would be the case.

I reflected in my journal throughout the three-day course; however, by the end of day one, three issues, in particular, had already emerged, which I decided needed further exploration: -

- The participant versus the researcher dynamic.
- The product versus its implementation.
- The concept of mindfulness versus the culture of schools.

3.4.1 Issue 1 – Participant versus researcher dynamic

Journal - Monday 13 February 2017 – day one

My mind felt in turmoil today; it had been challenging for me to stay focused on the course as I was also trying to find potential interviewees for my research. The irony of attending a course that trained us to teach

children how to stay focused was not lost on me. It's left me wondering how it will be during the cycles of research when I, the Paws.b teacher, will be teaching mindfulness to children in a junior school, while simultaneously I, the researcher, will be focusing on researching introducing mindfulness into the school.

Reading these reflections now reveals the predicament I felt I was in due to combining roles, i.e., the researcher and the trainee Paws.b teacher. The researcher's dual role as both researcher and implementer is characteristic of action research (Olsen and Lindøe, 2004), which was the method that influenced and informed this study's research process. While chapter four, section 4.8, provides a detailed definition and discussion on action research, in this chapter, I focus only on the researcher's dual role as it was an issue that arose during my reflections. Unlike research conducted in the positivist paradigm, where the observer and observed are separated, action research is carried out in the constructivist paradigm, where knowledge, understanding and meaning are created in the relations and connections between people and the setting they live and operate in (Postholm, 2008).

Irrefutably, however, this is a fundamental challenge of action research, i.e., having to combine deep empathic and political involvement with critical and reflective research, thus necessitating that the researcher treats their own experiences at 'arm's length' (Levin, 2012). It is challenging both cognitively and emotionally (Postholm and Skrøvset, 2013). A critique of action research centres precisely on this combining of roles - the critical researcher (as evaluator) with the active role as a change agent – often because it is inconsistent with scientific research (Olsen and Lindøe, 2004). Undeniably, as Cook (2006) observes, judgements are often considered more valid and unbiased when the researcher keeps a distance from the participants in the study and avoids being pulled into the complexities of the participants' conversations, opinions, expressions and ideas of what constitutes quality. It is also considered less likely that there is a loss of critical perspective and validity and less bias ascribed when the researcher maintains a given criterion for evaluative critique (Cook, 2006).

Despite this, Cook (2006) also acknowledges that externally imposed systems and measures may not be refined enough to allow the researcher to get to the very core of what gives a project meaning; consequently, claims for accountability using predetermined assumptions and similar external measures are not necessarily useful. Indeed, as Cook (2006) maintains, they can reduce the 'knowing' to the measurement of certain observable or reproducible variables that involve finding particular predetermined quantifiable characteristics and overlook the vaguer elements of a project that, although problematic to quantify, may have a crucial impact on development. Furthermore, it may bias the evaluation toward collating data about and supporting what is already known instead of what is as-yet to be known and understood (Cook, 2006). In essence, making decisions on representations of quality without investigating the complicated and intricate aspects of everyday practice is the equivalent in standard scientific terms to reaching a decision before knowing every fact (Cook, 2006).

> ### *Journal - Tuesday 14 February 2017 – day two*
>
> *A few trainees spoke about their attempts to implement some form of mindfulness in their schools. Unfortunately, their experiences were negative regarding how welcome mindfulness had been. However, they remained enthusiastic about continuing to try, hence their attendance on the course. I tried harder to stay focused on the training today to ensure I'll be skilled enough to do justice to delivering the MBI. I still felt pulled in different directions, though, on the one hand, not wanting to alienate myself by appearing to be on the course for different reasons to the other attendees. Yet, on the other, I was there for a different reason - to do research. Thrown into the mix, I was keen to be open and honest with the other attendees and course leaders about my research.*

These reflections show how I wanted to be transparent regarding my role as a researcher yet 'fit in' with the other trainees, and although I was there for

research purposes, I was also there for the same reason as them. While it was a short time to have this dual role of researcher and trainee mindfulness teacher, it was an intense time with everyone quickly becoming friends due to their shared vision. The friendship drove my desire to be transparent with them and consider my stance from an ethical perspective. Indeed, Trondensen and Sandaunet (2009) highlight how the researcher's dual role, while being a distinctive feature of action research, is not without its challenges, particularly those relating to ethical considerations. Such considerations can result, for example, from the long relationship between the researcher and participants where feelings of obligation to help the researcher succeed with the research can develop (Trondensen and Sandaunet, 2009).

Olsen and Lindøe (2004) consider the legitimacy of the researcher's dual role among the formal stakeholders and those being researched; when differing interests are at stake, it is not difficult to confuse roles when there is pressure from numerous assorted stakeholders. Tranquist (n.d.) notes how, from a historical perspective, doubts surround the real motive for action research. Questions are still asked regarding the extent to which Kurt Lewin, often regarded as the founder of action research (discussed later in chapter four), and his supporters were democratic or controlling in their attitude towards social change (Tranquist, n.d.). According to Schein (1995), when Lewin initially formulated the concept of action research, it was plain that the researchers were trying to work out a way of successfully implementing the changes they regarded as fitting. While acknowledging these challenges, Trondensen and Sandaunet (2009) also point to the advantage of this dual role in that it allows the researcher to get close to the socio-cultural processes framing the introduction of something new usually, gaining deep access is challenging in a more distant role.

Extending this discussion, Somekh (2002) maintains how researchers who are not part of the action context tend to simplify or distort their analysis, often assuming an unsophisticated cause-effect connection between phenomena and events. Indeed, the seminal sociologist Herbert Blumer (1969) cautioned that trying to capture the interpretive process while simultaneously remaining

the objective observer and not participating in the 'acting unit' risked subjectivism. Blumer (1969) maintained there was a greater likelihood of the objective observer filling in the process of interpretation with their surmises rather than trying to catch the process as it occurred in the experience of the 'acting unit' that uses it.

Journal – Wednesday 15 February 2017 – day three

Today I listened again to some of the trainees chatting about their negative encounters with other members of their school when they tried to do some mindfulness practices. I'm now starting to think about the importance of researching just how acceptable mindfulness is for a school rather than focusing on implementing it, which was my original thought for the research. I doubt that mindfulness will get successfully implemented if it's not even seen as an acceptable intervention in the first place.   As a trainee mindfulness teacher, I'm starting to feel my confidence wane when thinking of just how welcome I'll be at the school I'm doing my research in when I turn up armed with another new intervention. Some staff already know me as a teacher; however, that's changed, and I no longer have this in common with them.   Instead, I'm a researcher introducing another new intervention while fully aware that they're all pushed to their limits. The other trainees are hopeful the MBI will answer their implementation problems and they'll be taken more seriously. I'm wondering how much it will change other people's perceptions.   I hope my story doesn't end up as another negative experience to add to theirs. I noticed how implementation issues and queries were side-stepped again today.

My reflections continue to reveal a growing apprehension about how welcome the new intervention will be in the school where I will introduce it.   The trainees' negative experiences, combined with the course providers' lack of support regarding implementation, were not helping assuage my apprehension. The reflections show me heading towards feeling concerned about future research relationships.   Johnsen and Normann (2004) describe

how combining various roles, the need for good practice and the potential complexities of action research projects can result in the action researcher and his/her collaborators finding it challenging to have the required awareness of the different roles and their implications. The role of the action researcher requires shifting between closeness and distance, participant and observer, learner and teacher (Johnsen and Norman, 2004).

3.4.2 Issue 2 - Product versus its implementation

Journal - Monday 13 February 2017 – day one

In session one, we were asked to think about what we hoped to achieve from the training; to write down one hope and one fear on a post-it note and stick it on the wall to share with the group. My fear rested on the acceptance of mindfulness in the school where I'd be introducing it, a fear of scepticism and eye-rolling at another intervention added to an already overloaded curriculum. It was a fear shared by the majority of the other trainees.

My reflections draw attention to the fact that developing effective interventions is only the first step; as mentioned in chapter one, transferring them into real-world settings often presents the most significant challenge (Durlak and DuPre, 2008), a sentiment expressed by the majority attending the Paws. b course. Implementation theories advise that an essential first step is to consider the readiness or capacity before a school begins preparing to implement a new intervention (Wanless and Domitrovich, 2015). Meyer et al., (2012) also discuss the readiness to take on an intervention, which varies according to the intervention chosen. Thus, according to Meyer et al., (2012), it is more helpful to think of an individual and organisation as having a broad range of readiness and then within that range a specific readiness for a particular intervention given its complexity and fit with the existing beliefs, practices and cultures within the context.

Readiness, therefore, is a multi-dimensional construct, requiring the need to consider the everyday challenges of introducing and sustaining a concept in real life, considering the people presenting the programme and the context into which it is being introduced (Scaccia et al., 2015). As McCormack et al., (2002) maintain, every organisation, society, district, country and nation present a setting whose dynamics must be understood to implement a new approach successfully.

Journal - Tuesday 14 February 2017 – day two

There has been a constant emphasis on the importance of teachers practising mindfulness regularly in their personal lives to ensure they teach it authentically. So, each trainee has had the opportunity to lead a Paws.b mindfulness practice with a partner. Afterwards, we split off into groups. Some questioned how we should manage children with challenging classroom behaviour in my group. 'Hovering' over the child was suggested. Others queried what we should do if more than one child presented challenging behaviour. The response was to get the teaching assistant to 'remove' the child or children from the classroom. It raised the tricky question of what happens if you're not lucky enough to have a teaching assistant, as is often the case. We were told that question would be revisited later as we needed to come together as a whole group again and return to the tight schedule. It's left me wondering how it'll translate into a 'real-world' classroom. At the beginning of the course, we were asked to pretend to be well-behaved children eager to learn mindfulness to ensure we'd have time to complete the training consisting of six Paws. b lessons (each one hour long) taught in real-time. It's made me think about children who'd prefer not to do mindfulness and yet will have to. I've chosen to do the course. It doesn't seem very mindful being made to do mindfulness.

These reflections reveal how my thoughts had turned towards three critical issues that I considered needed further exploration. The first issue concerned the level of understanding and mindfulness practice required to teach

mindfulness. The second issue concerned different perceptions of mindfulness, particularly pupils' perceptions, which led to the third issue, i.e., willingness, or lack of, to practice mindfulness. These issues are explored in chapters seven and eight during the fieldwork description and data analysis.

Very briefly here, though, regarding the first issue, abundant literature insists that teachers' depth of daily mindfulness practice and teaching skills are the principal means for genuinely transmitting mindfulness practice to others (Viafora et al., 2014). Unlike other interventions, mindfulness emphasises the importance of individual practice instead of just skill and expertise in delivering the approach. Crane (2016) notes how MBIs offer participants a wide variety of experiences and is presented to allow them to decide what they can connect with, relate to and wish to leave aside. In this respect, as MBI practices can potentially cross this spectrum of effects they may have on a person, teachers need to have sufficient experience, knowledge and understanding of the practices and processes so they can relate to the level to which the participants may engage with the material (Crane, 2016). So, according to Crane et al., (2010), if teachers have not bought mindfulness into their way of living and working, they are in no position to facilitate cultivating mindfulness in others.

A literature review on how mindfulness is taught soon reveals a lack of empirical evidence regarding the actual impact of the teacher's influence (Viafora et al., 2014). Consequently, the key variables of what comprises outstanding competencies in mindfulness teachers that drive fundamental change processes and promote positive pupil outcomes need exploring (Crane et al., 2010). Piet et al., (2016) note how in most studies, the MBI has been delivered by trained MBI teachers, with a deeply internalised and embodied understanding of mindfulness resulting from years of practising every day, in-depth knowledge and understanding of the MBSR and MBCT curriculum and strong interpersonal and didactic teaching skills. However, as mindfulness becomes progressively more popular and is incorporated into mainstream society, there is no guarantee that the intrinsic integrity and quality

characteristics of the first-generation MBI teachers will be passed on effectively to the next generation (Piet et al., 2016).

Undoubtedly, this will have implications for future research; the worse scenario being studies with inadequately trained MBI teachers unable to find and report any beneficial effects or replicate any positive findings of previous studies on MBIs (Piet et al. 2016). It leads to questions on how the depth and integrity of MBI practices can be upheld and offered to ensure their potential for transformation can be accessed by participants (Teasdale et al., 2003); furthermore, how the pluralistic, secular ambitions and movement of MBIs into new contexts can be respected (Crane, 2016). While having implications for future research, there are also implications for practice; I will return to this issue in chapter ten.

Journal - Wednesday 15 February 2017 – day three

The trainees have cited lack of support, time, understanding, training, alongside academic pressures, as hampering efforts to introduce mindfulness, even intermittently, never mind on a regular or sustained basis. I'm still wondering if it'll change when we arrive at school with the Paws.b curriculum, PowerPoint presentation and certificate of qualification to teach it. We've been assured the MBI's been tried, tested, evaluated, and, after much research, declared to have genuine appeal to the children it's aimed at. The challenge of implementing mindfulness has largely remained an unaddressed topic or, at best, one where it could be argued we've been pacified and stories of cynicism swept aside. Today was the last day; the atmosphere was achievement and optimism. We're now all armed with a beautifully packaged set of glossy resources and strict instructions we've been told to adhere to rigidly.

My reflections show that while I was pleased to have completed the course and impressed with the resources, not addressing implementation was a cause for concern. Avoiding implementation challenges on the course echoes

the neglect of this issue in the research literature on mindfulness, where many studies take a psychological approach directed at understanding the impact mindfulness has on pupil wellbeing (Zenner et al., 2014). Some take a behaviourist approach directed towards understanding its impact on improving social behaviour, social skills and attention (Napoli et al., 2005; Semple et al., 2010). Others take a reductionist approach, with mindfulness being understood as an attentional technique and not a mode of being, thereby ignoring the primarily embodied and experiential nature of mindfulness, one of its most defining characteristics (Brito, 2013).

3.4.3 Issue 3 - Concept of mindfulness versus culture of schools

Journal - Wednesday 15 February 2017 - day three

The Paws.b training has motivated us and provided us with what I think are excellent resources. Nevertheless, looking at this well-presented package, I can't help thinking it's sad that we even need such resources and interventions to help children cope with stress. While I understand there are many complex reasons for the increased stress levels children experience today, I'm also very aware that schools play a part in this. It begs the question, why isn't more attention paid to what makes schools so stressful in the first place instead of creating interventions to help pupils cope with them and leave the cause unchanged?

These reflections draw attention to a creeping concern regarding the cultural context within which schools work, distracting me away from the 'excellent resources'. It is a justifiable concern if we compare various government initiatives, e.g., National Healthy Schools Standard, Excellence in Cities, and anti-bullying guidelines for fostering mental wellbeing in schools, against the current data revealing a growing childhood mental health crisis, as discussed in chapter two. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2003) claims that children's wellbeing is a priority, arguably the driving force behind promoting mindfulness. However, worrying data begs a consideration of the extent to which constant preoccupation with school accountability primarily

focused on examination results contradicts this priority. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics (New Economics Foundation, 2014) highlights the mismatch between the Department of Health and the Department for Education's approaches to child wellbeing. On the one hand, the government's mental health strategy emphasises schools' role in understanding the link between emotional wellbeing and good educational and broader outcomes, hence the necessity for a whole-school approach to supporting pupils' wellbeing and resilience. On the other hand, within the Ofsted Children's Services and Skills inspection framework, the continued pressure to persuade inspectors to focus on core academic concerns at the expense of the 'peripherals' remains.

Undoubtedly, challenges will exist when bringing together a paradigm where measuring and results are important, with a paradigm with numerous dimensions appearing intrinsically immeasurable. As Purser and Loy (2013) stress, tensions will arise when the fundamental ethical foundation of mindfulness practice, not to cause harm and alleviate suffering, is at odds with institutionally determined and favoured goals, e.g., working hard, increasing performance and profit maximisation. Irrefutably translating theory into practice when different intellectual and learning environments cohabit can become problematic (Crane et al., 2010).

Summary

This chapter shared reflections from my journals on the MBSR and Paws.b training courses. The reflections from the MBSR course revealed my increasing understanding of the concept of mindfulness, a greater acceptance of the challenges associated with practising it, and, ultimately, the effect mindfulness had on me personally and professionally. The reflections from my training days on the Paws.b course revealed how many dilemmas and questions arose throughout, eventually guiding the structure and questions for my research. To a certain extent, both journals tracked my progress from novice mindfulness pupil to Paws.b teacher qualified to teach mindfulness to children.

Chapter 4: Research Design –
Methodology and Theoretical Approach

Introduction

Chapter four provides my rationale for the approach adopted for this study and considers the philosophical, methodological, practical and ethical issues. The research context is described and how the research methodologies were chosen. A case is made for the need to employ a more mindful approach to the research process. Definitions and discussions of journaling and action research, the chosen research methods are provided. I then explore the harmonious links between the chosen research methods and mindfulness, the research subject.

4.1   Epistemology and ontology

Epistemology is understanding and explaining how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). The philosophical assumptions of our epistemological position inform subsequent procedural decisions and, therefore, the main element in the research process (Crotty, 1998). Defining the research's underpinning epistemology in my thesis provides a contextual lens to inspect and interpret the aims, research methods and resultant data. The epistemological stance in all qualitative research is that knowledge is created in interaction between researchers and research participants (Postholm, 2008).

As mentioned in chapter two, the overall philosophical assumptions fundamental to my research were based on a social constructionist and interpretivist approach where knowledge is viewed as constructed and understood rather than created, and where the researcher is personally active within the research process such that they influence and are influenced by the circumstances, experiences and events they are investigating (Burr, 2015). Just as the knowledge of participants reflects their social, cultural and historical context, this is also applicable to the researcher; indeed, as Burr

(2015, p. 172) states: "No human can step outside their humanity and view the world from no position at all, and this is just as true of scientists as of everyone else".

A social constructionist approach is a way of thinking and doing that is distant from expertise-based, logical, ordered, and result-driven models and closer to participatory, co-created and process-centred ones (Galbin, 2014). Research done in the positivist paradigm separates the observer and observed, and the observer seeks to manage and manipulate any inessential variables and offer an impartial explanation of the phenomenon (Burr, 2015). Conversely, a constructionist approach requires the researcher to abandon any thoughts about personal objectivity (Burr, 2015). It is believed that there is no point in establishing validity in any external or impartial way as each researcher's perceptions essentially bias the research (Ochieng, 2009). Furthermore, as constructions can be different even between individuals with similar personalities, its claims are not generalisable. Galbin (2014) notes how constructionist theory is sensitive to changes and, as such, can create new forms of practices and behaviours. It can be a useful approach for addressing and embracing changes in context and pointing to alternative research methods in a quickly changing world (Galbin, 2014).

4.2   Research context

I decided to research a secular state school as most school-aged children in the UK attend state schools, and most teachers teach within the state education system. As such, I considered I would be accessing a sample representative of a mainstream English school. There was also less likelihood that mindfulness would be aligned with any religious doctrine in this setting, a potential assumption had the research been conducted within a private school. Initially, I met with the school's headteacher to introduce the research project and provide information via a detailed letter (see appendix 4 information letter to headteacher). The headteacher suggested I do the Paws.b presentation and outline my research to the teachers (twelve in total) at a staff meeting. All pupil parents/carers received a newsletter informing

them that mindfulness would be introduced to the school. Ethical approval to carry out the research was granted in November 2017 from the University of Nottingham Ethics Committee (see appendix 3 research ethics approval paperwork).

The junior school comprises four year groups for pupils aged between seven and eleven. Each year group has three classes, each containing approximately thirty pupils. Nine teachers participated in the study varying in age (mid-twenties to mid-fifties) and teaching experience. Every teacher received an information letter (see appendix 5 information letter to class teacher) detailing what would be required of them and the pupils in their class. Paws.b was the MBI used for the study; it is a classroom-based mindfulness curriculum for seven to eleven-year-olds offered formally as a series of PSHE lessons (see appendix 1 outline of Paws.b lesson aims). I delivered the Paws.b MBI to every class throughout the school over one academic year. Each lesson lasted approximately forty-five minutes once a week; the lessons were taught to each year group in a block of six weeks.

In addition to the Paws.b lessons, the pupils in years five and six were offered a diary for recording mindful moments, which I created in conjunction with my supervisor (see appendix 2 sample pages from the mindful moments diary). The diaries were designed to enable the pupils to reflect in an individually accessible and appropriate way. It also offered them a way of deepening and extending the mindfulness experience provided by the MBI. Chapter nine contains an in-depth discussion on the pupils' views and experiences of journaling.

4.3   Choosing the methodology

According to Allen (2015), the research method aims to provide symmetry between intellectual and methodological rigour, emotion and creativity, seek social justice and make life better. Often, the researcher's beliefs and values determine what they want to study, their choice of methodology and interpretation of findings (Mehra, 2002). When deciding on the appropriate

research methods for this study, I adhered to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) suggestion that rather than choosing methods built upon epistemological foundations, I should first reflect on which methods would most effectively answer the research questions. It involved considering the setting where my research would occur and the audience for whom my research would be written (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Early on during the research process, it became clear a discrepancy existed between the claims made by research regarding the feasibility of MBIs in schools and the reality in terms of their acceptability, as per the voices of those on the Paws.b course. While those voices represented only a small sample at that stage, they were worth hearing. They encouraged me to choose a method that would ultimately provide the platform for everyone involved in the study to be heard, thereby supporting and realising my quest for honesty and reality. I also considered it essential that the research methods I chose would recognise the need for awareness of self and reality and acknowledge that they are a positive value in themselves and should be part of the research process (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998). Indeed, I wanted to approach the study with openness and awareness, attitudes closely aligned with mindfulness, which requires a readiness to look deeply at the present moments irrespective of what they hold, in a spirit of generosity, self-kindness and openness to what may be (Kabat-Zinn, 2004).

In essence, the research required an approach that resonated with the nonspiritual description of mindfulness as "paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are" (Williams et al., 2007, p. 47) and also, more deeply, with classical descriptions. Such descriptions emphasise mindfulness as a form of remembrance or inquiry into the non-permanent yet divine nature of self and reality (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). It was, therefore, an approach that would be receptive to all the implications and complications of mindfulness as a way of being and knowing (Feagans-Gould et al., 2016) and one that would also acknowledge the limitations of positivist science in this field of research due to the nature of mindfulness, i.e., a phenomenon based on beliefs, experiences, priorities,

opinions, decisions and judgments. It was this social reality that I was going to reflect on and interpret, not one made up of atoms, molecules and scientific matter.

Nonetheless, some quantitative research elements were introduced in this study during the thematic analysis process, i.e., a table illustrating both frequency and numerical data (see chapter 6, section 6.6, table 3 - Themes and Sub-themes and appendix 12). As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) state, differences in epistemological beliefs should not prevent a qualitative researcher from using data collection methods more typically associated with quantitative research and vice versa.

While research, more often than not, tends to be linear, mine is not. It is a journey that initially consisted of practising mindfulness and reflecting, gradually sharpened into autoethnography, and then settled on the autoethnographic method of journaling. Journaling created the space for my reflections consistent with the mindfulness paradigm. I journaled cyclically during the research process. Thus, there was a natural gravitation towards action research, which ultimately led to me settling on the methods of journaling informed by action research. I decided they were the methods most appropriately matched to the research questions due to the harmonious links they shared with one another and with mindfulness, i.e., all three are concerned with developing awareness, reflection and wellbeing.

4.4   A more mindful approach

In chapter two, I suggested the need for more qualitative research for researching mindfulness; building on this suggestion now, the focus is placed on the benefits of doing so. In a mindful inquiry, the person is at the centre of the inquiry process; consequently, the research becomes a part of the researcher (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998). It is not just in a psychological sense, for example, the personality of the researcher shaping the choice of research method, but also in a philosophical sense, i.e., the research is not viewed as

a disembodied, programmed activity but as a part of how you engage with the world (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998). A mindful inquiry acknowledges the need to recognise that all research involves bias, the bias of one's situation and context, and rise above it. Undeniably, we are all immersed in and shaped by historical, social, economic, political and cultural structures and constraints consisting of domination and oppression and, as such, have suffering built into them (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998).

There is the recognition that past researchers have been unable to draw meaning from experimental research, which, according to Winter (2003), has prompted questions such as: - if individuals and contexts are very distinctive, how can research be repeated?; how can results be understood and converted into successful practice?; what about the validity and ethics of randomised controlled trials?; why is there a tendency to exclude practitioners and participants from delineating the motivation of the research and the significance and implications of the data? However, as Trochim (2006) points out, all quantification can be regarded as limited in nature; it only looks at a tiny part of a reality that loses the whole phenomenon's importance if separated, divided or condensed. Therefore, as Trochim (2006) suggests, researchers should avoid assuming one unitary reality except for their perceptions as we all experience life from our perspectives. All our experiences are unavoidably subjective; we all, to some extent, hear and see different realities (Burr, 2015). Research conducted that does not take this into account breaches the basic view of the individual; consequently, methods that try to aggregate across individuals are flawed because everyone is unique (Trochim, 2006).

Adopting a more mindful approach to the research afforded me increased access to a more in-depth exploration of how the context and individual differences impact the perceived effect of and meanings ascribed to the experience of learning and practising mindfulness; as such giving essential information into how a curriculum is received by those directly receiving the intervention (Crawford et al., 2021). Such insights are essential for understanding where and how MBIs fit in schools. Adopting a more mindful

approach to the research also allowed me to move away from research techniques where the subjects might become suspicious, wary, or conscious of what the researchers want and try to please them (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). The desire to please was a worry for me as I had taught many pupils participating in the research. The possibility of the subjects wanting to please the researcher is highlighted by Freire (1970), who questions the extent to which the voices are authentic when different people gather and participate in an intervention. Powerless groups may echo the sentiments of those perceived as having the power as a conscious way to appear acquiescent to their wishes or because they have internalised the dominant opinions and ideals (Freire, 1970).

Undeniably, the pupils tend to have a silenced voice within a school community. Therefore, a genuine concern for me was to provide them with a voice louder than the one more commonly heard via a tick box questionnaire. Through the semi-structured focus group interviews carried out during the research and the older pupils' journaling, their voices could be heard. Undeniably, however, when researching mindfulness, feedback is often obtained via questionnaires, structured interviews or mindfulness measurement scales; all are more closely aligned with quantitative analysis methods. Mindfulness questionnaires tend to be viewed with cynicism, though some criticisms are just as applicable to all self-report instruments. Criticisms such as the questionnaires being biased so that respondents measuring mindfulness misrepresent themselves purposely or unwittingly (Baer, 2011). Alternatively, the subjects are perhaps unaware of their feelings, interactions and behaviours and cannot articulate them to respond to a questionnaire (Marshall and Rossman, 2016).

Initially, at the start of the research, I reverted to a more familiar and comfortable teacher role rather than the more unfamiliar role of the researcher. It prompted me to ask the children to complete a Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) (Greco et al., 2011) before and after the MBI. My automatic teacher default setting considered that some kind of measurement was necessary as usually measurement or assessment takes

place to determine how useful an intervention is and how effective the teacher has been in its delivery. Some children found understanding the questions challenging even with adult support due to their age, despite the ordinary language used to describe everyday experiences to circumvent this problem (Baer, 2011). Lack of time prevented clarifying the questions to the extent needed, and another problem arose when some children were absent in the first session and others in the last. As I was not measuring the effectiveness of the MBI for teaching mindfulness, I decided the CAMMs were unnecessary for this study, so I abandoned them.

4.5   Defining journaling

The term 'journal' comes from the French word 'jour', which means day and often depicts daily writing and reflection (Bender, 2000). Some writers use the terms diary and journal interchangeably, while others focus on the diary as an account of external events and a journal comprising internal thoughts and feelings. History shows that people have written journals for a variety of reasons; Samuel Pepys, Anne Frank, Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway and other famous authors wrote journals that became influential and significant works that have endured to this day and ultimately served as the medium for their self-actualisation and life purpose (Williamson, 2009).

Journaling became fashionable due to the human potential movement during the 1960s and 1970s, which focused on individual development through encounter groups, sensitivity training and primal therapy (Stone, 1978). The movement encouraged Ira Progoff, a psychotherapist, to create Intensive Journaling Workshops. Progoff (1992) started with groups, asking each member to keep a journal. He found that members were more truthful in their journals than in therapy; consequently, Progoff experimented with using the journal to delve into their inner life and support his clients explore personal insights (Martin, 1992).

Through reflective writing, we have a way of expanding our inner horizons and relating more meaningfully to the world we live in. Journaling, therefore,

is not just about recording objective facts about the day's events; it involves subjective contemplation (Baldwin, 2007). For writers such as Janesick (2015) and Parnell (2005), a journal mirrors the self, our perceptions of, and responses to life's events; thus, it presents an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth. The use of structured questions in conjunction with free-flowing journal writing is particularly useful (Progoff 1992) as we are better able to explore and write about our dominating thoughts and emotions and discover what they can reveal about where we are with 'the now of life' (Parnell, 2005). Journaling also provides us with ways to illuminate our automatic thinking and habits of mind, to move past an intuitive adoption of patterns of thinking or unquestioned beliefs and progress from "*assimilative* learning to *transformative* learning" (Hubbs and Brand, 2005, p. 64).

According to Fox (1996), the crucial goal of journal writing is self-understanding, and a journal is a perfect guide for this as it listens without judgement and reflects who you are back to you when you read it. When writing a journal, it does not have to conform to any style, type or representation or have any discernible meaning. It only needs to have substance and value for the writer; it is the process of recording on paper the conversation taking place in the writer's mind and making sense of it (Parnell, 2005). As such, it has an order of its own in the process of writing the words and is a way of being heard when it feels as though no one else will listen (Williamson, 2009). The existence of a journal gifts the writer with the confidence and bravery "to travel as far as the mind allows and then find our way home through the act of writing" (Baldwin, 2007, p. 21).

4.6   Journaling as a research method

Although journaling is a key feature of the introduction and augmentation of contemplative practices in higher education (Barbezat and Bush 2014), reflective journaling is best known within education as a tool to develop critical thinking skills (Miller, 2017) where dilemmas, contradictions and evolving worldviews are questioned or challenged (Hiemstra, 2001). By engaging in constant dialogue through journal writing, researchers can better determine

what they know and how they think they came to know it (Watt, 2007). Keeping this introspective record of their work can also help the researcher take stock of biases, feelings and thoughts to understand how they influence the research (Watt, 2007).

Holly (1989) suggests the journal reconstructs experience with objective and subjective dimensions; we can chronicle events as they happen, have a dialogue with facts and interpretations and learn from experience. When reviewed over time, the dialogue prompts questions like: - what happened? What are the facts and critical elements? What is my role, and what feelings surround the event? What might I be aware of if such a situation should arise again? (Holly, 1989). Such insight enables us to become more accepting, less judgmental and better acquainted with our hidden patterns of thinking and feeling (Mazhar, 2001).

Cunliffe (2016) also considers the subjective dimension of journaling. According to Cunliffe (2016, p. 418), "it is not just thinking about thinking but thinking about self from a subjective perspective". It demands that we are attentive to our assumptions, ways of being and acting and relating; thus, journal writing helps us notice, influence and change the dialogue the mind is having with itself (Cunliffe, 2016). The dialogue is continuous, so it is beneficial to write some of it down, particularly the part directed toward specific questions (Baldwin, 2007).

4.7   Rationale for journaling

My rationale for journaling as the primary research method was based on it being a way of collecting data that encourages mindfulness. As such, it met my desire to find a research method synergistic with mindfulness. Journaling allows the researcher to gain a more holistic type of self-report, thereby providing a more nuanced opportunity to examine the undeniably complicated behaviour and mental effects resulting from mindfulness practices (Albrecht and Cohen, 2012). In this study, journaling opened up greater access to perceptive, in-depth and real-life feedback on both pupils' mindfulness

experiences and the process of learning the practice. These are challenging to quantify using typical psychometric tests, emphasising the before and after while paying little consideration to the learning process. As mindfulness practice is predominantly learned experientially (Feldman and Kuyken, 2019), my chosen approach seemed particularly pertinent and one that would yield more authentic data.

While the focus was primarily on the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of mindfulness training in the school, the reflections revealed how the pupils also valued the depth of insight journaling afforded them. Undeniably, as Haertl and Ero-Phillips (2017, p. 1) recognise:

> Writing is a powerful means of expression. It allows the writer exploration of cognitive, emotional and spiritual areas otherwise not accessible.

Another reason for my choice of journaling as the primary research method rested on it providing a platform for me to share an in-depth insight into my personal experiences as a mindfulness teacher and researcher throughout the research process. A final reason for journaling was acknowledging that it would support my professional development as a reflective practitioner. I could use the resulting reflections to inform me, the mindfulness tutor, of my delivery of the MBI throughout the cyclical process that the research would follow, as per the nature of action research.

4.8   Origins and definition of action research

The term action research is often attributed to Kurt Lewin and his social-psychological research during the 1940s, which examined how workers could improve their working environment (Chimwayange and Kane, 2013). Drummond and Themessl-Huber (2007) highlight how Lewin described action research as a way of generating information about a social system while at the same time attempting to change it and draw attention to how Lewin's fundamental ideas when describing the action research cycle (see drawing of

the Action Research Spiral below) are still equally valid today. Consequently, they are worth considering in some depth here.
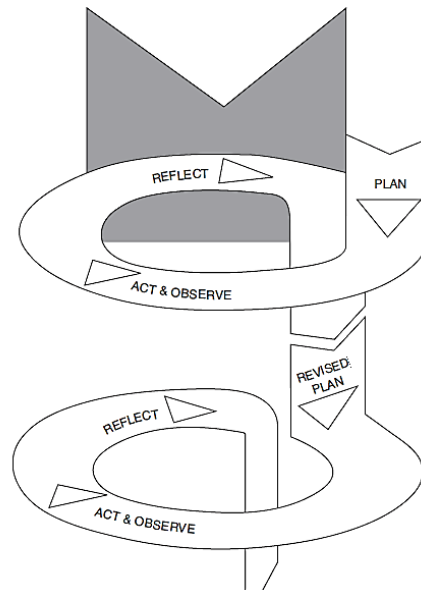
Action Research Spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 278).

According to Lewin (1948), planning starts with an idea and desire to reach a particular objective, though it is often unclear how to circumscribe or reach it, so the first step involves examining the idea and considering the means available, which often necessitates more fact-finding. If successful, two items emerge - an overall plan for reaching the objective and a decision on the first step of action; the focus is then turned towards achieving the first step of the overall plan, followed by certain fact-findings with four functions (Lewin, 1948):- first, to evaluate the action to ascertain if what has been achieved meets expectations; second, to allow the researcher to gather new general insight; third, to provide a basis for planning the next step; fourth, to provide a basis for modifying the overall plan. The second step also comprises a circle of planning, executing and fact-finding and involves evaluating the results to prepare the rational basis for planning the third step and potentially modifying the overall plan (Lewin, 1948).

This cyclical nature of the Lewinian approach, according to McTaggart (1991), recognises the need for action plans to be flexible and responsive. Lewin understood the complexity of real social situations and how, in practice, it is

impossible to foresee everything that needs doing; hence, the deliberate overlapping of action and reflection thus allowing for adjustments in plans for action while people were learning from their own experience and making this experience available to others (McTaggart, 1991). More recently, Dick and Greenwood (2015) reiterate that to meet the commitments to both participation and action, the action researcher must be responsive to the situation as it uses processes flexible enough to adjust to the situation as it emerges and changes. This fundamentally important and transformative move made by action research in the 1940s was twofold for social science: - it moved experimentation from isolated laboratories into the different fields of social life and, more radically, the subjects of the research were invited to join the community of researchers in the primary interpretation of findings (Eikeland, 2006).

Consequently, it instigated the steady decline and elimination of the division line between the 'knowers' and 'the known'; it was a move motivated by democratic convictions and ideology and a belief that it would strengthen the validity of social research (Eikeland, 2006). So, while action research is described as a cyclical process, it is also described as a participatory (democratic/egalitarian) undertaking (Drummond and Themessl-Huber, 2007), this being an essential aspect of the research process. It necessitates developing trusting relationships with the participants through negotiation and reciprocity; thus, the relationship becomes one of co-researchers, allowing input into both the results and the definition of the researched issue (McTaggart, 1991).

From a more critical stance, Ospina et al., (2004) highlight how the democratic ambitions fundamental to action research are far easier to realise in theory than in practice; in particular, action research's participative characteristic causes distinct challenges when participants are from different social worlds with different identities. Action research undoubtedly differs from most social science studies by what many consider its lack of adherence to the systematic standards that scientific research adheres to. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) note how the contrast between action research and

conventional social inquiry creates real and practical problems for action research; problems such as report findings being marginalised, rejected as biased, or sentimentally idealistic, as voices of dissent, or exercises in raising morale and as merely missing the validity and trustworthiness of 'proper research'. Such anxieties felt by those with political and professional influence cannot be dismissed, particularly in light of action research's practical responsibility of making justifiable decisions in situations involving human wellbeing (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001).

In response to the criticisms, Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) suggest that instead of comparing action research with the naïve claims of positivism, it is better to compare it with an accomplished account of the philosophical basis of social inquiry; one where fallibility and inconclusiveness are acknowledged, as well as the responsibility to contribute to human wellbeing in a real-world of practical action.

4.9   Rationale for action research

There were several reasons why action research came to influence this study. Primarily, researching cyclically suited the research's evolving, non-linear and experiential nature. Combined with journaling, it allowed me, as the researcher, to reflect in-depth during each cycle of the investigation, from my starting position as a mindfulness novice to training to teach mindfulness, towards becoming a mindfulness teacher in a school and reflecting on the realities accompanying this. Furthermore, it enabled me to reflect on my teaching practice during each cycle.

Another reason for being influenced by action research rested on my keenness for the pupils and teachers to have a voice; I welcomed their insights resulting from their practical involvement in the research. An essential value of action research is the respect for people's knowledge and skill to understand and resolve the issues confronting them and their communities (Stringer, 2013). Most social science studies aim to gather data about many individuals, organisations or events and attach generalisable causal links among the

variables studied, regardless of the particulars (Chandler and Torbert, 2003). Undeniably, we live in a society where politically influential knowledge tends to be statistically or theoretically based generalisations, determined by academics or professionals and promoted through organisational power hierarchies (Levin, 2012). However, generalised solutions, plans or programs do not always fit all contexts or groups to whom they are applied (Stringer, 2013). For action research, it is the creation of non-hierarchical relationships that is an essential aspect of the inquiry process, and knowledge presented in the form of narratives of personal experience that give voice to those who are often culturally and politically silenced by the conventional structures of social inquiry (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001).

Reid and Frisby (2008) stress the importance of listening to and for different versions and voices. Indeed, 'truths' emerge when people come together to share their experiences through a dynamic process of action, reflection and shared inquiry; however, truths are still entrenched in the participants' conceptual worlds and their interactions (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008). In essence, it is the action researcher's task to provide people with the support and resources to do things that fit their cultural context and lifestyles (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001). In this respect, according to Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001), action research can be regarded as a kind of interpersonal relationship capable of blurring the boundaries between the traditional roles of the researcher and the researched. As such, value is placed on the insights derived from practical involvement in a situation over the contribution of supposedly objective methods applied by outsiders and where concern with the process of inquiry is equal to the concern with its findings (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001).

Consequently, I considered the research methods of journaling influenced by action research to be most well-matched to the experiential nature of the research process and mindfulness, the research subject.

4.10 Harmonious links – mindfulness, autoethnography, action research

Considering the nature of the subject matter and cyclically employing journaling resulted in a greater coherence between epistemology and ontology in the research design (Crawford et al., 2021). It fulfilled my aim to employ a more mindful approach to the study based on the belief that the research is closely linked with awareness of yourself and your world. Awareness of and reflection on your world and intellectual awareness and reflection that is part of the research impact one another. As mentioned in section 4.3, harmonious links are shared between autoethnography (more specifically journaling), action research and mindfulness; these will now be explored. Central to all three is the development of awareness; imperative to all three is reflection and the concern for all three is wellbeing.

4.10.1 Developing awareness

Work by the psychologist Howard Gardner on the theory of multiple intelligences resulted in him identifying eight intelligences; intrapersonal intelligence is one. It is the skill of self-awareness, i.e., the capability to understand oneself (Gardner, 2006). Critiques of Gardner's definition of intelligence, however, regard it as too broad, his theory confusing and accompanied by vague claims not yet empirically validated, and his popularity in educational contexts reflecting its sentimental and intuitive appeal (McGreal, 2013). Nevertheless, continuing with Gardner (2006), intrapersonal intelligence is the most private of all the eight intelligences, with evidence from language, music or another expressive form of intelligence required if the observer is to detect it at work. Linguistic intelligence, i.e., the ability to use words well when writing and speaking, is a helpful way to observe intrapersonal knowledge in operation (Gardner, 2006). Journals, therefore, are a suitable medium for this.

Developing self-awareness by using the researcher's own experiences in the culture reflexively to "bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other

interactions" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 740) is the aim of autoethnography. It allows the author to consistently develop self-awareness through using their experience in the culture, self-reflection and writing to explore their personal experience, eventually connecting it to broader cultural, political and social meanings and understandings (Ellis, 2004). According to Solgot (2005), journaling, a form of autoethnography, provides us with a way of developing a more acute sense of self-awareness by examining our thoughts, communications, and behaviours. Parnell (2005) likewise describes journaling as a tool for expanding our self-awareness, as a mirror of the self, and our perceptions of and responses to life's events.

Developing awareness consistently captures the very essence of mindfulness (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011), where we can become more aware of what is happening in the present moment, both in our body and mind and the wider world; with feelings, thoughts and situations accepted just as they are without diminishing or embellishing features of our present experience (Wright, 2013).

Just as awareness is essential for mindfulness and journaling, it is equally significant for the action researcher, i.e., awareness of our own prejudices and perspectives within the research process. It is acutely evident in the first-person dimension of inquiry (Torbert, 2001). According to Reason and Torbert (2001), first-person research/practice skills and methods consider how the researcher must adopt an inquiring approach to their own life, act with awareness and 'choicefully' and evaluate the effects in the outside world. Indeed, the researcher is taken 'upstream' toward the source of their attention, which can reveal how certain ways of thought occasionally enable and, at other times, cuts the researcher off from ongoing experiential knowing; it is this 'upstream' inquiry that helps clarify for the researcher where they are coming from and the purposes of their inquiry for themselves and others (Reason and Torbert, 2001).

Reason and Marshall (1987) likewise highlight the importance of researchers developing awareness of the existential life issues they bring to the research,

the opportunities and the challenges faced resulting from their gender, age, race, employment status etc., as well as the potential psychodynamic issues they bring with them often resulting from unresolved childhood sorrow, fear and anger all of which may impact the conduct of their inquiry (Heron, 1988). Exploring these issues contributes to what Reason (1994, p. 327) calls critical subjectivity, i.e., a state of consciousness different from the naïve subjectivity of 'primary process' awareness and the attempted objectivity of egoic 'secondary process' awareness.   According to Reason (1994), critical subjectivity is about accepting that our knowledge is from a perspective and being aware that this perspective is accompanied by bias. It is not about stifling our primary subjective experience; on the contrary, this needs articulating in our communications; thus, critical subjectivity involves self-reflexive attention to the ground upon which we stand (Reason, 1994).

In essence, critical subjectivity encourages the researcher to observe the specific frames of reference they bring to an inquiry, e.g., political, racial, cultural or gender orientation; to examine habitual responses to people or events and see how they might be influenced by these responses rather than 'in the moment' (Heron and Reason, 2001). Noticing our reactions helps us see past our immediate, 'programmed' reading of circumstances to a more "open perception of the 'other' as they are in the 'here and now'" (Ladkin, 2005, p. 118).

4.10.2 Reflection

Finding time to reflect is often a challenge in busy academic lives, and any free time for thinking is typically spent on urgent, analytical inquiry. Paradoxically, though, time spent in contemplative practices such as mindfulness allows us to move into a quiet space away from constant probing, thereby offering us a broader perspective, increased lucidity and better concentration on problems worth investigating (Webster-Wright, 2013). According to Williams and Penman (2011), when we stop and reflect, we realise our mind does more than just think; it becomes aware it is thinking; it is this form of 'pure awareness' that allows us to experience the world directly

without it being obscured by our thoughts, feelings and emotions. Mindfulness, therefore, does not reduce the brain's natural desire to solve problems; instead, it gives us time and space to choose the best way to solve them (Williams and Penman, 2011). Paying attention in this way promotes greater creativity, aptitude, imagination, clarity, resolve, choice and wisdom (Kabat-Zinn, 2004).

Ultimately what we document in a journal becomes a reference tool to reflect on our own life – its achievements, disappointments, challenges and special events and helps us identify our spiritual and emotional centre daily (Parnell, 2005). Davies (1999) highlights how reflexivity, while generally relevant for social research, is particularly salient for ethnographic research due to the researcher's close involvement in the society and culture of those studied. Reflexivity voices the researcher's awareness of their essential connection to the research context and consequent influence over it; through this, learning occurs (Davies, 1999). Reflecting through journaling can be a powerful tool for putting yourself in another person's shoe of issues, making them more personal and intimate and resulting in greater reflection and critique to create change instead of logically analysing the issues in a cold, detached way.

Reflection also plays a central role in action research (Kemmis et al., 2014), where the transformation of experience creates knowledge through observation and reflection. Through our interactions, ideas and activities in the world, for example, who we are, how we act and think are shaped and reshaped (Webster-Wright, 2013). Dick and Greenwood (2015) suggest that the heart of action research is the constant confrontation of reflection and action, theory and method, and theory and practice to generate understanding and effective action. The constant process of reflection involved in action research by both researchers and participants develops the researcher's adeptness at discerning the correct course of action and making ethical judgments in situations involving complicated human relationships (Elliott, 1991). Reflexivity is vital as action researchers must question their perceptions of improvement or resolutions regarding who gains from the actions undertaken (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Reflexivity helps clarify power

relations and exercise of power during the research as it involves critical reflection on several levels: - identifying power relations and their impact on the research process, identifying ethical decisions framing the research, marking the boundaries of common values and political convictions and responsibility for the knowledge generated (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002).

4.10.3 Wellbeing

Mindfulness meditation can be a powerful medium for realising transformative and healing properties in ourselves and the world, particularly when understood as a way of living life as if it really matters, as opposed to a technique to shoehorn into an already busy day (Kabat-Zinn, 2006). Studies show how individuals with a natural tendency toward high levels of mindfulness demonstrate a greater ability to regulate their emotions (Brown et al., 2007), an increased ability to sustain their attention (Schmertz et al., 2008), have increased self-esteem (Brown and Ryan, 2003) and more frequently feel positive emotions (Fredrickson et al., 2008).

Wellbeing is also a concern for autoethnography; as a method, it wants the reader to care, feel, empathise and act (Ellis and Bochner, 2006). Holmon-Jones (2005) notes how research and writing are seen as socially just acts as their goal is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better instead of being fixated on accuracy. Auto-ethnographic methods such as journaling allow the researcher to measure success and change by looking back on issues that have been addressed and worked on while revealing unresolved issues still needing attention; after all, it is only when we know what is not working that we can change it (Ellis and Bochner, 2006). For Parnell (2005), the ultimate goal of writing is to find our centre of emotional balance and identify ways to regain balance when confronted with emotional dilemmas. In committing ourselves to this 'growth process', we can begin to develop self-awareness to achieve and maintain emotional and spiritual balance in our lives (Parnell, 2005).

Likewise, wellbeing is a defining characteristic of action research, with good practice being about justifiable decision-making in situations involving human wellbeing (Dick and Greenwood, 2015). The goals of action research are change and improvement (Elliott, 1991). It starts with the researcher initiating change because something needs to change to generate a better human situation (Bell et al., 2004). Action research employs a combination of action and reflection that work together in a continually repeating analysis cycle; it is a method of informed trial and error motivated by the evidence and the desire for the wellbeing of all involved.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

While some issues are specific to certain circumstances, there are also common features in the challenge of thinking and acting ethically as a qualitative researcher (Reid et al., 2018). These features include upholding truth and altruism, preserving autonomy in gaining consent and access, balancing the protection of vulnerable participants with paternalism, managing many roles and power relations and eschewing harm when disseminating findings (Reid et al., 2018). Alderson (2014) highlights the challenges resulting from the vagueness of principles and outcomes, noting how they offer significant scope for disagreement or they leave the researcher to determine, for example, what the terms 'respect' and 'harm' mean. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, the values of generosity, non-maleficence, fairness, and justice are essential to guide action; indeed, they need to be effectively balanced from the start of the research to its conclusion and beyond (Reid et al., 2018).

If we contemplate, as Alderson (2014) suggests we do, the enormous potential of research via its processes and influences to harm or benefit children and misuse power, then we should, as researchers, consider the morals of our work just as carefully as the methods, maybe even more so. Therefore, safeguarding against harm, abuse, exploitation, neglect, or discrimination is fundamental to ethical research (Alderson, 2014). Furthermore, participation rights, which are crucial to ethical research,

necessitate that children are well-informed, listened to, respected by adults, and adults acknowledge that their personal preferences may not always match children's choices (Alderson, 2014). In addressing research with children as participants, Finch (2016) notes how it is acknowledged that children's understandings of the world generally, and, more specifically, their understanding of research processes are not as developed as adults. Hence, research involving children, even though they are subject to the same ethical considerations as adults, undoubtedly increases exploitation risk (Mazza-Davies, 2015).

Consequently, ensuring children's understanding of the planned research is even more important and necessitates even more care than with adults (Finch, 2016); thus, the language the researcher uses to convey the purpose of the research is vitally important. In addition, the researcher needs to be alert to any signs of distress as well as sensitive to children's reluctance to discuss specific topics, which necessitates reassurance from the start that they can withdraw from the study, stop an interview or refuse to answer a question without any recriminations (Alderson and Morrow, 2011).

True to the nature of autoethnography and action research, this study is subjective and sensitive as it involves children and the subject of mental health and wellbeing. Any writing depicting people, places and circumstances necessitates that care is taken against possible information misuse. Therefore, anonymity and privacy were vital considerations that required safeguarding for this study. Data collected from thematic analysis studies is typically a person's own words, actions, or noticeable features of their life in a group, institution or culture; consequently, it can result in relatively more sensitive data than data obtained from questionnaires or surveys (Boyatzis, 1998). Hence, for this study, taking into account the sensitivity of the data necessitated a high degree of thought and caution in terms of the participants' informed consent, protection of their confidentiality, protection against abusive data use, and protection against the results' abusive application (Boyatzis, 1998).

Keeping this uppermost in my thoughts, throughout the research process, I adhered to The Nottingham University Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics Version 6th April (2016) and the British Educational Research Association (2011). I referred to these guides for making practical and academic decisions. I also upheld and considered during the research process the fundamental values of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity and took the following action to protect the ethical validity of the research: -

- Each pupil received an information sheet (see appendix 6 pupil information sheet – focus group) and was required to sign a letter of informed consent titled 'pupil agreement to participate in a focus group' (see appendix 7 pupil agreement form – focus group). The capacity of children to not completely understand their part in the research, to feel daunted, or obliged to take part were issues I was well aware of. In consideration of this, a stipulation within the letter was to read the information provided on the study's nature and purpose before signing it. Within the letters of informed consent, it was made clear that participants could remove themselves from the study whenever they wanted to without giving a reason and without any negative consequences or effects on them.

- All parents/carers were provided with an information sheet explaining the study's purpose and nature (see appendix 8 parent information sheet – focus group).

- All parents/carers received an informed parental consent form for their child to participate in a focus group (see appendix 9 parental consent form – focus group). No pupil was permitted to participate without first providing the researcher with an informed consent letter signed by their parents/guardians.

- At the start of the pupil focus group interviews, I clarified the research purpose and the reason for the meeting. I reiterated that they did not have to participate. No pupil chose to leave; instead, they remained and were enthusiastic and willing. I ensured the questions from my interview schedule were clear and used unambiguous language. I rephrased any questions that I thought were not fully understood.

- The data collection and analytic process were explained. Participants were informed they could remove their data at any point up until it was transcribed and would not be traceable to them personally.
- All information provided by the participants was anonymous, confidential and stored securely on a password-protected computer. The participants and parents/carers were informed of this.
- Following transcription of the focus group interviews, I met with each focus group and read the transcripts back to them to ensure their accuracy.
- The parents/carers were informed that they could ask any questions throughout the research process.
- The headteacher was informed that a report summarising the findings would be provided for the school.

The research was approved by the Chair of the Ethics Committee, Nottingham University, on the 23rd November 2017 (see appendix 3 research ethics approval paperwork).

Summary

This chapter provided my rationale for the research methods chosen and discussed the benefits of adopting a more mindful approach to the research process. An argument was made that challenged the claims of a positivistic view of knowledge where trustworthiness lies with research remaining objective and value-free. I explained how the approach and methodologies adopted for this study appreciate the notion of knowledge as socially constructed and recognise that research is embedded within a system of values and human interaction (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). I suggested that the strength of applying a more mindful approach, as adopted in this study, lies in its power to capture the nuances of diverse personal experiences gained from all those involved in the same MBI. I also suggested that it made for a more democratic research process. The harmonious links between the methods and the research subject were highlighted in the chapter. The chapter finished by outlining the ethical considerations for the study and describing how I addressed them.

Chapter 5: Reflections on Bringing Mindfulness to a Junior School

Introduction

This chapter starts by sharing reflections written in my journal while carrying out the third research cycle. The cycle was concerned with teaching the Paws.b MBI in the Autumn term of 2017 to the year four pupils in the junior school. As with previous reflections, commentary based on the literature review and discussion is woven throughout. The cycle allowed me to practice teaching the MBI; writing the journal afforded me the time and space to reflect on my practice and make any necessary changes before teaching it to the next year group. No data was collected during this cycle; it was a gentle introduction to notice, observe and become aware of the pupils' and teachers' initial perceptions of mindfulness.

The reflections written during the Paws.b training course and shared in chapter three focused on three issues: - participant versus the researcher dynamic, product versus its implementation and concept of mindfulness versus culture of schools. These three issues were also the focus of this journal; consequently, the reflections shared here are also examined in light of them. However, the context they were written in was very different; I was not a trainee mindfulness teacher but a qualified one teaching the MBI in a junior school. Later in the chapter, a brief commentary on introducing the MBI to the other year groups (years five, six and three) is provided. Rather than share further reflections of a similar nature, the commentary focuses on the differences between these three cycles. The chapter concludes with a summary.

5.1   Issue 1 – Participant versus researcher dynamic

Tuesday 19th September 2017 - Lesson 1

Today, I felt under pressure due to my dual roles as a mindfulness teacher and researcher. As the teacher, I wanted to focus on teaching

a programme I'd never taught before; as the researcher, I wanted to observe and record. I also wondered what the teacher thought of me bringing yet another 'miracle' intervention into school to improve everything. Scepticism was at the forefront of my mind. Contrary to my initial thoughts that some staff knowing me would make it more comfortable, it didn't. I'd had more in common with them in the past; now, I was possibly another source of stress. Despite rehearsing the lesson beforehand, it didn't prepare me for how I felt teaching it in real-time to a group of thirty conscripted eight-year-olds and a potentially conscripted teacher. It was stressful adhering to the strict format of the programme and timings, and I was concerned that the still, silent aspects of the lesson might create disinterest and, consequently, chaos. What would my response be? I was insufficiently trained in this respect. Disappointingly, two of the three teachers were absent; the same teacher was present throughout as the classes moved around Tuesday mornings and not the teachers. Just as I had in the presentation at the staff meeting, I emphasised the importance of teachers being present to learn alongside their class so they'd be able to practice during the week. I was assured they'd be there next week.

When reading these reflections, three issues stand out. The first issue is related to multiple roles, the second is regarding potential scepticism, and the third relates to having a conscripted audience. Regarding issue one, in chapter three, I considered the participant versus the researcher dynamic; at that point, I had the dual roles of researcher and trainee Paws.b teacher. My reflections prompted a brief discussion on the impact of dual roles for the action researcher and the accompanying ethical dilemmas. While the reflections in this chapter were written in a very different context, I still had dual roles, albeit this time they had changed to being the practitioner (teacher) and researcher investigating actions to address issues and solve problems (Herr and Anderson, 2005). It prompts further discussion on this distinctive feature of action research, which undoubtedly carries some disadvantages due to the researcher's involvement as an active participant in the study (Fougler, 2009).

Relationships between researchers and the organisation members are undeniably dynamic, and as they develop, role-related tensions and differences may arise over values and interests, resources and skills, control, political realities and rewards and costs (Israel et al., 1992). Arieli et al., (2009) observe that while participation is widely deliberated in the action research literature, most studies only describe the beginning of how these relationships were established. Although some report on the importance of overcoming distrust, few provide information on how the relationship was built; those that do are told from the researcher's perspective (Arieli et al, 2009). The voices of the participants and practitioners are seldom heard regarding the relationship itself, their perceptions of the researcher and what they thought they would get from it (Arieli et al., 2009).

Therefore, while Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 3) claim that "action research is inquiry done by or with insiders to an organisation or community, but never to or on them", this is questionable from a more critical perspective. Indeed, Meyer (1993) queries if it is even viable in reality, as ultimately, while researchers consider the practitioner's perspective, they keep control by judging what is said against their references and only sharing them when finished and when they return to state what they have seen and what they suggest needs improving (Meyer, 1993). For Segal et al., (1988), it is an approach that breaths an air of colonialism from the privileged researcher rather than the altruistic empowerment of the cooperative practitioner.

Returning to issues two and three in my journal, i.e., potential scepticism and a conscripted audience. My concern for scepticism was based on the 'narratives' I had heard on the Paws.b training course, referred to in chapter three, and recognising that I no longer shared common ground as a mainstream teacher. Instead, I was a researcher bringing a little-understood intervention into an already busy day. My reflections refer to a group of thirty conscripted eight-year-olds plus one potentially conscripted class teacher. Initially, presenting the hour-long Paws.b presentation to the staff to explain the research and introduce the MBI appeared to be an invitation to participate.

Reflecting later, I now consider the reality was, as can often be the case with interventions in schools, that the teachers were merely being informed by the headteacher, albeit through me, that they were taking part, like it or not. My journal entry draws attention to the teacher's absence in week one. I wonder now if this was resistance to becoming involved in the research and/or programme. Ironically, I am reminded of the participatory and democratic nature of action research (Reason and Bradbury, 2008), where the ability of the research findings to contribute to the practical concerns of individuals relies on democratic participation as the participants record their experience via the data (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

Previous reflections in chapter four noted how groups without power might reiterate those perceived as powerful because they have internalised the dominant views and values or just want to appear compliant (Freire, 1970). The risk here is that it may seem as though participatory processes have happened, allowing the comparatively powerless to state their complaints and main concerns in what is depicted as an otherwise open system (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008). In reality, existing power relations have been reinforced without significant changes in policies or structures, thereby perpetuating the problems being addressed. This appearance of inclusion means that what transpires is handled as though it denotes what the participants want and, in the process, gains a moral authority difficult to challenge (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008). However, from a different perspective, Dillon (2014) argues that individuals in power relationships have possible actions to choose from to respond to an action, and, therefore, resistance is built into power relationships out of necessity.

Tuesday 26th September 2017 – Lesson 2

The pupils were excited about mindfully eating chocolate today, resulting in one pupil being distracted and then reprimanded by the teacher. Immediately afterwards, the teacher momentarily left the classroom. Unfortunately, the distracted pupil had not completely calmed down. To prevent him from falling off his chair, he needed a

further reminder of what the teacher said. Simultaneously, another child I knew from a few years before as having challenging behaviour started walking around making noises; it prompted others to start chatting and giggling. Classroom behaviour quickly became a problem. My dual roles as Paws.b teacher and researcher quickly morphed into one role, i.e., class teacher. It was a familiar role and one I felt far more comfortable in. Yet, now it's left me uneasy about my participation in the disruption in the session. I'm left wondering where I stand in relation to the research and how the children view me now. The session was a stark reminder of the worrying conversations during the Paws.b training course regarding what we'd do if there were children with disruptive behaviour in the class.

A central belief of action research, as a participatory approach, is that the researcher plays a vital role in any investigation (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Research does not start in a void where the researcher is an independent being; indeed, the researcher always has an interest, agenda or aim (Hannu et al., 2001), and often, according to Ladkin (2005), there is even an appreciation of this characteristic of most action research approaches. However, it does raise the question of how, while retaining my subjectivity, can I also put it aside to be open to the other, thus enabling the other to reveal something of itself to me? Kabat-Zinn (1994) observes how at best, we tend to be only partially aware of what we are doing in and with our lives and the effects our actions and thoughts have on what we see, do not see, do, and do not do. Without being aware we are doing it, we often presume that our ideas and views are the truth about what is out there in the world and in our minds; frequently, this is not so (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

My reflections reveal how the challenge of having various roles resurfaces. At one point, in the momentary chaos of too many roles to negotiate, my inclination to adopt a more familiar and comfortable role, i.e., class teacher, ultimately prompts confusion regarding where I should place myself in relation to the research. Having put myself in the class teacher role, I knew it was not how I wanted to be viewed. On the contrary, it was no longer my role.

Alderson (2014) cautions any researcher who researches with children they already care for needs to make sure the children understand the nature of different and separate roles and relationships; a caution applicable to me, having taught many of the children in the past.

Ladkin (2005) considers this initial difficulty for the action researcher, i.e., where to position themselves in relation to the research inquiry to consider their complete subjective experience while not becoming self-indulgent. According to Ladkin (2005), subjective in this respect is a way of knowing located in a person's perspective, including their experiences, expectations and here-and-now perceptions, whereas a claim to truth from objective knowing suggests it declares a truth that is valid from any perspective. It is this that is a real challenge for the action researcher; the implication that is characteristic within the notion of objectivity that there are valid perspectives other than our own and that when someone regards us, they can do so more 'objectively' than we can regard ourself (Ladkin 2005). While my reflections reveal the issue of subjectivity, as Dillon (2014) advises, reflecting through writing a journal is not to try and eliminate the subjectivity brought to the research but try and understand it.

My reflections show my preconceived ideas and biases when trying to understand them now. I used prior knowledge and accompanying prejudices with the child walking around making noises. Consequently, somewhat judgementally, I viewed them as they were in the past instead of now, which was a different time and context. While, unfortunately, this time, the child lived up to my expectations, it still prompts consideration of the suggestion put forth by Kabat-Zinn (1994) that when looking at other people, we should ask ourselves if we are really seeing them or just our thoughts about them; often, without realising it, we bring our biases into things. Hence, the need for critical subjectivity, as discussed in chapter four. Critical subjectivity prompts the action researcher to see if they perceive people in ways that cause degenerative patterns of response within themselves, without actually questioning that particular moment and the reply choices it presents (Ladkin, 2005).

5.2   Issue 2 - Product versus its implementation

Tuesday 19ᵗʰ September 2017 – Lesson 1

While preparing to teach the session today, a teaching assistant passing by commented: "I tried mindfulness myself; it was rubbish". It leads me again to think about other peoples' perceptions of mindfulness. I'm aware it's a very different experience for the children, probably taking some of them out of their comfort zone, just as it did for me. I noticed differences in excitement levels, receptiveness and class behaviour between the three classes.   The class with many children that I've previously taught seemed particularly receptive.   I wonder if they are also falling into a familiar role in relation to me? It's made me speculate about who's best to teach an MBI and who would have the greatest impact on the children?

My reflections have returned to an issue first raised in chapter three (issue two), where I questioned if teachers would be best to deliver mindfulness practices and whether they need to be mindfulness practitioners themselves before teaching it to their pupils (Thomas and Atkinson, 2017). Traditionally the debate over who is best qualified to teach mindfulness has remained firmly in favour of the fundamental principle that to teach mindfulness, the teacher needs to have adopted this practice for themselves (Teasdale et al., 2003). Indeed, it is considered that practitioners need to recognise mindfulness's unique qualities and characteristics as a meditative process instead of a technique to learn and pass on to others, as treating it in this way would render the whole therapeutic intervention a worthless exercise (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Supporting this perspective, in their investigation of the teacher's role in mindfulness-based approaches, van Aalderen et al., (2012) emphasise how crucial it is for the embodiment of mindfulness by the teacher. The teacher acts as a role model by demonstrating the attitudinal aspects of mindfulness, for example, acceptance and non-judgment, compassion and understanding,

the role of language, attitude in helping to motivate pupils, and how they use personal examples from their life to help pupils understand how to integrate mindfulness into their lives (van Aalderen et al., 2012). Likewise, Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) assert that solely teaching mindfulness skills is not enough; motivation, willingness and the need to adopt a mindful disposition must be addressed. Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) identify three key components: teaching pupils the skills to think and behave mindfully (developing their ability), guiding pupils such that they become aware of the value of mindfulness (nurturing inclination), and helping them to notice opportunities to practice mindfulness (encouraging sensitivity).

In essence, MBIs are practice-intensive; therefore, a teacher who embodies mindfulness becomes the necessary role model for pupils to learn how to become mindful themselves (Broderick et al., 2018). A mindfulness curriculum alone cannot achieve its planned aims without the teacher's ability to introduce it effectively. This effectiveness is dependent on their understanding of the programme and how they embody mindfulness as a way of being (Broderick et al., 2018). However, from a more critical perspective, this does lead to considering the practicalities of training teachers to teach a mindfulness programme to their pupils. Indeed, such practicalities are often viewed as potential barriers to implementing these programmes in schools (Thomas and Atkinson, 2017). Alternatively, while it is assumed that the teacher is necessary to transmit mindfulness-based practices, Mazza-Davies (2015) questions this suggesting a teacher might start to internalise a mindfulness philosophy and eventually embody mindfulness as a result of teaching mindfulness-based practices.

Tuesday 3rd October 2017 – Lesson 3

One of the more elusive teachers, having not attended any session so far, sent a teaching assistant today in their place. The teaching assistant chose to mark work during what she regarded as some 'free time'. Conversely, one of the other elusive teachers appeared for the first time and practised alongside the children. It was surprising the

significant impact their presence had on the children. Maybe the teacher's presence confirms the worthiness of the programme? The teacher commented on how enjoyable it had been and would attend the subsequent sessions.

In earlier reflections in chapter three, I referred to the statement made by Durlak and DuPre (2008) that developing effective interventions is only the first step; transferring them into real-world settings tends to pose the most significant challenge. At that time, I was reflecting on a journal entry written during my attendance on the Paws.b course. My reflections had focused on conversations with other trainees describing failed attempts to implement mindfulness in their schools. I previously touched on people's readiness to welcome a new programme or intervention in chapter three, section 3.4. The reflections in this chapter referring to elusive teachers prompt further consideration of this issue.

A fundamental trait of action research is that the work happens in the context of action, and the researcher enters a school or organisation and becomes involved with the practitioners there (Bradbury-Huang, 2010). The practitioners need to see the value of working with the researcher and want to engage in the experiment in learning that is action research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010). Reading the reflections from my journal now and observing the teachers' absence, then subsequent ad hoc presence, noting the placement of a teaching assistant instead who used the 'spare time' to mark work, and the passing comment '*I tried mindfulness myself, it was rubbish'* can all be viewed in various ways. They could be seen as a reflection of power relations, perhaps resistance, as discussed in chapter four. Alternatively, they could demonstrate a lack of value and desire to learn within the research process. Or regarded as a lack of engagement with mindfulness itself, echoing the trainees' experiences on the Paws.b course, as discussed in chapter three, or, more specifically, they could be viewed as a lack of engagement with the MBI.

Schools are often confronted with numerous duties and existing requirements and priorities that do not include implementing a new intervention, and in such a climate, teachers who are not supportive of the intervention are unlikely to see its benefits (Langley et al., 2010). Implementation is also significantly diminished when, according to Forman et al, (2009), 'passive resistance' to the practice is displayed; this includes stating support for the intervention but not bothering to learn about it or implement its core features. It echoes Rix and Bernay's (2014) findings from their study of mindfulness for school-aged children across five primary schools and found that the teacher's engagement and participation impacted how beneficial mindfulness was to the class.

Tuesday 10th October 2017 – Lesson 4

This week all teachers were present and participating; the pupils were engaged and animated and offered excellent feedback on school and home practice from the previous week. In an earlier reflection, I'd wondered if the children I'd taught previously were more enthusiastic and compliant than those I hadn't, perhaps even conditioned in this respect. However, this week there was no difference between all three classes. I sensed a shift in attitude in one of the more elusive teachers after listening to the children's enthusiasm and responses, particularly during a discussion on worries and how mindfulness had helped. One pupil spoke of how he worried before maths club every week even though he always did well. The teacher was surprised by the revelation but pleased it had been raised, addressed and hopefully resolved. Later a pupil, who found accessing learning in a classroom environment a challenge, shared how listening to the music and watching the film clip was so beautiful it had made him want to cry. The deep, well-thought-out admission and acknowledgement of feelings at that moment appeared to be an even greater surprise to the teacher.

Frequently I refer in my journal to teacher absence; however, in week four, with all the teachers in attendance, I reflected on the change in one teacher's

attitude that positively impacted the children's participation and behaviour. It is often stated that the teacher's perceptions and endorsement of new classroom practices ultimately determine how beneficial and productive these practices will be (Brown, 2009). Their beliefs and attitudes toward new classroom programmes are essential as they often carry the most responsibility for implementing them (Zhang and Burry-Stock, 2003). Therefore, as McCready and Soloway (2010) suggest, school administrators and others concerned with reform need to consider teachers' perceptions of the benefits an intervention will have for their pupils.

Supporting this view, Pinkelman et al., (2015) refer to the increasing amount of literature that identifies factors that help in the sustained implementation of evidence-based practices (i.e., enablers) and ones that hinder sustainability (i.e., barriers). The most commonly cited enablers are staff/teacher buy-in, school administrator support and consistency; the most commonly cited barriers are the absence of administrator and teacher support (Langley et al., 2010). As Postholm (2008) maintains, when teachers can relate to or agree with the project and understand its usefulness or the meaning of a developed practice, they may internalise it into their everyday work. Development, therefore, must be built on a desire to learn; the motivation for developing further starts with the teachers, thus creating a developmental attitude that can support developmental processes for improving practice, even after the researchers have left the classroom (Postholm, 2008). Consequently, teachers' opinions on the *acceptability*, feasibility and usefulness of an intervention will affect programme implementation, fidelity and sustainability and provide a better understanding of how the intervention works and how it might be improved (Baker-Henningham and Walker, 2009).

5.3   Issue 3 - Concept of mindfulness versus culture of schools

Tuesday 26th September 2017 – Lesson 2

Classes were swapped today, resulting from a concern that the classes didn't have equal time for P.E. due to the Paws.b lessons. It made the

lessons shorter and the children more fidgety, which meant the teachers continually reprimanded some children; consequently, the teachers seemed harassed. Trying to stick to the script and format, deliver the lesson and finish on time was stressful. I became very conscious of the conscripted audience elements in each class. Ironically, the lesson was about choice, emphasising that we always have choices. Yet, at that moment, I was only too aware there was no choice for the children; they were in the lesson, like it or not. The whole atmosphere and environment felt like the antithesis of mindfulness. At the end of two lessons, I did a short mindfulness practice during the break to calm myself and feel more positive before starting the third session.

Intrator and Kunzman (2007) contend that most teachers enter the profession because they are genuinely concerned for their pupils and view themselves as someone who can make a difference. However, constant challenges and institutional limitations can make teaching very stressful and erode a teacher's idealism, energy and purpose. Stress negatively impacts teachers' wellbeing and teacher retention and recruitment (Gold et al., 2010). Retaining teachers and giving them the resources to care for themselves can translate into increased classroom effectiveness (Flook et al., 2013). Reflecting on my journal entry with its reference to harassed teachers, conscripted audiences and time pressures, it is clear I was feeling stressed and felt the need to carry out a short meditation during the break. While not changing the circumstances I found myself in, it did change how I responded to the pressures and how I felt about teaching the next session.

It echoes the sentiments of Roeser et al., (2012) that mindfulness-based training, while not claiming to change circumstances in the external world immediately, can enable the practitioner to change how they respond to their circumstances. As such, mindfulness encourages teachers' professional development by promoting changes in old mindsets, which empowers them to be better prepared to meet the needs of their pupils and the demands of their jobs (Roeser et al., 2012). Drawing from a holistic education, cultivating

mindfulness engenders qualities like patience, presence and compassion; these are necessary for building positive relationships in the classroom (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Klusmann et al., (2008) observe how studies investigating teacher wellbeing and pupil performance are inclined to note that a type of wellbeing reciprocity exists, with teacher wellbeing affecting instructional performance, personal characteristics directly and performance more generally, impacting pupil motivation. This ostensibly upward spiral effect is described by Fredrickson and Joiner (2002, p. 172) as the "broaden-and-build theory of positive emotion". In essence, this theory envisages positive emotions as expanding cognitive and attentional functions, resulting in more interested and imaginative pupils and building new talents, relations, knowledge and ways of being (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002).

Tuesday 10th October 2017 – Lesson 4

This week all three teachers stayed with their classes, joined in and took responsibility for behaviour management. It seemed to impact the children positively. Familiarity with the lessons' experiential nature also contributed to a greater acceptance of mindfulness practices. After the lesson, some children came to talk to me about how being mindful had helped them stop worrying so much.

Tuesday 31st October 2017 – Lesson 6

Today the last class came in without their teacher (the teacher who had attended only one session), and I was left alone to teach the class. The children who had practised mindfulness outside of school as they had been unable to do so in class enthusiastically shared their experiences. While heartening to hear some had still tried to practice mindfulness despite no encouragement, the lack of teacher support was disheartening. Some low-level disruption occurred as it was their first lesson after a half-term break, making a few pupils more unsettled than usual. I tried to remind myself to take a mindful approach by noticing the behaviour, accepting it and guiding those struggling. Noticing was

the easy bit; accepting and guiding more challenging. Afterwards, I was left contemplating the concept of mindful discipline and how to introduce it into my practice.

According to Jennings (2015), some teachers often mistakenly believe they can and should control their pupils' behaviour, which sets them up for power struggles resulting in frustration, exhaustion and feeling ineffective. However, teachers do have control over how they communicate and behave, their classroom expectations and, to a certain extent, the environment to make it more conducive to learning (Jennings, 2015). When mindful of these elements, teachers can control and orchestrate the elements to create the optimal learning conditions (Jennings, 2015). This more mindful approach to classroom management focuses on learning rather than control, thereby creating the best circumstances for learning, which is ultimately a teacher's goal. If something interferes with this goal, taking time to observe and adjust the classroom elements and dynamics mindfully is essential rather than reactively trying to control pupils (Jennings, 2015).

My reflections draw attention to both the negative impact of the teacher's absence on the children's engagement with the MBI and the positive impact their presence has. The reflections reveal how, at times, the low-level disruption created challenges during the six weeks. The suggestion offered during the Paws.b training, i.e., get a teaching assistant (assuming you have one) to 'hover over' the child, or remove the child from the classroom, returned to haunt. At the time, I did wonder how this suggestion might translate into practice when faced with the reality of having a class where not all are willing and compliant. While I now know that my initial perception of mindfulness as a potential form of behaviour management was utterly misguided, undoubtedly, there is a need for managing behaviour when teaching mindfulness in a classroom context. In this respect, my journal entry in week six queries how to introduce a more mindful discipline into my teaching practice.

The word 'discipline' initially seems at odds with mindfulness; it tends to have a negative connotation in our culture and society, often seen as overly harsh, antiquated and associated with punishment or consequences. However, discipline is about teaching and learning when looking at the word's root (Siegel and Bryson, 2015). Willard (2010) acknowledges that while it is not usually fun or even useful, getting weighed down with too many rules, there is the need to establish basic expectations when teaching mindfulness in a classroom setting. Children have a natural yearning for order; a lack of boundaries and guidance leaves them physically vulnerable and hinders their natural evolution towards maturity (Shapiro and White, 2014). Mindful discipline encompasses disciplining consciously and lovingly, openly supporting a child's growth and development, and being attuned to the present moment, thus, knowing at any point in time what the most skilful action to take will be (Shapiro and White, 2014).

Mindful discipline is also about ensuring that when we say 'no' to a particular behaviour, we simultaneously do our best to say 'yes' to the child; their inner states, their being and the relationship (Siegel and Bryson 2015). Drawing on my experience as a teacher, I know the importance of having clear and agreed expectations within the classroom. Reflecting now, I wonder if my expectations were not clear initially, whether my focus was too centred on juggling the different roles I had or delivering a programme I had never taught. Willard (2010) highlights the importance of teachers being aware of their intentions and goals before and during the teaching, letting go of expectations, remaining connected, trusting, empathic and non-judgmental of themselves and the pupils.

According to Willard (2010), teachers are often stuck in habitual patterns of reacting to challenging behaviours. Mindfulness practice, however, enables teachers to see their pupils at that particular moment without constructs and labels that tend to provoke habitual reactivity; they can pause and get a broader perspective of the social and cultural context adding to the situation and consequently respond with compassion and understanding rather than with a knee-jerk reaction to the stress of the situation (Willard, 2010).

Duncan-Andrade (2009, p. 9) describes his own classroom as a "micro-ecosystem" each pupil contributes to a subtle balance of interdependency within the classroom in which hurt and healing can be transferred from person to person. When a noncompliant pupil is taken out of the classroom, it creates a social stressor within the micro-environment; hence, from this viewpoint, removing a child instead of trying to heal them is bad for the child. According to Duncan-Andrade (2009), it also damages the classroom's social ecosystem as trust and hope, both necessary for positive educational outcomes, are eroded for the pupil and those who witness the removal.

5.4   Further research cycles: similarities and differences

In this study, the main difference found when introducing the MBI between the different year groups was that the pupils in the year five and six classes were slightly more receptive than the younger pupils in years three and four. All the year five and six teachers attended all the sessions, both physically and, in varying degrees, emotionally. The teachers investing in the programme made it feel like a more democratic and participatory experience and less forced (conscripted). In terms of similarities, many were found across the year groups. These were: -

- The majority of the pupils found the MBI lessons enjoyable and novel.
- Most pupils wanted to share their experiences on the benefits of mindfulness in different situations and circumstances.
- All the teachers used mindfulness practice as a helpful time-out 'tool' when wanting to get on with other jobs or for behaviour management.
- Many children across the year groups practised at home irrespective of whether they practised at school.
- All the teachers considered that there was not enough time for the MBI.
- All classes stopped practising mindfulness, if not before I left the school, certainly after, when other priorities took precedence.

Reading reflections from the journal written during this time reveal how my disposition ranged from annoyance and disappointment at some reactions to

the MBI to hope and delight at others – primarily the children's. In addition, they expose increasing guilt at how judgemental I felt I was becoming, particularly as I had experienced the pressures associated with teaching myself. My reflections refer at length to the teachers' lack of engagement with the MBI and how this left me questioning its focus, i.e., primarily paying attention and not worrying. I wondered whether it trivialised mindfulness by presenting such a limited view and whether the teachers saw it as little more than an emotional literacy programme with a few breathing techniques thrown in. I figured this would explain why they sometimes decided to mark work, put up classroom displays, tidy the library books, or not show up during the mindfulness sessions.

Summary

In this chapter, I highlighted the challenges for the action researcher; in particular, how practitioners or communities want action research to solve a problem or improve their practice and yet, what constitutes improvement or a solution is not always obvious, particularly in fields lacking a consensus on basic aims (Fougler, 2009). It prompted a discussion on the need for the action researcher to consider the different perspectives involved, including the perspective of oneself, both in the action and the research (Fougler, 2009). Consequently, subjectivity was explored, particularly its challenges, highlighting the need for those working within this paradigm to question how their perspectives and frames of reference shape the questions, interpretations and how the inquiry is framed (Ladkin, 2005). The reflections entwined throughout the chapter start to reveal some issues relating to the *acceptability* of the MBI, for example, scepticism, lack of teacher support, deciding who is best to teach an MBI, and a conscripted audience. These significant issues will be explored in greater depth in chapter eight when the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the *acceptability* of mindfulness in school are examined and discussed.

Chapter 6: Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

Chapter six starts with clarifying hierarchical focusing, the strategy that informed the interview schedule by demonstrating how I used it in the research process. A brief discussion follows on the nature of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, as they were the methods employed for data collection. Thematic analysis, the analytic method used for interpreting the data collected, is then described. Several reasons existed for my choosing thematic analysis; they are outlined later in the chapter. However, the most significant reason was that I considered it would help demonstrate transparency in the research process, allowing me to analyse the data with integrity rather than use it deceptively to support my arguments. As such, I believed it would ensure I did justice to the narratives under analysis and, in doing so, make it clear that I valued the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of mindfulness that were shared with me.

6.1   Hierarchical focusing and semi-structured interviews

One-to-one semi-structured interviews lasting approximately half an hour were carried out with nine teachers. A hierarchical focusing strategy informed the interview questions for the focus group and one-to-one teacher interviews (see schedules 1 and 2 for the pupil and teacher interview schedules – pages 97 and 100). Hierarchical focusing ensured that the key topics I wanted to discuss were outlined, starting from a more general agenda hierarchy (Tomlinson, 1989). The interview's semi-structured nature enabled the participants to fully express their answers and provided some flexibility in how the questions were asked, which permitted exploration of random or impulsive conversation points (Coolican, 2017). On the occasions I considered the interviewees had not completely covered the research agenda, I referred to the given headings to raise the next most specific sub-topic and continued iteratively in this way through the various sub-levels until I had covered the entire agenda (Tomlinson, 1989).

Table 1: Hierarchical Focusing - Pupil Interview Schedule

Questions for Pupils	Justification for Questions	Literature Review References
Question 1 *Can you tell me what it's been like learning about mindfulness in school?* **Prompts:** What did/do you think about it? What did/do you think about the practices? How did/do they make you feel?	**To reflect on the pupils' perceptions of mindfulness.** ✓ To consider receptiveness to the intervention.	Scaccia et al., (2015) Wanless and Domitrovich (2015) McCormack et al., (2002). Felver et al., (2015)
Question 2 *Are you using any of the mindfulness practices in your life? If you are, can you tell me about it, what it's like?* **Prompts:** When/why do you use them?	**To ascertain what situations prompt pupils to choose to practice mindfulness – (voluntary as opposed to conscripted/instructed).**	
Question 3 *In your experience do the mindfulness practices have any effect on you in any way?* **Prompts:** Thoughts? Behaviour? Learning?	**To reflect on pupils' perception of the impact mindfulness practices have on them (academic function).** ✓ Improve pupils' brain functioning and lead to changes in brain structure that support academic success. ✓ Improved attention, increased ability to regulate emotions and improved cognition.	Lyons and DeLange (2016) Brown et al., (2007) Weare (2013) Schmertz et al., (2008) Brown and Ryan (2003)

Question 4 *In what circumstances do you find mindfulness practice useful/helpful at school?* **Prompts:** When do you practice at school? How do you feel when you have practised?	**To consider how/where pupils perceive mindfulness fits into the context of their school (day).**	
Question 5 *Has learning mindfulness changed you in any way?* *If so, how?* **Prompts:** How you think about things? Feel about things? Look at things? Deal with things?	**To reflect on the pupils' self-perception of the impact learning mindfulness has had on them (intrapersonal and interpersonal).** ✓ Higher self-esteem ✓ Greater task persistence ✓ Decrease in negative effect and improvement in metacognition and executive functioning ✓ Impact on pupil wellbeing. ✓ Improving social behaviour, social skills and attention ✓ Reduction in rumination	Vickery and Dorjee (2016) Fredrickson et al., (2008) Napoli et al., (2005) Semple et al., (2010) Flook et al., (2010) Kumar et al., (2008)
Question 6 *Are there any things (barriers) that make practising mindfulness at school difficult?*	**To determine how mindfulness can be implemented, sustained and embedded in the context of a school.** ✓ To consider phases, a school needs to negotiate to establish effective and sustained use of an MBI. ✓ To consider the authenticity of delivery of MBI programmes for successful implementation.	Durlak and Dupre (2008) Carsley et al., (2017) Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010)

Question 7 *What things in school would make it easier for you to practice?*	**To reflect on how mindfulness fits in with the current educational climate, implications for the authenticity of MBIs, and potential negative effects.** ✓ To consider how an MBI intervention is transferred into a real-world setting. ✓ To consider how the depth and integrity of MBI practices are maintained and offered to ensure their transformational potential is available to the pupils. ✓ Consider the day-to-day functionality and whether mindfulness fits the current education system (dual paradigm – mindfulness and education).	Grossman (2011) Crane et al. (2016) Purser and Loy (2013) Hyland (2016a; 2016b) 2016c; 2017) Forbes (2015) Purser and Milillo (2014) Kabat-Zinn (2003)
Question 8 *Would you like to continue to have mindfulness lessons at school?* **Prompts:** Has it had an impact on the school in any way? Behaviour? Friendships? Learning?	**To reflect on pupils' perception of mindfulness as beneficial to them in their school context.**	
Question 9 *Tell me your thoughts on journaling; what do you think about the mindfulness moments diary?* **Prompts:** How did it feel writing in your diary? Will you continue to write in it?	**To consider pupils' perceptions of journaling.**	

Table 2: Hierarchical Focusing - Teacher Interview Schedule

Questions	Justification for Questions: -	Literature Review References
Question 1 *In your experience/opinion, have the mindfulness lessons had any impact (beneficial or other) on individuals and/or the class as a whole?* **Prompts:** For example, behaviour/attitudes/learning?	**To reflect on the teachers' perception of the impact of the MBI/mindfulness in general.** ✓ Potential impact MBI has had on pupils/the whole class. ✓ Any improvement in pupils' brain functioning leading to changes in brain structure that support academic success. ✓ Enhanced attentional control, emotional regulation and cognitive processing. ✓ Executive functioning, behavioural regulation, metacognition, overall global executive control.	Lyons and DeLange (2016) Brown, et al., (2007) Schmertz et al., (2008) Brown and Ryan, (2003) Flook, et al., (2010)
Question 2 *Are you using any of the mindfulness practices in your class during the week? If you are, can you tell me about your experiences of them?* **Prompts:** When/why do you use them? What changes have you noticed?	**To ascertain extent of teachers' participation/cooperation/ scepticism/ regarding the MBI and mindfulness in school.** ✓ When/why practices took place. ✓ Willingness to allocate time/resources to the MBI. ✓ Teachers' understanding of mindfulness. ✓ Teachers' receptiveness to the MBI. ✓ To ascertain any potential scepticism.	Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) Mazza-Davies (2015)

Question 3	To consider how the teachers	
Was there anything you felt did not work so well in the classroom during the teaching of mindfulness? **Prompts:** In what way did this not work? What needs to be in place for it to work?	**included mindfulness in their class in the absence of the researcher (to consider authenticity, intention, and understanding).** ✓ When practices took place and why. ✓ Willingness to allocate time/resources to the MBI. ✓ Teachers' understanding of mindfulness as a concept. ✓ Teachers' receptiveness to the MBI. ✓ To ascertain any potential scepticism.	
Question 4 *In what circumstances do you find mindfulness practice useful/helpful for the class?* **Prompts** At certain points during the school day when children are in class? When playing sports? Coping with friendship problems? Coping with behaviour?	**To consider how an MBI intervention is transferred into a real-world setting.** ✓ To consider the potential for McMindfulness. ✓ Whether MBIs lead to mindfulness practices being instrumentalised/techniques. ✓ Do MBIs pathologize behaviour or become a form of behaviour management.	Purser and Loy (2013) Hyland (2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2017) Forbes (2015) Purser and Milillo (2014) Kabat-Zinn (2003) Reveley (2016)

Question 5 *Whilst this is a mindfulness programme for children, has being introduced to the concept of mindfulness alongside your class changed you at all in any way? If so, how?* **Prompts:** The way you think about things? Look at things? Feel about things? Deal with things?	**To consider how mindfulness can be beneficial for teacher wellbeing.** ✓ To reflect on the impact mindfulness can have on teacher burnout or stress.	Felver and Jennings (2015) Schussler et al., 2015) Flook et al., (2013 Split (2011) Meiklejohn et al., (2012).
Question 6 *Are there any barriers to practising mindfulness at school?* **Prompts:** What sort of things make practising difficult? Internal/External?	**To reflect on how each teacher perceives mindfulness as fitting into their school day.** ✓ How ready are schools to take on MBIs in the current educational climate of attainment, testing, assessment, competition, etc.? ✓ Does mindfulness fit in the current education system - dual paradigm – mindfulness and education? ✓ To consider time constraints - addressing wellbeing by bolting initiatives onto existing systems.	Meyer (2012) Wanless and Domitrovich (2015) Grossman (2011) Zenner et al., (2014) Watkins (2008) Winter (2003) Spratt et al., (2006)
Question 7 *What things in school would make it easier for children to practice?* **Prompts:** Internal/External	**To establish how mindfulness can be implemented/sustained/ embedded in a school context.** ✓ To consider how an MBI is transferred into a real-world setting. ✓ Leadership approaches, feedback, support. ✓ Environment.	Ritchhart and Perkins (2000) Carsley et al., (2017)

Question 8 *What would you consider key to the successful implementation of mindfulness in schools?* **Prompts:** External/Internal Staff training? Pedagogical approaches? Whole school approach?	**To reflect on the authenticity of MBIs.** ✓ The authenticity of delivery of MBI programmes for successful implementation.	Kabat-Zinn (2003) McCormack et al., (2002) Purser and Loy (2013) Hyland (2016a, 2016b) Purser and Milillo (2014) Crane (2016) Teasdale et al., (2003)
Question 9 *What would you consider are the difficulties/challenges in the actual implementation of a mindfulness-based intervention in school?* **Prompts:** External/Internal	**To consider whether mindfulness fits in with the current education system.** ✓ Tensions in trying to apply a paradigm emphasising measurement and outcome to a paradigm inherently unquantifiable. ✓ To consider if mindfulness inadvertently supports schoolification.	Purser and Loy (2013) Hyland (2016) Forbes (2015) Kabat-Zinn (2003) Crane et al., (2016)
Question 10 *Thinking of other interventions that have been introduced into the school, how would you consider a mindfulness-based intervention could be sustained?* **Prompts:** External/Internal Staff training? Pedagogical approaches? Whole school approach?	**To consider what teachers view as essential for implementing and sustaining an MBI.** ✓ Phases a school needs to negotiate to establish effective/sustained use of an MBI. ✓ To consider specific implementation supports/relationships among providers and organisations to support an MBI.	Durlak and Dupre (2008)

Question 11 *What are your thoughts on the continuation of having mindfulness taught in this school? Would you be comfortable/interested/keen to teach an MBI?* **Prompts:** Has it had an impact on the pupils in your class in any way? Behaviour? Friendships? Learning? Any parent/carer feedback?	**To determine how interested teachers would be in continuing to have mindfulness in their school.** ✓ Receptiveness to MBI and understanding of the concept ✓ Potential scepticism. ✓ Willingness to allocate resources/time training.	
Question 12 *What are your thoughts on the children's journaling (writing in the mindful moments journal)?* **Prompts:** Time-wise? Ease of use? Impact in any way?	**To reflect on the teachers' perception of journaling.** ✓ To consider receptiveness to journaling. ✓ Understanding of benefits. ✓ Willingness to allocate time.	

6.2   Focus groups

Two boys and two girls from each of the nine classes (totalling thirty-six pupils) were selected by their respective teachers to participate in the focus group interviews for this study. I reasoned that given the nature of the method, this number of pupils would be sufficient to provide rich and detailed data. Pupils were selected based on their perceived motivation towards the lessons; this included one highly motivated pupil, two neutral and one comparatively disinterested. It was considered more representative if the focus groups comprised a mixture of pupils in terms of enthusiasm for the MBI. Though perhaps a limitation, these factors were not analysed as part of the process. Instead, their views were taken as representative of their age (7-11) and set against discussion of similar themes in the literature.

The study followed the ethical guidelines and protocols of the University of Nottingham and BERA (2011); hence informed consent was obtained from the school and all participants for research activities, as outlined in chapter four, section 4.11. The lessons were part of the curriculum and, therefore, mandatory. Importantly, every pupil participating in this study was given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and protection, thus, complying with the ethical considerations (see chapter four, section 4.11). The focus group interviews lasted for approximately thirty minutes. Before each interview, the pupils agreed to speak one at a time to hear all views. As the participants were in a group, it prompted an exchange of views and encouraged some to contribute ideas and insights that might otherwise have not been thought of during a one-to-one interview (Coolican, 2017). Furthermore, my presence as the researcher within the focus group enabled me to probe the respondents for more breadth and depth of their responses (Coolican, 2017).

6.3   Data analysis

As qualitative research has become increasingly recognised and valued, it has become essential to rigorously and methodically gain meaningful and useful results (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thorne (2000) notes how data analysis is the

most complex qualitative research phase but receives the least thoughtful dialogue in the literature. Qualitative researchers often neglect to include a detailed description of how their analysis was conducted, yet a well-conducted analysis involves some interpretation of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). As Starks and Brown-Trinidad (2007) emphasise, when conducting data analysis, the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis, making judgments about coding, theming, decontextualising and recontextualising the data. To many, therefore, it is considered necessary for the researcher to be transparent about what they are doing and why and provide a clear description of analysis methods (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Thorne, 2000).

Starks and Brown-Trinidad (2007) caution that if readers are unclear about how the researcher has analysed their data or what assumptions have informed the researcher's analysis, evaluating the research process's trustworthiness is difficult. As such, there is a need for disclosure and sophisticated tools to enable researchers to conduct trustworthy qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017). Data analysis is a systematic approach that can be transparently communicated to others by recording, systematising and disclosing detailed analysis methods so the reader can ascertain whether the process is trustworthy (Ryan et al., 2007). In this study, thematic analysis was the method of analysis employed.

6.4   Defining thematic analysis

Until lately, thematic analysis was an extensively used yet inadequately defined qualitative data analysis method. Qualitative researchers often used the method without any guiding reference or claimed some mix of other approaches such as grounded theory or discourse analysis to rationalise what essentially was thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012). However, thematic analysis is now rapidly becoming recognised as a unique and valuable method in its own right (Braun and Clarke, 2012). As a technique, it can be viewed as a rudimentary analytic skill that supports qualitative methods (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Unlike other qualitative analysis methods, thematic analysis is not constrained by epistemological suppositions

or reliant on pre-existing theoretical frameworks; as such, it is a more accessible approach that can be utilised with a wide variety of frameworks (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). It is a qualitative analytical method that aims to recognise, examine and report patterns (themes) within data in rich detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006), often going even further than this by interpreting assorted aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), by focusing on meaning across a dataset, thematic analysis enables the researcher to see and understand collective or shared meanings and experiences and find commonalities in how a topic is discussed or written about. However, as Braun and Clarke (2012) also point out, what is common is not necessarily in and of itself meaningful or important as numerous patterns could be identified across any dataset; the aim of analysis is to recognise those relevant to answering a particular research question. Analysis can also yield the answer to a question, even if the actual question being answered only becomes evident through the analysis (Braun and Clark, 2012).

6.5   Rationale for thematic analysis

Several reasons determined why I chose thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data collected. The first was based on how it enables the researcher to explore and analyse meaning across a complete dataset and one particular aspect of a phenomenon in depth (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I wanted to understand the participants' perceptions of practising mindfulness in a school environment in-depth, and I judged that thematic analysis would help answer the research question regarding the *acceptability* and *potentiality* of mindfulness in a school context. The second reason for choosing thematic analysis resulted from the understanding that it goes further than the semantic content of the data (i.e., what is explicitly stated) to the latent meanings, where underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations are identified, examined and interpreted (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I believed thematic analysis would widen the critical lens, facilitating me to look at the 'bigger picture'. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a thematic analysis

that focuses on the latent themes has a tendency to be more constructionist. It does not focus on motive or individual psychologies but theorises the socio-cultural settings and structural circumstances that prompt the individual accounts offered (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I hoped my exploration of the latent meanings would grant me insight into the inherent challenges to introducing and sustaining an MBI in the cultural context of a school in the current educational climate, one that is arguably the antithesis of mindfulness.

Thematic analysis, as a technique, allows for a high level of transparency throughout the research process itself, thus, safeguarding the trustworthiness of the research process; this was another reason for my choice. As the active researcher, I was keen for my voice to remain present in the theme generation process; thematic analysis allows this. A final reason for my choice was to develop clear links between the study's themes and aims; thematic analysis can help guide the development of analytical claims (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It, therefore, fulfilled this need.

6.6   The analytic process

Joffe (2012) asserts that a good thematic analysis will describe most of the data rather than choose samples of text that agree with the arguments it is making. Additionally, it will aspire to reflect a balanced view of the data and its meaning within a particular context of thoughts rather than attaching great importance to the frequency of codes abstracted from their context (Joffe, 2012). Undeniably the occasional reporting of percentages and frequencies is helpful, especially to those who subscribe to a quantitative paradigm. I am not denying that recording, comparing and reporting the proportions who have chosen from a sequence of reply options can be significant and valuable, particularly for Positivists interested in measuring the degree to which phenomena are expressed rather than the qualitative experience of it (Ratner, 1997). However, the stance I have adopted in this study is that the reporting of percentages reflects, to some extent, concern around the validity of qualitative research, thereby implying that in some way, the analysis might be false, or the themes might be 'anecdotal' rather than patterned.

All research relies on integrity, honesty, and good research practices, whether qualitative or quantitative. Counting responses and reporting actual numbers does not bypass this issue and misses the point of qualitative research in that frequency does not establish or prove value (Pyett, 2003). Whether something is insightful or significant for responding to a research question is not automatically decided by the number of people who said it. As Wainwright (1997) states, even a view shared by most respondents in a small qualitative study cannot claim to represent the broader population; therefore, it is the quality of the insight that is important and not the number of respondents that shared it.

Due to the nature of qualitative data, it cannot be assumed what the absence of a theme in the data means. This becomes apparent if we consider, for example, the difference between a quantitative survey and qualitative data collected from an interview or focus group. A quantitative survey may ask the same questions and request responses from a limited number of options that will be the same for all. Conversely, in an interview or focus group, the data produced by each member can vary considerably. Interviews are mercurial, flexible and interactive methods of collecting information, and not every participant discusses the same issues. If it was reported that several pupils thought about something in a certain way during an interview, it could not be assumed that the remaining pupils did not think this way or thought the opposite. It may be that they just did not discuss it. The researcher, therefore, is unable to interpret what is not reported in qualitative data; consequently, reporting numerical proportions is rather misleading and duplicitous (Psych.auckland.ac.nz, (nd)).

However, critics of thematic analysis argue that its flexible approach can lead to discrepancies and incoherence when developing themes resulting from the research data (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Patently, as Silverman (2013) points out, science is interested in how knowledge is generated and is a methodical way of discovering the answers to research questions. Nevertheless, a progressively recognised view is that work becomes scientific by espousing study methods suited to the topic being studied; such methods

also need to systematically produce knowledge to make claims concerning its reliability and validity (Silverman, 2013). Beyond these criteria conventionally associated with quantitative work, those using thematic analysis need to create a transparent trail showing how they selected and collected their data, demonstrating from whom and how it was analysed (Joffe, 2012).

In this respect, Braun and Clarke (2006) established a six-phase guide to undertaking thematic analysis. It ensures a more rigorous and structured procedure guides the iterative and reflective process that involves continuously moving back and forth between phases (Nowell et al., 2017). The first phase includes familiarisation with the data, which begins during data collection. In this study, during the initial stage of the analytic process, I familiarised myself with the data by listening to all the recorded data, transcribing it verbatim and checking it against the original recording to ensure its accuracy.

The second phase involves creating codes to immerse the researcher more deeply in the data and create the analysis building blocks. A code identifies a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst and refers to the most basic element of the raw data that can be accessed meaningfully (Boyatzis, 1998). While creating the codes in this second phase, I transformed all the data into a Microsoft Word table comprising three columns. The first column contained the emergent codes; the second column contained the annotated original transcripts, and the third column systematically explored the data by noting information pertinent to the research questions based on the literature review, cycles of research and resulting reflections (see chapter six, section 6.1 – Hierarchical Focusing Interview Schedules 1 and 2 for the research interview questions).

After this initial familiarisation process, I developed codes related to the straightforward semantic or latent aspects of the data and communicated them in easy grammatical form. The codes were placed next to the referenced transcript extracts in another separate column. As I was concerned with addressing specific research questions, it was essential to keep this in mind

during the data analysis; thus, the analysis was theoretical rather than inductive. Consequently, instead of coding every piece of text, I coded each data segment that captured something interesting about or relevant to the research question.   I used open coding as I did not have pre-set codes; the codes were developed and modified as I worked through the coding process (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The codes were colour-coded for each focus group and teacher interview to further organise the data. This process was carried out repeatedly throughout the entire dataset.   Upon completion, the codes were taken from the transcript, collected together and organised according to subject matter and meaning.

The collection of codes was examined in relation to their relevance to the research questions rather than their frequency within the data. For example, a significant number of pupils mentioned using mindfulness practices at home and the benefits they gained for improved sleep or performance in various out-of-school activities or hobbies. However, these were deemed irrelevant to the overarching research question regarding introducing mindfulness within a school context. This chapter includes two examples illustrating the thematic analysis process described; one is taken from a pupil focus group interview (see page 113), the other from an interview with a teacher (see page 114). It should be noted here that while only two short samples are provided in this chapter, appendix 10 contains a completed version of the thematic analysis process carried out with one focus group interview, and appendix 11 contains a completed class teacher interview. The process was repeated for all nine pupil focus group interviews and nine teacher interviews; however, the word limit for the thesis prevented all the data from being included in the appendices. The data is safely stored on a password-protected computer and can be accessed if necessary.

The interview questions were accompanied by prompts to aid comprehension; these can be seen in the interview schedules (see chapter 6, section 6.1, schedule 1 and schedule 2). Justification for the questions is based on prior research via a literature review and also resulted from the issues that emerged during the journal reflections documented during the cyclical research

process, as discussed in chapters three and five. The answers provide insight into both the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of mindfulness. However, a caveat is that they are justifiably limited in breadth and depth of understanding.   Such limitations resulted from the participants being mindfulness novices, the majority being children and the short duration of the MBI limiting opportunities to engage deeply with practices seeking to cultivate increased awareness. As Spira (2017) observes, in our culture, we tend to value objects, ideas, beliefs, states of mind, opinions, feelings and relationships, resulting in our attention being given to objective knowledge so exclusively that the experience of simply being aware is overlooked or ignored.

Consequently, in this study, participants lacking sufficient background knowledge and direct experience of meditation practices came the ineffable failure to provide in-depth feedback when conducting self-enquiry regarding increased awareness.   Indeed, this became very apparent with the participants in classes where the teacher offered them even fewer opportunities to engage with the practices; their feedback was noticeably even more limited, with many of them unable to express anything other than just experiencing feelings of calm. Hence, the challenge of communicating ideas through words should not be underestimated (Spira 2017).

Example of Pupil Focus Group

Emergent Codes	Annotated Original Transcript (Year 6 – Class 10) - Blue Focus Group	Exploration of Comments
	Interviewer - Are there any things (barriers) that make practising mindfulness at school difficult?	
Teacher remembering – a barrier. Self-conscious.	Rhiannon – I definitely think like that we don't do it at school because our teacher doesn't remember to do it. I think sometimes that if you wanted to do it before tests and you are the only person, you can't really because you almost feel embarrassed to do it if not everyone's doing it.	Pupil perceives the benefits of mindfulness practice before exams but recognises feelings of awkwardness if no one else is doing it.
Busy curriculum a barrier.	Ali – If you want to bring mindfulness into school, there's already quite a lot of subjects at school like maths and literacy and lots of other ones, so it would be quite hard to involve mindfulness. We would have to almost like have to clear some subjects out of the way.	Recognition by the pupil that schools have a jam-packed curriculum, and therefore, time constraints are an issue.
Environment a barrier.	Interviewer – So, like time?	
	Ali – Yes.	
Induces feeling of calm.	Keira – Sometimes before break or even at break, you might just want to calm down. You might just have a practice test before break, and there might be loads of noises outside, and you couldn't really like ignore them. Like it's kind of hard to do it.	Recognition schools are noisy places and, therefore, may not be a suitable environment for mindfulness practices to be carried out in.
	Interviewer – OK, so it's kind of like about the environment then?	Pupils recognise need to calm down before an exam, and note teacher talk beforehand increases the pressure, leaving no time to calm down. Pupils aware of competition and stressful situation they are in.
	Keira – Yes.	
Good for academic functioning.	Noah – sometimes before tests like you get them and the teacher starts talking about them for ages, and it makes me really nervous, and I'm just like, can we get on with it because this is almost like building a tension up (others join in at this point agreeing there is a build-up of tension) on and on until I'm like super nervous for it and then I probably don't do my best performance.	

Example of One-to-One Teacher Interview

Emergent Codes	Annotated Original Transcript (Year 5 – Class 9 Teacher)	Exploration of Comments
Reduction in negative thoughts.	Interviewer - while this is a mindfulness programme for children, has being introduced to the concept of mindfulness alongside your class changed you at all in any way? If so, how? Fran – I think that I am more aware probably of the benefits of stillness and, certainly, that you talked about thinking of positive things that have happened. Thinking about the good stuff rather than working on the bad stuff, and there are children in my class who will very much take home the negative, and so I very often said, "right, let's have a think about two good things that we've done today" and tried to focus on enjoyment of those small little every day chunks that do give pleasure when you realise that you know that's been a good thing rather than letting the bad stuff outweigh.	*Teacher perceives mindfulness to be beneficial in supporting pupils in positive thinking and to recognise what has gone well during the school day rather than focusing on the negatives.*
Teacher 'on - board'. Pedagogical benefits.	Interviewer - are there any barriers that make practising mindfulness at school difficult? Fran - There's always barriers; there's always a new initiative, a new scheme. It just depends what… what you personally as a teacher think is particularly useful. I do think this is useful because if children can sit and focus and concentrate, then their learning improves, so it's not just about their wellbeing; from a pedagogical point of view, it's also very useful to help improve your results, your learning and your teaching.	*There is recognition of the importance for the teachers to be committed to an intervention in order to ensure it is implemented and also for it to be sustained. Mindfulness is perceived as supporting pupils' mental wellbeing and ability to focus their attention, ultimately leading to improved results. The teacher linking mindfulness practice to gaining improved results is indicative of the results-driven environments schools have increasingly become and the thought processes of some teachers under pressure to perform.*
Time constraint – barrier.	Interviewer - what things in school would make it easier for children to practice? Fran – Oh more time every day. It's just about … it's just, well, maybe there is some kind of resource that can go at the front of the classroom that says right, take five minutes? You know everybody has a three before me type resource; perhaps there is a thing. Whether that just becomes wallpaper or not, I don't know.	

Busy schedule – barrier. **Remembering – barrier.**	Interviewer – I know the… did you ever get mindfulness monitors? Fran – No. Was it teacher B or teacher L that did that? A remind me to do. Interviewer – Yes, a remind me to do. Putting it on the children to remind them to do mindfulness. Fran – <mark>I have a lot of people responsible for remembering a lot of things that I can't remember during the day because there's so much going on. Yes, so that might help.</mark>	*There is a perception by the teacher there is not enough time during the day for mindfulness. The suggestion time needs to be made for mindfulness every day for five minutes instrumentalises the practices, reducing them to techniques. It illustrates the belief of the teacher that mindfulness is a technique rather than a way of being or ethos.* *Teacher was aware the other classes had mindfulness monitors but chose not to appoint any herself despite being unable to remember to practice.*

After coding the entire dataset, following Braun and Clarke's six-step guide, the third phase starts by creating themes and sub-themes; these are not fixed but open to change. A theme will capture something significant about the data that relates to the research questions and signify some patterned response within the data set (Braun and Clark, 2006). The themes and sub-themes constructed from data gained in this study are displayed in table 3, titled 'Themes and Sub-themes' (see page 117), and in more detail in appendix 12. While presenting data in this way is conducive to a quantitative paradigm and one that I, as the researcher, have less affinity to, it does allow for the data to be displayed in a short, accessible format.

Undeniably, in this study, most codes did reveal themselves to be recurring thoughts, feelings or opinions expressed by the participants, thereby demonstrating an unintended frequency element (the coloured numbers show this). This frequency element could be attributed to all the participants being asked the same open-ended questions. It could also be attributed to the reductionist and somewhat narrow focus of the MBI; for example, the emphasis on paying attention prompted many participants to discuss their experience of an enhanced ability to focus. Despite this frequency element with most codes, some codes did have only two or three references. As argued earlier, something is not necessarily determined as insightful or important for answering a research question because many people say it. For example, in this study, only four references were made relating to the difficulty of making pupils practice something they do not want to practice, consequently touching on the issue of a conscripted audience. Three teachers commented on the inability to measure mindfulness, and one pupil discussed intention behind the practice. I considered these codes relevant to the research questions and therefore included them as sub-themes.

Theme one

Potentiality of mindfulness in school: Pupils' and teachers' perceptions

Sub- theme one: Wellbeing– pupils' perceptions			Sub- theme five: Self-perception – pupils' perceptions		
15	10	15	9	8	8
12	9	14	6	8	12
9	17	7	2	2	3

Sub- theme two: Pupils' wellbeing– teachers' perceptions			Sub- theme six: Behaviour/calming – teachers' perceptions		
3	7	5	-	-	2
4	6	1	1	2	1
6	3	1	2	1	2

Sub- theme three: Teachers' wellbeing– teachers' perceptions			Sub-theme seven: Academic functioning – pupils' perceptions		
3	-	-	3	8	4
1	1	-	11	4	2
3	1	-	14	4	-

Sub- theme four: Conflict resolution/relations pupils' perceptions			Sub- theme eight: Academic functioning – teachers' perceptions		
2	5	5	2	2	3
3	-	3	7	2	2
1	3	-	3	2	-

Theme two

Acceptability of mindfulness in school: pupils' and teachers' perceptions

Sub- theme one: Time constraints - pupils' perceptions			Sub- theme six: Environment - teachers' perceptions		
5	2	2	1	-	3
2	5	3	1	3	5
5	2	2	-	1	2

Sub- theme two: Time constraints – teachers' perceptions			Sub-theme seven: Conscripted audience – pupils' perceptions		
5	2	4	-	-	-
7	9	2	-	-	1
8	3	3	2	1	-

Sub- theme three: Teacher reluctance - pupils' perceptions			Sub-theme eight: Understanding mindfulness concept – pupils' perceptions		
7	2	2	-	-	1
1	1	1	-	1	-
3	2	1	5	2	5

Sub- theme four: Teacher reluctance - teachers' perceptions			Sub- theme nine: Measuring – teachers' perceptions		
6	4	12	2	-	-
10	6	4	-	1	-
3	4	4	-	2	-

Sub- theme five: Environment – pupils' perceptions		
2	-	1
1	-	-
2	6	-

Theme three

potentiality and acceptability of journaling in school pupils' and teachers' perceptions (years 5 & 6 only)

Sub- theme one: Enjoyable/different – pupils' perceptions		Sub- theme four: Work – pupils' perceptions	
4	-	-	-
3	-	-	-
3	1	-	1

Sub- theme two: Wellbeing– pupils' perceptions		Sub- theme five: Work – teachers' perceptions	
3	4	-	-
2	-	-	1
7	2	-	-

Sub- theme three: Pupils' wellbeing– teachers' perceptions		Sub- theme six: Time constraints – teachers' perceptions	
3	-	-	-
2	1	-	-
1	-	-	2

Table 3 – Themes and Sub-themes

Continuing to follow the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step guide, the fourth phase involves reviewing, modifying and developing the initial themes identified in phase three. The fifth phase involves several techniques and questions to guide progress in defining and naming themes. During these stages of the analytic process, I reread and rearranged emergent themes. Codes were checked in relation to their significance to the themes, and thought was given to the themes' validity with regard to the complete dataset. This procedure recognised the similarities among a few themes, for example, time constraints and a busy curriculum, so these were merged into one theme. Teacher scepticism, cooperation, and understanding of the concept were merged into one theme; likewise, mindfulness as calming and behaviour management were merged. The resultant themes were defined and named, considering their relevance to the research questions. Figures 1 and 2 (see pages 119 and 120) are the final thematic maps illustrating the relationships between themes.
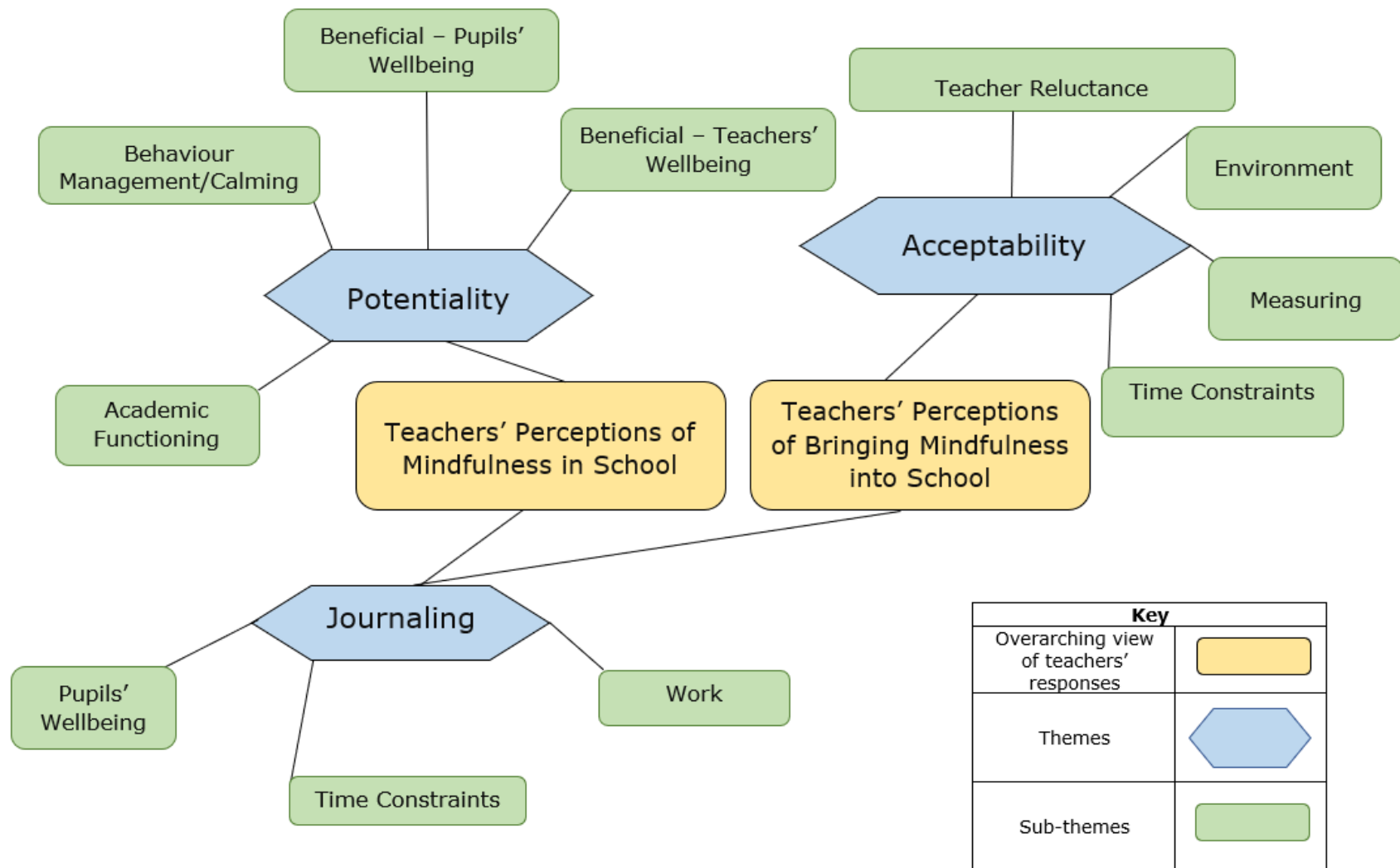
Figure 1: Thematic Map representing teachers' perceptions of bringing mindfulness into the school
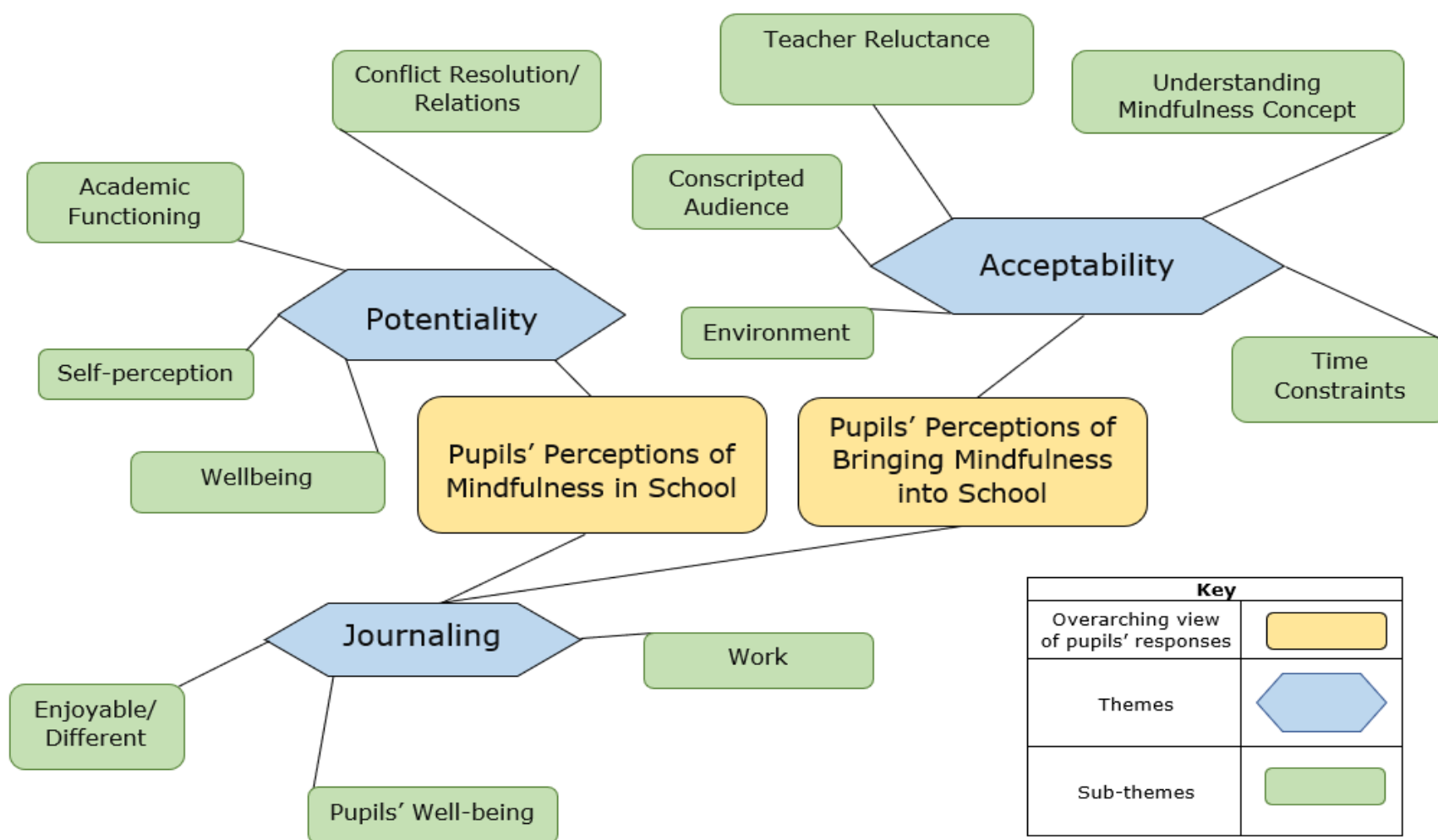
Figure 2: Thematic Map representing pupils' perceptions of bringing mindfulness into the school

The sixth and final phase is the development of the entire analysis and the production of a report. Writing this report offers the researcher a final opportunity to strengthen the analysis and ensure effective communication of the analyst's story (Terry et al., 2017). Chapters seven, eight and nine contain the report I wrote resulting from the thematic analysis process carried out in this study.

6.7   Analysing the data

Just as before, when conceding that a table is a quantitative method of presenting data, I also concede that providing data here in a report leans more towards a quantitative paradigm. Nevertheless, the premise for this choice was based on recognising the necessity for a systematic method of presenting the data, thus safeguarding my intention to demonstrate integrity, transparency and fairness while ensuring a flowing coherence. In the report, three themes were identified as being the most relevant to answering the research question, i.e.: -

- Theme one - pupils and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* of mindfulness in school.
- Theme two - pupils and teachers' perceptions of the *acceptability* of mindfulness in school.
- Theme three - pupils and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of journaling in school.

The report, therefore, was divided into three chapters to allow each chapter to contain an in-depth analysis of one theme, each containing several sub-themes. I acknowledge here that I could have chosen from two or three different ways of presenting the data; however, I chose to integrate my reflections with the literature for several reasons. Firstly, separating the reflections from the extant literature would have resulted in a more truncated and less dynamic read. Secondly, I considered the format allowed for a more significant participant contribution by examining each issue alongside the literature and then returning to my data. Thirdly, as the researcher, I am

aware of the tension present when presenting data as complete, yet, in such a way, it renders it superficial by failing to elicit deeper narratives for exploration and analysis or reveal more significant issues.

Presenting the data this way ensured a more holistic and mindful approach via commentary and discussion, which was validated by extracts from the original transcripts woven into the findings. It also permitted an examination of the narratives from a critical perspective, thus uncovering potentially more significant issues that could be discussed within each theme when brought to light.

Summary

This chapter clarified how the research questions and focus groups were organised.   I provided an in-depth discussion on the thematic analysis process, i.e., the method of data collection used in this study. The procedural stages involved in the research were examined, and my rationale for choosing the data collection and analysis methods was given. The crucial issues of transparency, trustworthiness, quality and ethical considerations in qualitative research were discussed.

Chapter 7: Analysis of Theme One – Pupils and Teachers' Perceptions of the *Potentiality* of Mindfulness in School

Introduction

Chapter seven comprises an analysis of theme one, which focuses on pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* of mindfulness, the aim being to provide contextualisation and support to the differing perspectives and arguments resulting from the data. The analysis answers the sub-question posed in chapter one, i.e., what are the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* of mindfulness? Some extracts from the original transcripts with dialogue and the relevant literature are woven throughout iteratively. I have not included all the extracts due to the thesis word limit; however, those shared are typical of the majority. The extracts have been analysed through a critical lens to move beyond the superficial narratives to more significant issues which are discussed when they arise.

Theme one contains eight sub-themes resulting from matters raised during the thematic analysis process, as described in chapter six. Some sub-themes reveal both teachers' and pupils' perceptions, and others only the pupils' or just the teachers' perceptions depending on the nature of the theme.

As an overview, sub-themes one and two reveal the pupils', followed by the teachers' perceptions of mindfulness to support pupil wellbeing. Sub-theme three considers the teachers' perceptions of mindfulness for promoting their own wellbeing, revealing that the majority view it as useful for the pupils but not themselves.   Sub-theme four focuses on how the pupils perceive mindfulness as impacting their relationships and/or ability to resolve conflicts with friends or family. Sub-theme five reflects on the pupils' insights into the changes they think have occurred within themselves due to practising mindfulness, with many considering it has increased their ability to see things from another's perspective. Sub-theme six explores how the teachers view mindfulness as a form of behaviour management. Sub-themes seven and

eight reveal the teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the potential of mindfulness for improving academic functioning.

Sub-theme one: mindfulness to support pupil wellbeing – pupils' perceptions

Many philosophical, spiritual and psychological traditions stress the importance of the quality of consciousness to maintain and enhance wellbeing (Wilber, 2000). Mindfulness is a characteristic of consciousness long believed to support wellbeing (Brown and Ryan, 2003). However, as highlighted in chapter four, wellbeing as a concept is particularly challenging to define. Within this sub-theme, it is described and discussed as feeling calm or having reduced anxiety, stress, rumination and worry. All these were the states of mind most commonly referred to by the pupils when discussing wellbeing, and so they are the children's notion of the concept, so they are used within this sub-theme, which discusses pupil wellbeing. Other aspects of wellbeing such as increased self-perception, improved social behaviour, improved relations and academic functioning are also discussed in other relevant sub-themes.

Most of the pupil participants in this study referred to stress, worry and negative thoughts. These feelings, however, were not confined to the focus group participants; other pupils in the class also mentioned them. Mindfulness and its associated practices were with equal frequency cited by the pupils as helping them cope with these states of mind and inducing feelings of relaxation and calm. Consequently, the findings in this study support the findings of other studies stating that mindfulness enhances emotional wellbeing.

> Liam – (year 3 pupil) *I used to have lots of really worrying thoughts and like scary thoughts, actually, and I used to think the scary things were real. But now I just don't think that anymore because it has calmed me down.*

> Georgia – (year 5 pupil) *When I was feeling really nervous about something, it really helped me get over the nerves and just think this*

is all going to be fine because normally I don't really think about the positives; I always think about the negatives.

Some spoke of how they had asked their teacher if they could practice mindfulness during stressful times at school, such as before a test or assessment. Reference to stress was more frequent in the year six focus group interviews, i.e., the year group required to do the Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs). Pupils in other year groups also referred to the SATs, recognising the potentially stressful time ahead that awaited them.

James – (year 6 pupil) *With SATs, the teachers are applying quite a lot of pressure. So, I think mindfulness would be useful in those kinds of situations.*

Ali – (year 6 pupil) *I think we should keep on doing it because usually, school can be quite stressful, and so if we do it, it's kind of like, its so that school isn't more stressful than it used to be if you get what I'm saying.*

The pupils' perception was that mindfulness helped reduce anxiety, worry, and rumination and provided a means to cope with school-related stress. As the mindfulness teacher, it was heartening to listen to them discuss how mindfulness provided them with the support they felt they needed; however, it was saddening from my perspective as a primary school teacher. Expressing this need for support for feelings of stress caused by schooling, particularly at a young age and early on in a school career, echoes the problems highlighted in chapter two when education and children's mental health were discussed. My journal reflections shared in chapter three went on to consider the concept of mindfulness versus the culture of schools. They drew attention to the disparity in child wellbeing approaches between the Department of Health and the Department of Education. They also noted how bringing together education with an emphasis on measurement and outcome and mindfulness with many unquantifiable properties is not without challenge. In light of the comments made here by the pupils in this study, they are topics worth revisiting for a deeper exploration as they undoubtedly impact any mindfulness interventions introduced.

Undoubtedly recent signs in UK educational policy and practice demonstrate a move away from the main goals of education as the dominance of economic capital and employability towards social capital (Hyland, 2013). More emphasis is now being placed on the affective domain, alongside personal and social wellbeing (Hyland, 2013), as reflected in government policy increasingly focusing on improving mental health and wellbeing and supporting children's social and emotional development. It is evidenced by, for example, the Department for Education publishing in 2017 a series of documents titled 'Supporting Mental Health in Schools and Colleges' (GOV.UK, 2017). Another more recent example was the introduction in September 2020 of compulsory health education for all pupils; children are taught about good physical and mental health, staying safe off and online and the importance of healthy relationships (GOV.UK, 2019).

Nevertheless, the prevailing instrumentalist and economistic function of learning continue to hold sway (Hyland, 2013), as evidenced by the joint Green Paper published in December 2017 by the Department of Education and Department of Health and Social Care on 'transforming' children's mental health provision. While the paper's statistics reveal that some 850,000 children and young people in the UK have an identified mental health disorder, nowhere in the document does it allude to the possibility that education policy itself might be contributing to some pupils' anxiety (Mansell, 2018). In light of this, it can be considered worrying that a government department, supposedly concerned with making children's mental health one of its priorities, has effectively ruled out the possibility that in order to do this, education policy needs to change (Mansell, 2018).

Further evidence of this function of learning is provided if we look at the more recent changes made and note how raising academic standards remain, once again, firmly in sight. These latest changes have included the introduction in 2020 of compulsory times tables tests for all pupils in year four and baseline testing for all four-year-olds. Furthermore, under the more recent New Inspection Framework for Ofsted (2019), it is clear there is no intention of Ofsted abandoning data as a critical factor in its inspection judgments

(Bousted, 2019). If we now consider this continued emphasis on raising standards and return to the promising research and claims that MBIs could potentially support mental health and wellbeing in schools, it prompts revisiting one of the sub-questions of this thesis. Does mindfulness even fit within the context of the current educational climate? Especially if we consider how education has a tendency toward spiritual bypassing and neglect of deep inner work, i.e., using spiritual practices to gloss over problems rather than resolving them, and where encouragement is placed on focusing on the positive.

Hart (2014) observes how there is a lack of recognition that the well-intended directions, ones often filling a need and making a difference, are being implemented and operating in an outdated system; this is where the real problem lies. It is a view echoed in the study of primary teachers' perceptions of mindfulness practices with young children carried out by Piotrowski et al., (2017), who found that despite the teachers' acknowledgement of the benefits of the practices for their pupils, various factors contrived to make implementing them challenging. In particular, the teachers considered the current education system as being set up to prohibit an opportunity for them to take risks (Piotrowski et al., 2017). Thus, as eloquently stated by Hart (2014, p. 9):

> The vision and view of education and of human consciousness are simply not adequate for this century, and so these programmes remain add-ons to the 'serious curriculum' and thus are likely to be unsustainable. When the political, economic, administrative, or social winds change, these programmes may become distorted or diluted or fall by the wayside altogether.

From a more critical and realistic stance, taking into account the more recent developments in education as outlined here and simultaneously acknowledging that education and mindfulness are two conflicting paradigms, it raises crucial questions. Will MBIs ultimately become nothing more than short-term commercialised mindfulness strategies implemented in schools to provide a quick fix or cure-all as per Hyland's warnings (2016b)? Or, as Hart (2014) cautions, could MBIs become mere add-ons that one day fades into

oblivion like many other interventions in schools?   Indeed, can they be anything else in such a climate? These questions are explored in chapter ten, alongside a discussion on the kind of education system required to support mindfulness.

Sub-theme two: mindfulness to support pupil wellbeing – teachers' perceptions

In this study, all nine teachers referred to the benefits of mindfulness as supporting pupil wellbeing. One teacher stated:

> Helen – (year 5 teacher) *I think it's made me see actually that children do worry about things and that they are looking for something to help them with that because otherwise, so many of them wouldn't have said: "yes, I use it".*

The fact that it was a revelation to the teacher that the children in her class had worries was disquieting. However, her acknowledgement that the pupils turned to mindfulness to support their mental wellbeing was positive; less so my knowledge that despite this admission, I knew mindfulness practices rarely happened from one week to the next in this class. In keeping with other studies citing lack of time as a barrier to practising mindfulness (Wigelsworth and Quinn, 2020), likewise, time constraints were cited in this study. Chapter eight will discuss this issue when analysing theme two – the *acceptability* of mindfulness - as lack of time was identified as a sub-theme.

The connection between mindfulness and worry, however, was not typical. Unlike the pupils' perceptions, the teachers associated it with being a technique that, when practised, calmed a noisy or 'wild' class, as revealed by a few teachers' comments.

> Sue – (year 5 teacher) *It's been a good tool for me to refer back to when they are getting a little bit wilder and say, right, let's just … let's calm ourselves down. Do we need to have a little bit of mindful mindfulness? And they all sort of go, ah, and it calms things down very quickly*.

Paul – (year 3 teacher) *The biggest thing that they'll probably take away is the techniques and things like that from it, and about having to …allowing them to cope, allowing them to focus and allowing them to do those things*.

Going beyond these somewhat superficial 'narratives' regarding the teachers' time allocation to practice mindfulness when the class are '*getting a little bit wilder'*, more critically, it raises the question of whether mindfulness, when implemented in a school, typically becomes just another form of behaviour management, a strategy to calm and quieten a class. It is an issue that was identified during the thematic process and became a sub-theme. I will, therefore, return to it later in this chapter in sub-theme six. Reflecting on the teachers' perceptions of mindfulness as a technique, this could be attributed to them not fully understanding the concept due to their novice status. Alternatively, it could be a result of the narrow focus of the MBI.

Nonetheless, it does raise the concern that when mindfulness is implemented in schools via an MBI, will it be viewed purely as a technique instead of a way of being (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Lack of understanding of the concept of mindfulness was another issue identified during the thematic analysis process; hence it too became a sub-theme and is discussed in chapter eight when considering the *acceptability* of mindfulness.

Sub-theme three: mindfulness to support teacher wellbeing- teachers' perceptions

Undoubtedly, teachers are experiencing alarmingly high rates of stress and burnout (Felver and Jennings, 2015; Schussler et al., 2015) and addressing teacher stress in the classroom remains a significant challenge in education (Flook et al., 2013). Defining teacher wellbeing is as complex and elusive to define as wellbeing; most studies relating to teacher wellbeing focus on teachers' psychological wellbeing in relation to stress and burnout (Split, 2011). Like their pupils,' teachers also need and deserve support to flourish professionally and personally (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). In this study, most teachers did not consider mindfulness as a way of alleviating their stress, and

none expressed being familiar with the mindfulness concept or any mindfulness-based practices. Yet, despite this novice element, exposure to an MBI aimed at children resulted in a simplistic understanding of mindfulness and motivated a couple of teachers to embody aspects of mindfulness to support their own wellbeing.

> Sue – (year 5 teacher) *When things are getting too much, I just think… I do take that moment now and go like stop, let myself breathe and then just for that little moment… and then I just go right that's it, now I can deal with this. So, I have found it really helpful for me.*
>
> Mark – (year 6 teacher) *I love that idea of just being a bit more… nicer to yourself and not worrying so much about not being focused or concentrating. You know it being a very conscious process; you know you have to notice these things. So yes, a bit of that detachment from the emotions, I suppose. Not that… not that you know I am sad, but I notice that I'm feeling sad, you know it's… it's that sort of thing, isn't it? I quite like that. There's a calmer feel to the room; I think that's because I feel a bit calmer as well. But I think they notice the difference.*

These short narratives demonstrate the potential for mindfulness to support teacher stress, a finding in line with current research claiming that schools worldwide have implemented various mindfulness programmes and practices that inspire and nurture teachers and pupils (Gouda et al., 2016). Shapiro et al., (2016) note how integrating mindfulness training into teachers' lives provides multifaceted and broad benefits. According to Shapiro et al., (2016), mindfulness training generates three pathways of integration in teachers' lives: - mindfulness as a means for self-care, mindfulness as a way of becoming a reflective teacher, and mindfulness for transforming pupil learning. As it supports universal positive qualities like compassion, attention, and emotional balance developing these qualities and embodying a mindful presence helps teachers teach mindfully and simultaneously model these virtues to their pupils (Shapiro et al., 2016; Roeser, 2016). It is particularly relevant as children learn by example.

Likewise, Albrecht et al., (2012) maintain how it has been shown that mindfulness practices can help reduce teacher stress, increase self-esteem and support teachers in managing behaviour. Furthermore, according to

Albrecht et al., (2012), for some teachers, it enhances their ability to gain a holistic view of the curriculum, which, as a consequence, enables them to communicate critical concepts to pupils more effectively, rather than feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of learning outcomes they must teach.

Sub-theme four: conflict resolution/relations – pupils' perceptions

The MBI used in this study focused on increasing attention, coping with stress and promoting emotional regulation.   Kindness, compassion and the importance of nurturing ourselves and others were only considered in the final lesson, yet, despite this, the extracts still reveal how the MBI impacted the pupils' relationships. Some pupils referred to conflict with friends and alluded to feeling that mindfulness impacted their ability to resolve these conflicts. Being more mindful had helped them take a step back, calm down and see what was happening. In turn, this had facilitated improvements in peer relations.

> Todd – (year 5 pupil) *Now, with my friends, I get along with my friends. I think we used to have a bit more arguments then. When we had mindfulness lessons, I think we understood each other a bit more, and now me and my friends can get along and play a lot better*.

> Herjeet – (year 5 pupil) *I really enjoyed it. We should carry on. It helped lots of people. If spread out more between the classes, the year three classes are bonkers. It would help them stepping up into the school, a sense of maturity. The year threes are violent people, some of them*.

Three pupils demonstrated increased empathy toward their peers. They spoke of an increased understanding of how their friends felt and saw the other side of the argument. One pupil identified such ability as a skill for resolving disputes more quickly.

> Mary – (year 6 pupil) *When on the playground, if there's like an argument going on, I find it easier to like step back and sort of realise what's going on and like figure it out like how I'm feeling*.

> Lily – (year 5 pupil) *There's a lot less fallouts with friendships. People are calming themselves down.*

Such findings in this study support the research to date that has demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness for increasing self-compassion (Saltzman and Goldin, 2008) and improving social behaviour and social skills (Napoli et al., 2005).

Sub-theme five: self-perception – pupils' perceptions

Research on mindfulness practice has also shown that it improves behavioural regulation, metacognition and executive functions (Flook et al., 2010). It necessitates reflecting on the meta-level, an essential process that enables us to become more aware of why things happen as they do and what happens when we respond in one way rather than another (Berila, 2016). In this study, most pupils could articulate in varying degrees of depth some idea about the kind of person they thought they were and the changes they perceived to have taken place within themselves due to practising mindfulness. Some pupils considered they now had a better understanding of their thought processes and how their minds worked; others felt more able to reduce their negative thoughts and rumination, and a few noticed some of their negative behaviour patterns. While not referring directly to increased self-awareness, the extracts demonstrate this.

> Rhiannon – (year 6 pupil) *Now it's like changed me from reacting to, like I said before, to like instead of reacting to stopping and thinking, and like instead of making some choices that I would have before, thinking and making new ones.*
>
> Herjeet – (year 5 pupil) *I got stressed a bit. Mum and dad are divorced, and my sister is annoying.   It really helps to calm me; it helps me to focus more at school, not worrying about later or worrying in the day. It has made me a more positive person. I'm a more positive person; I recognise worries and thoughts*.

Although not directly referred to, perhaps due to a lack of understanding, an increase in empathic understanding resulting from mindfulness practice was also noted by some pupils. They perceived that mindfulness had impacted them in such a way that it had made them better versions of themselves, citing examples as evidence of the changes that had occurred, i.e., a

decreasing inclination to react to situations and people and an increasing tendency to consider situations and relate to people.

> Charlotte – (year 6 pupil) *It's made me sort of notice... I mean, it's not really related, but notice how other people may be feeling more, and a few times I know that I've been happy and someone else has been having not the best day and I've been really excited and I've been annoying them a bit because I'm happy, and I've just taken myself off and just calmed myself down and come back because I just want to be calm with them because they are finding it really annoying.*

> Ravinder – (year 6 pupil) *It's calmed me down through lots of stages, and I wish we could have done it in year three or four because then my whole way through years… through school then it would have been much better than it was because I had quite a few arguments in year five and so mindfulness in year six has just made it better*.

In addition to an increased awareness of oneself and others, one pupil also reported having a greater appreciation of how hard other people work.

> George – (year 6 pupil) *Yeah, sometimes when I look at like… when I see films, and I see like art like I see like how much work people have put into it*.

Sub-theme six: behaviour/calming – teachers' perceptions

The link between mindfulness and regulating behaviour is apparent in Buddhist literature. A concern with the cessation of suffering is connected to becoming more aware of harmful consequences; such awareness is vital for creating positive behaviours that limit them (Kumar, 2002). Indeed, one of the goals of meditative practice is to encourage 'right action' based on one's insight, understanding and concern for others (Kumar, 2002). Brown and Ryan (2003) highlight how mindfulness serves as a vital self-regulatory function by freeing individuals from automatic thoughts, habits and unhealthy behaviour patterns and fostering more informed and self-endorsed behavioural regulation.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the teachers' perception of mindfulness was predominantly linked to the calming effect it had on the pupils in their class.

None of the teachers referred openly or directly to mindfulness as a form of behaviour management; instead, they referred to it as calming. However, as observed in sub-theme two, their opting only to practice mindfulness when they wanted the children to calm down or pay attention sub-consciously linked it to a form of behaviour management. Despite the teachers not referring to this link, three pupils did; they perceived a direct connection between mindfulness and their increased ability to self-regulate and improve their behaviour.

> Henry – (year 5 pupil) *Well, it has a massive impact on how I feel, and the least of it goes on thoughts, but the middle of it probably goes on behaviour, and I've been getting less told off* (year 5 pupil).

> Sara – (year 3 pupil) (Mentions child in the class considered as having challenging behaviour) *Before, when he was a bit crazy, he would… he didn't really do the right thing. And now I think he has got a lot better*.

According to Kabat-Zinn (2003), when MBIs are plugged into a behaviourist paradigm to drive desirable change or cure what is perceived as broken, it disrespects the unique essence of mindfulness as an ongoing practice or lifestyle and reduces it to a temporary treatment technique or exercise. It prompts a return to the question raised in sub-theme two of this chapter, asking whether mindfulness could become just another behaviour management strategy/technique? Critically, it could be argued that when mindfulness is presented in such a diluted form via an MBI, it can be little else but a strategy or technique for behaviour and calming. However, taking an even more critical approach, Flores (2016) suggests that MBIs aim to equip educators with tools to introduce the phenomenon, referred to as 'school readiness' and, consequently 'schoolify' or 'academicise' young children's education.

Deepening the discussion results gained from an MBI inadvertently align well with the fundamental intentions of schoolification and school readiness, i.e., the notion of a child's aptitude to obey the behavioural requirements of the school; requirements such as the ability to follow instructions, behave according to the school rules, display acceptable emotional responses,

practice cooperation and focus on taught activities (Farran, 2011). Farran (2011) also notes how many teachers rely on behavioural interventions due to the externalisation of some challenging behaviours usually regarded as disruptive to the school readiness agenda. While these are often supportive in helping a child find emotional stability, many classrooms adopt MBIs to implement school readiness practices further (Farran, 2011). Consequently, if schoolification and school readiness aim to promote 'normalised' behaviour, reduce emotional outbursts, and teach children to endure and put up with disappointment and frustration, then mindfulness has become the tool to realise this aim (Albrecht et al., 2012).

It leads to asking the sub-question introduced in chapter one, i.e., can mindfulness taught via an MBI be exploited or misappropriated in ways that may become harmful, either by omission or commission? Undeniably, certain mindfulness practices with benefits relating to cooperation and compliance could give unintentional messages to be quiet and not complain in the face of adversity, inequality and prejudice; this could have implications for children's future participation in social activism (Flores, 2016). Therefore, as Flores (2016) stresses, practising mindful awareness to improve academic ability and encourage normalised behaviour should not happen if it means ignoring an awareness of the oppression that marginalised groups face. Purser and Milillo (2015, p. 16) refer to "institutional blindness" promoted and perpetuated when mindfulness is taught lacking a critical lens; it helps preserve the status quo rather than provoking a transformative change of power structures. According to Simpson (2017), such a learning environment could make children become peaceful and accept hardships instead of questioning them or opposing inequalities in relation to social class, race, or gender.

Delving into this further, from a critical perspective, the current preoccupation in education with using mindfulness for regulating pupils' emotions results in the prejudiced, unfair, anti-critical and depoliticising structural arrangements existing within the education system intact and ignored (Forbes, 2015; 2019). Not addressing these existing structural arrangements is a particularly

pertinent issue, especially when considered in the context of the drive to implement MBIs in deprived inner-city schools attended by non-white pupils. The challenges such pupils face cannot be blamed on an individualised matter of poor skills in controlling emotions; on the contrary, they should be investigated as indicative of more significant socio-political problems related to race, class and poverty (Forbes, 2015). From a different angle, Warren et al., (2020) suggest that in contexts where youngsters face discrimination, it may hinder the development of mindfulness by undermining basic psychological needs and worsening anxiety; after all, any kind of discrimination can weaken the development of mindfulness.

It would, therefore, not be unfair to state that current mindfulness practices have fallen prey to an individualistic worldview, emphasising internal disease and ignoring stressful environments (Goddard, 2014). The medicalisation of mindfulness, where "critique is turned inward" (Davies 2015, p. 10), potentially diverts critical attention away from broader economic and political difficulties; consequently, the emancipatory potential of mindfulness for addressing social suffering remains limited. Reveley (2016) similarly cautions how the implementation of MBIs aimed at increasing resilience and ability to cope in the face of inequalities and adversity could be used to pathologise the children themselves. If used in this way, it runs the risk of the pupils being punished as they are seen as blameworthy individuals, and, as such, mindfulness then becomes just one more standard they are judged against (Reveley, 2016).

Sub-theme seven: academic functioning – pupils' perceptions

It was discussed in the literature review in chapter two, section 2.9, how recent research suggests that transferring mindfulness into classrooms could improve a wide range of outcomes supporting academic success. In this study, some pupils commented that doing one of the mindfulness practices they had learned helped them calm down and focus before being tested on a subject.

Lily – (year 5 pupil) *I did an exam two to three weeks ago and did a practice before I went in, and it calmed me down before I went in*.

William – (year 6 pupil) *Now we have like SATs and stuff coming up recently. I find it helps for a test or something. So, I don't like, you know, misread any questions or anything*.

As shown by their comments, while not directly referring to mindfulness practice as helping improve academic standards per se, sub-consciously, by recognising they felt calmer and more focused, they indirectly linked it to academic success.

Sub-theme eight: academic functioning – teachers' perceptions

Some teachers in this study referred to mindfulness practices to improve pupils' focus and attention just as the pupils had. Also, in common with the pupils, they did not directly connect mindfulness practice to improving academic outcomes. It could be speculated that there may have been a subconscious hope that this would happen, as demonstrated by their inclination to only practice mindfulness with their class before tests and exams. As discussed in sub-theme two, the only other time mindfulness was practised was for behaviour management and calming.

Mark – (year 6 teacher) *We tend to do it because that's when we're sort of putting in all of these extra revision sessions and things like that, so that's a bit out of the norm. So, we do it then to get them, you know, settled and ready for that feeling calm about it. But certainly, before tests, the set of tests that we just did which were over last week and the week before. Lots of them have said they feel better after doing a practice.*

The teacher's comments here reflect the suggestion discussed earlier in sub-theme six, that mindfulness, perhaps inadvertently, fits in well with the school agenda, particularly when there is a preoccupation with results (Flores, 2016). It is a fit that leads Rosenbaum and Magid (2016, p.8) to ponder how such goal-oriented grasping has resulted in the mass-marketing of "spiritual materialism". The core of Buddhist teachings declares "no path, no wisdom,

no gain" (Rosenbaum and Magid, 2016, p. 9), with no gain being the antithesis of spiritual materialism as it rejects any 'means to an end' conceptualisation or use of meditation. Arguably, therefore, it would seem that in many situations, mindfulness is divorced from its holistic foundation to ensure children act 'normally' as they progress through school and is employed to decrease the stress resulting from increasing schoolification and high-stakes assessments (Flores, 2016).

This is not how mindfulness was expected or intended to fit in and leads to the somewhat awkward suggestion that mindfulness contributes to suffering by helping pupils cope with stress. Furthermore, it leads to the fundamental challenges within education being overlooked, opportunities for critique, questioning and opposition undermined or prevented, and the role schools and educational policies have in generating stress and suffering for pupils being ignored (O'Donnell, 2015). It is a suggestion I will return to and examine in greater depth in theme two when considering the *acceptability* of mindfulness in school.

Summary of the findings

Various comments, perspectives, discussions and arguments from the pupils, teachers and relevant literature were presented in this analysis of theme one, all positioned around the *potentiality* of mindfulness. The findings reveal that although the teachers noted the potential benefits of mindfulness for their pupils, lack of time and understanding of the concept of mindfulness negatively impacted their level of commitment to the programme. The findings also showed how the pupils enjoyed learning and practising mindfulness and saw it as a way of relaxing, easing stress, focusing and improving relationships. These benefits match the aims of the MBI that was introduced to them. The data from this study is significant in terms of the potential benefits of mindfulness on wellbeing; however, while significant, it is not novel, it is typical and supports other studies in this research field.

What is novel about the data is that in considering two of the sub-questions of this thesis concerning whether mindfulness fits within the current educational climate and/or whether it can be exploited or misappropriated and then become harmful, the data generated various ethical concerns and dilemmas. Ethical concerns associated with schoolification and pathologising pupils; dilemmas relating to the lack of understanding of mindfulness; MBIs reducing mindfulness to another form of behaviour management; and the impact of this on the concept of mindfulness. As such, it would not be unfair to say that it seems the general enthusiasm for promoting mindfulness interventions outweighs the current evidence supporting them (Greenberg and Harris, 2012, Maynard et al., 2017).

Arguably, an important message to take away from these findings is that overlooking ethical concerns and dilemmas will ultimately impact the *acceptability* of MBIs in schools, especially when viewed in the light of them being introduced to what is essentially a vulnerable audience. Consequently, these ethical concerns and dilemmas will be explored further and addressed from a more ethical perspective in the next chapter, comprising an analysis of theme two, where the focus is placed on the *acceptability* of mindfulness in schools.

**Chapter 8: Analysis of Theme Two – Pupils and Teachers'
Perceptions of the *Acceptability* of Mindfulness in School**

Introduction

Chapter eight comprises an analysis of theme two, which focuses on pupils'
and teachers' perceptions of the *acceptability* of mindfulness. The analysis
answers the sub-question posed in chapter one, i.e., what are the pupils' and
teachers' perceptions of the *acceptability* of mindfulness? Extracts have been
taken from the original interview transcripts, and commentary and discussion
woven throughout iteratively alongside the relevant literature to provide
contextualisation and support the differing perspectives and arguments
emerging from the data. While the extracts are typical of the majority, some
are atypical as only one or two participants referred to the point in question;
however, I considered them essential to the overall research questions. As
discussed in chapter six, whether something is insightful or significant for
answering a research question is not necessarily determined by the number
of people that said it.

The extracts are critically analysed to go beyond the superficial 'narratives' to
elicit more significant issues, which are discussed as they arise. They offer
diverse and conflicting perspectives, highlighting the complex and contentious
nature of bringing mindfulness into a school. Theme two contains nine sub-
themes guided by matters raised during the thematic analysis process; some
reveal both teachers' and pupils' perceptions, others only the pupils' or only
the teachers' perceptions depending on the nature of the theme.

Sub-themes one and two respectively consider the pupils' and teachers' views
on time constraints for practising mindfulness. Sub-theme three examines
the pupils' views on why their teachers seem reluctant to engage with the
MBI, with variation in practice between the classes noted and discussed.
Attention is drawn to how the year six classes (the busiest year group due to
SATs) find time to practice. It prompts a return to the discussion started in
chapter seven and to one of the sub-questions of this thesis: - can mindfulness

taught via an MBI be exploited or misappropriated in ways that may become harmful? A discussion follows, recognising how MBIs align well with the underlying intentions of a neoliberal agenda, an issue touched on in theme one and now discussed in greater depth in this chapter.

Sub-theme four explores further why the teachers, despite positive pupil feedback, seem reluctant to engage with the MBI, thereby casting doubts on its *acceptability*. Scepticism and lack of understanding of mindfulness are revealed as factors prompting a debate on who is best to deliver an MBI. It leads to the question of what becomes of Buddhist mindfulness teachings and practices when they are de-contextualised, modified and used in a secular context? Sub-themes five and six respectively consider the pupils' and teachers' views on the school environment's suitability for practising mindfulness. It moves on to a discussion on how suitable MBIs are for children in terms of their developmental abilities. Sub-theme seven reveals the pupils' thoughts on being part of a 'conscripted' audience, prompting acknowledgement of the resulting ethical dilemmas. Sub-theme eight focuses on pupils' lack of understanding of mindfulness. Intention, an essential aspect of mindfulness, is examined, leading to a critique of mindfulness' commodification and lack of an ethical framework. Sub-theme nine discusses the challenges of measuring mindfulness from the teachers' perspective.

Sub-theme one: time constraints – pupils' perceptions

Lack of time, an issue first raised in chapter seven, was cited as a potential barrier to practising mindfulness, thus impacting its *acceptability*.

> Kieran – (year 5 pupil) *So, like we don't really have much time to do it. The teachers are all over the place all of the time.*

> Ali – (year 6 pupil) *If you want to bring mindfulness into school, there's already quite a lot of subjects at school like maths and literacy and lots of other ones.*

Every week I encouraged the pupils to share their experiences of mindfulness practice from the previous week, practices that, disappointingly, invariably

happened outside of school. The teachers welcomed the pupils' positive feedback, yet it had little impact on the frequency of the mindfulness practises in some classes where it was practised just once a week, i.e., when I taught it. While acknowledging the busyness of a school day, some pupils questioned the apparent lack of time, even citing various opportunities they thought mindfulness could be 'squeezed' in.

> Noah – (year 6 pupil) *If Mr (names teacher) actually remembered, and also just before lessons, if we may be just instead of having a mess around, he just gets us focused straight away, instead of us all having a chat and sitting on desks and then it doesn't… then instead of doing all that he actually says right we're all going to do mindfulness practice instead then we'd do it. And it doesn't take any time out of our lesson. It's just the same; instead of messing about, we do mindfulness. Not a problem.*

> Poppy – (year 3 pupil) *Well, sometimes we have some empty places where we just finish off our work, and we could squeeze it in at the end, like at the start or end of that lesson.*

Critically, if we consider the teachers' reticence to find time for mindfulness practice, despite the pupils' positive feedback and suggestions when it could be included, it draws attention to the importance of teachers being 'on board' with an intervention, a concern that I reflected on when journaling during the Paws.b training course. Teacher reluctance was identified as a sub-theme during the thematic analysis process; it is, therefore, discussed later in sub-themes three and four.

Sub-theme two: time constraints – teachers' perceptions

In terms of *acceptability* of mindfulness, in this study, all the teachers stated there was not enough time for 'squeezing' anything else in, let alone another intervention. They felt hard-pressed to complete everything they considered essential to complete, thus reflecting the ongoing tension in incorporating multiple curriculum commitments (Joyce et al., 2010). Three teachers unequivocally stated they were not attempting mindfulness practices with their class, despite my request and their initial agreement to try.

Holly – (year 3 teacher) *Sometimes they mention it before an activity, but I wouldn't say I try and consciously school it in. We just couldn't timetable it in. …the timetables are just so strict, aren't they? And you've got so much to fit into the time anyway.*

Paul – (year 3 teacher) *Fitting it in and finding the time to do it when we're trying, trying, you know, if we've got an hour to fit a lesson in, just even to spend five minutes doing something, then it chips away at that, and there's other things I need to get done. I'm focusing more on fitting everything into what I need to fit in first, really.*

Other teachers, however, did try to 'squeeze' in mindfulness practice on an ad hoc basis.

Mark – (year 6 teacher) *It's one thing to the next or next. So, you know, I suppose in a way it's almost that scarcity mentality, you're not looking at the long term. It's just a case of what's the next thing I've got to do? And those things that could actually make a huge difference over several months get lost because I've only got an hour to do this, and so you push on with stuff.*

Stuart – (year 6 teacher) *You know what it's like; sometimes these things can be difficult to carry on, particularly at such a busy time of the year. But again I would, I would find it difficult to state how as a class, it's impacted because they're such a nice bunch anyway. We've currently got a few issues in there with certain groups; children sort of beyond the classroom, so it might be a time to re-introduce it... But yeah, partly my fault for not pushing it as much as I have. But they are a pretty calm bunch anyway.*

The extracts show varying levels of unwillingness to practise mindfulness; however, all teachers, without exception, mentioned a perceived lack of time as the reason despite positive pupil feedback and an acknowledgement by one teacher that there could be long-term benefits from practising mindfulness. It could be argued that the variation between the classes in terms of allocated practice time shows how time can be quite a useful way to explain, at a superficial level, the lack of willingness to do something with no immediate tangible gain. As time tends to be limited in schools, citing it to opt out of something will not cause teachers to be questioned/chastised. Lack of time, alongside lack of 'buy-in' from other staff and the School Leadership Team (SLT), were cited as the most significant barriers to practising mindfulness in

schools by the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP, 2013) Teacher Survey 2019 Summary of Responses.

Returning to the extracts, if we consider the last one where the pupils were referred to as *'a pretty calm bunch'*, thus implying mindfulness is not required, it acts as a reminder of a previous concern raised in chapter seven, sub-theme six, i.e., the fear that MBIs inadvertently reduce mindfulness to a behaviour management tool. As such, they do not respect the unique essence of mindfulness as an ongoing practice or mode of being (Brito, 2013). Indeed, as Drougge (2016) points out, in the Western world, mindfulness practice tends to be marketed as a 'neutral' technique, with its ethical and religious beliefs and cultural specifics removed. Without an ethical framework, it leaves mindfulness vulnerable to this reductionist approach where it is viewed merely as a tool to chase goals that in themselves are unwholesome and consciousness constricting (Kirmayer, 2015). Pradhan (2016) also observes how MBIs tend not to be presented around a prescribed ethical framework but assume the ethical framework provided where often there is little effort to position all aspects of learning within a "moral community inspired by the loving-kindness and compassion which are fundamental to the universal *dharma* within which mindfulness has its origins" (Hyland, 2016c, p. 394).

Hence, while the relationship of mindfulness to ethics and compassion may not be inherent, it does depend on specific interpretive frameworks provided by cultural contexts and background knowledge (Kirmayer, 2015). In societies where it originated, mindfulness mediation is part of a more extensive Buddhist belief system and practice with robust ethical and moral elements (Kirmayer, 2015). Undoubtedly, removing techniques like mindfulness meditation from their original social contexts can potentially change the practice's nature and effects (Kirmayer, 2015). Irrespective of this, however, many supporters of MBIs are convinced that the way mindfulness is taught today constitutes the very heart not just of Buddhism but every important wisdom tradition; it is an assertion frequently used as part of a very successful sales pitch (Drougge, 2016).

Buddhist meditative practices and their application bring together two very different ways of knowing, i.e., Western empirical science and empiricism of the meditative disciplines and their associated frameworks created over millennia (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In the absence of high levels of rigour and empiricism integral to both ways of knowing, problems can occur that undermine and hinder this developing field's most profound and creative potential and ultimately obstruct its fullest development (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011). The secularisation of mindfulness and consequent effects is an issue I will explore further in sub-theme four and the significance resulting from the lack of an ethical framework in sub-theme eight.

Sub-theme three: teacher reluctance - pupils' perceptions

All the pupils cited the teacher's forgetfulness as a significant barrier to practising mindfulness, despite 'mindfulness monitors' appointed to remind them. The pupils were also aware of time constraints which begs the question, is this awareness learned behaviour resulting from continually being told by teachers they have lots to do and little time to do it? Even the mindfulness monitors themselves struggled to remember that they needed to remind the teachers; they were also too busy.

> Lily – (year 5 pupil) *Teachers forget. They never have time to do the practice with us.*

> Henry – (year 5 pupil) *They always forget and, like Herjeet said, we do have mindfulness monitors, but they forget as well.*

The year six teachers proved the keenest to invest some time in the MBI, which could have been them merely reflecting their pupils' enthusiasm.

> Stuart - (year 6 teacher) *My main barrier is remembering to do it. But like I said, there are children in my class who invested in it so much that they've given me that nudge.*

Alternatively, the year six teachers' enthusiasm could have been due to the reason provided by the headteacher who, when informed of their enthusiasm, stated:

To me, that's a bit of what's in it for me as well. Year six staff could see - well, actually, this could be something really powerful to help these children cope with the SATs. And I think the children will be able to look at it the same … "Oh yes, I am one of those people really worried about SATs; this might be able to help me",… whereas maybe the younger ones don't necessarily see it so clearly.

Undoubtedly, the headteacher's reason was based on recognising the pressure on year six teachers and pupils to cope with SATs and ultimately achieve the results required in an assessment-driven culture; it generates two questions. The first by Sellman and Buttarazzi (2020), who query whether mindfulness in education is an ambitious vehicle for human flourishing or simply an intervention to help pupils 'survive' school. The second by Ergas (2013), who questions whether we are now moderating stress levels of pupils with just the right amount to keep them on track and, as such, whether mindfulness practice is, therefore, becoming a healthier Ritalin (Ergas, 2013), a medication increasingly prescribed to ensure students sit down and study.

While it could be deemed churlish, even uncaring, not to welcome what proponents of mindfulness regard as a helpful intervention for providing pupils skills to gain academic and personal success, in light of these two questions, it would also be lax not to adopt a more critical approach and examine them further. To critically question how and why mindfulness is being implemented in a neoliberal climate of educational reform, interrogate the term 'success', and query who defines it (Forbes, 2017). In doing so, we return to the discourse started in chapter seven, sub-theme six, where I briefly considered one of the sub-questions of this thesis, i.e., can mindfulness taught via an MBI be exploited or misappropriated in ways that may become harmful, either by omission or commission?

In fairness, however, before proceeding further with this more critical approach, we should acknowledge the pressure placed on teachers. Indeed, for anyone outside the field of education, it is hard to grasp how influential the assessment-driven culture is in the lives of those working in English schools; the way it governs how work is thought of and talked about and how assessment data is used to judge the general quality of education against a

very politicised backdrop (Pratt, 2016). Successive governments and policymakers have used the term 'progress' to refer to the increase in pupil attainment over a period of time. Consequently, a pupil's progress, measured against centrally defined performance levels at certain times in their schooling, is now the all-important measure that schools are judged against when being inspected. So, as Forbes (2017) contends, it would not be inaccurate to say that we can define education and academic success by the results gained on high-stakes testing; this provides the answers, albeit brief ones, to the two questions - what does 'success' mean within education and who defines it?

Returning now to the more critical stance and extending the argument that results gained from MBIs support the primary intentions of schoolification and school readiness, as described in chapter seven, sub-theme six, it could be said that using schools to target the wellbeing of young people is not an "ideologically neutral welfare-enhancement exercise" (Reveley, 2016, p. 468). On the contrary, it can be viewed as ethically very questionable. Using mindfulness in different social contexts, such as education, promotes an individualised creation of the self, eventually promoting individual wellbeing over communal wellbeing and diverting attention away from the opportunity for social and political transformation (Arthington, 2016). It also raises the question of how will people learn to communicate harmoniously in the future in a climate of collective helpfulness when most of their lives are lived in settings where self-interest, competition and conflict have become the norm? (Winter, 2003).

MBIs – a neoliberal agenda

Indeed, within neoliberalism's doctrine is personal independence, self-sufficiency and responsibility for one's wellbeing (Reveley, 2016). Therefore, according to Purser (2018), within a neoliberal climate, MBIs in schools become a form of 'governmentality' where they help mould the pupils to adapt to the requirements of a society that competes in a global economy. Consequently, pupils and teachers are persuaded to become self-determining,

emotionally robust beings able to operate and thrive in a market-based consumerist society (Lavelle, 2016) and determine their own happiness and wellbeing (Reveley, 2015; Purser, 2018). Undoubtedly, in mainstreaming mindfulness, programme developers have abandoned returning to the original teachings and have instead referred to mindfulness-based health interventions when utilising mindfulness in different settings such as schools. These interventions typically have an instrumental focus designed to alleviate or manage symptoms (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). This medical position has, as Sellman and Buttarazzi (2020, p. 5) contend:

> Over-emphasised by-proxy foci such as stress management, concentration and happiness to such a degree that it is politically non-threatening when applied to a context such as education.

Davidson et al., (2012) also note how research on mindfulness in education uses medical terms such as 'intervention' and 'dosage'. Such terms prompt Ergas (2013) to interrogate the reason for their use and hypothesise that it supports other processes underlying the 'contemplative turn' in education (Ergas, 2013); processes pointing to control and a more sophisticated style of domination. From this position, it becomes easier to accept that nothing is inherently dysfunctional with capitalism itself; widespread societal stress and suffering cannot be blamed on vast inequalities, discrimination, poor material conditions, immoral business practices, or political dishonesty (Barker, 2014; Goto-Jones, 2013). They are due to individuals not being mindful or robust enough to be thoroughly competent, authentic and happy (Purser et al., 2016), thereby instantly positioning mindfulness within a medical model.

We now see how problems can easily be attributed to individual-level psychic dysfunction (Barker, 2014), reuniting us with the issue raised in chapter seven, sub-theme six, concerning MBIs pathologising pupils. Attributing problems as being the crisis in the heads of individuals, as opposed to the structures and institutions of society *per se* (Goto-Jones, 2013; Barker, 2014: Purser, 2019a) is ethically very questionable. From this perspective, radical action is unnecessary; instead, a conservative mindful revolution is required to address societal problems and bring about social change. One that is

primarily therapeutic instead of political and promises to bring freedom and an answer to those incapacitated by the stresses of capitalism (Purser et al., 2016). Such a revolution requires no political programme or confronting harmful capitalist institutional arrangements (Purser et al., 2016). Instead, it requires training individuals in mindfulness (Goto-Jones, 2013). It is a hypothesis known as the "Trojan horse" (Purser et al., 2016, p. xvii), one that advocates that more mindful, caring, and authentic individuals will gradually and calmly ensure that a humane and kind capitalist society emerges (Purser et al., 2016).

Loy (2016), however, questions such a revolution because a revolution with an individual does not work; it needs to be collective. While social transformation requires a personal change to succeed, the opposite is true; teachings promoting individual awakening cannot avoid being impacted by the social structures supporting communal delusion and compliance (Loy, 2016). Indeed, the current individualised self-help attitude towards mindfulness made popular via the MBSR model is limited in its capacity to tackle the wider inherent and structurally repetitive conditions of stress existing in the world today (Ng, 2016). Therefore, using mindfulness for stress reduction within education, for example, without enquiring into the origins of the stress, is tacitly reinforcing the social system one is practising in (Walsh, 2016). As such, mindfulness becomes merely a tool of self-discipline, disguised as self-help which, instead of setting practitioners free, helps them adjust to the very conditions causing their problems (Purser, 2019a) and conceals political and socio-economic views on why underlying unhappiness and stress exist in contemporary capitalist society (Arthington, 2016).

Irrefutably, the ever-increasing interest in employing mindfulness in different settings to find peace of mind and personal wellbeing when widespread economic hardship, coupled with increasing social inequality exists, is ethically dubious (Arthington, 2016).

Sub-theme four: teacher reluctance – teachers' perceptions

The issue of teacher 'buy-in' was briefly discussed in chapter five when sharing my reflections resulting from the Paws.b training; the issue is now revisited in the context of this study. The teachers' views on the acceptability of mindfulness in the school were sought, thereby revealing their commitment or 'buy-in'. Teachers' perceptions and endorsement of any intervention undoubtedly determine how productive and beneficial it will be (Mazza-Davies, 2015; Wigelsworth and Quinn, 2020). A teacher's beliefs, values and attitudes also determine how an intervention is enacted. In this study, critically reflecting on the transcripts, it can be seen that other issues exist regarding its *acceptability* in addition to time constraints.

> Mark – (year 6 teacher) *I suppose a bit of scepticism would be part of it so far. I think I've seen some of that already, you know, from other staff members, not particularly the ones I work with. I think with the children being in year six and really getting into it. I think you know they took us along with them, really. But you know, other staff members have sort of been a bit more reticent about it. I suppose, more circumspect in their response, whereas I was just, oh great, this is amazing.*

> Sue – (year 5 teacher), *I think some teachers might want to see the evidence of it working before they fully sign up to it. ... I think those of us who've worked with you can see the effect on many of our children already. But I think everybody needs to have that before.*

> Paul – (year 3 teacher) *It's like with anything you try and put into a whole school, it can be quite difficult to put new things in place because some people are keen, and some people aren't.*

These extracts reveal how scepticism was also a barrier to practising mindfulness, an issue raised in my journal reflections in chapter three. Scepticism could stem from a lack of understanding of mindfulness; most teachers have a relatively superficial understanding, often with little or no mindfulness experience to support lessons (Segal et al., 2013; Wigelsworth and Quinn, 2020). For many, therefore, it will be highly ambiguous how observing breathing, scrutinising bodily feelings, journaling, or yoga,

contributes to quantifiable, economically sustainable aims, which is often what the quality of state education is assessed against (Ergas, 2015).

Returning to the teachers' relatively limited or complete lack of understanding of the mindfulness concept, it remained this way even after the Paws.b course finished. While, as aforementioned, this could be attributed to their novice mindfulness status, it could also be credited to the somewhat simplistic MBI introduced, with its overly instrumentalised and reductionist approach. Consequently, some teachers perceived mindfulness as a tool for behaviour management or a therapeutic technique, thereby echoing how I had initially perceived it. Some viewed practising mindfulness as not active enough or sufficiently engaging and entertaining for the pupils.

> Paul – (year 3 teacher) *I know here we do things like ELSA* (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants), and *that's all-emotional support and stuff like that, and you know it might be that you could put mindfulness into that kind of thing because it's you know it's that essentially. It's like a kind of therapy thing.*

> Claire – (year 3 teacher) *If it was maybe a bit more active. Or if it was broken up a bit just so that it's not such a long stint of sitting. I think that was… maybe… probably did not help the concentration side of things*.

Some teachers believed that the seven and eight-year-old pupils were too young to practise mindfulness outside the lessons.

> Holly – (year 3 teacher) *I don't know if any of them are sort of old enough or mature enough to have used any of the strategies out of lessons. I've seen a couple of them because we've been doing like assessments this week.*

> Paul – (year 3 teacher) *I know there's some children who have been… that have said they've used some of it at times, and I know that I did actually notice one child doing it when he got quite upset about being told off* (teacher laughs*). He was doing deep breathing in his chair*

> Mark – (year 6 teacher) *I think during some of the sessions, the demand for them to think about how they're feeling, how they're feeling emotionally or physically, how they feel, I think they find that quite difficult to articulate.*

The pupils regarded by Holly as being too young to practice mindfulness were the same pupils that each week enthusiastically shared with their class their experiences of mindfulness practice outside of school. Mark's comment regarding pupils arriving in year six unable to articulate their feelings despite being taught from day one at school PSHE to support this vital life skill for promoting good mental health and wellbeing is worrying. Teacher reluctance, whether due to scepticism or lack of understanding, leads back to the question first raised in chapter three and my reflections in chapter five, i.e., who is best to deliver an MBI?

MBIs – teacher versus external facilitator

In their study, Johnson et al., (2016) reported that most teachers preferred an external facilitator or an embedded school teacher citing greater student engagement with a novel presenter and the need for extensive teacher training to deliver such a specialised topic. Others thought a mindfulness expert working alongside the teacher responsible for classroom behaviour ideal (Johnson et al., 2016). For mindfulness to be established in a school-based framework, Zenner et al., (2014) recommend teachers as the agents of change. However, this would require that the teacher personifies mindfulness as a way of being in their teaching practice and not only on the occasions they teach it (McLaughlin, 2008). Limited data advocates that a teacher's skill to enable mindfulness in others successfully might be linked to their own mindfulness experiences (Segal et al., 2013). Indeed, mindfulness is internalised and lived with for considerably more than the average eight-week duration of most programmes.

According to Flook et al., (2010), a teacher's dedication to mindfulness practice is a critical factor in pupils' beliefs in mindfulness. Regarding the teachers embodying mindfulness, in this study, some pupils recognised and commented on the inexperience of their teachers when guiding a mindfulness practice.

> Liam – (year 3 pupil) *It's actually honestly harder to do it without you because we normally forget about how to do it without… like, I mean, we get instructed, but without instructions from a professional, it's really hard*.

Despite being one of the pupils referred to by the teacher as being too young to practice mindfulness, Liam seemed able to recognise in his class teacher an inability to embody mindfulness in his everyday teaching practice. He commented:

> *When if one of the people get mad in the class and they do like something mean to another person in our class (*refers to the teacher*) forgets to do it, like that he just shouts*.

As Semple et al., (2017) point out, while trained outside instructors may improve the standard of training due to their clear experiential understanding of the material, it has cost implications that may hinder a programme's expansion and/or sustainability; currently, budgets within schools are incredibly tight. Therefore, conversely, and more attainable for schools, Burnett (2009) suggests that if a taster of mindfulness in the context of timetabled periods is on offer, this will not require the same level of training as an instructor of an eight-week course. There will be less depth in a classroom context, with limited time for enquiry; as Burnett (2009, p. 42) states: "you are dipping their toes in the pool, not throwing them in". Therefore, according to Burnett (2009), in a classroom setting, while children's eyes can be opened up to the possibilities of mindfulness, limited time prevents an extreme change in pupils' perceptions of their world; in addition, the ability to teach mindfulness will also be equally dependent upon the teacher's experience of classroom management and relationships.

Albrecht et al., (2012) suggest that despite research advocating the benefits of teachers' personal mindfulness practice to ensure they can teach it more effectively, it does not preclude teachers and pupils from learning together. Critically, however, if we consider how competencies for teaching mindfulness to adults are becoming increasingly tightly prescribed (Crane et al., 2012), it could be argued that teaching young people should be just as tightly

monitored, if not more so given their vulnerability. Therefore, the suggestion that more simplistic MBIs are a way of 'dipping their toes in the pool', thus requiring less extensive training for the instructor than for the more comprehensive adult programmes, flies in the face of this. It also provokes the question of how much training is enough for the safe and effective dissemination of mindfulness on a large scale to young people? (Johnson et al., 2016).

Reducing the symptoms is a form of alleviation of human suffering, which is compatible with the goal of Buddhist practice (Gause and Coholic, 2010) and, as Monteiro et al., (2014) note, a fundamental assumption of MBIs is that the intention to lessen suffering is shared by both traditional and contemporary forms of mindfulness. Here, the word contemporary refers to all mindfulness programmes not unequivocally based on Buddhist practice. However, as Monteiro et al., (2014) argue, traditional mindfulness seeks to find and understand the fundamental causes of suffering, whereas contemporary mindfulness aims to relieve the symptoms and attitudes that result in distress.

If we return to the suggestion that MBIs are a way of 'dipping their toes in the pool', more critically, we could ask if there is something inherently wrong with a partial application of mindfulness? It triggers revisiting the sub-question in chapter one, i.e., can mindfulness be taught authentically in schools, and will the incentive to do so be related to its fundamental essence and transformative potential, or will it be perceived as a 'fad'? Using contemporary MBIs to enable pupils to 'dip their toes in the pool' can arguably lead to instrumentalising mindfulness, which, in turn, raises concerns around how the unique essence of mindfulness as an ongoing practice or lifestyle can then be respected. As Mazza-Davies (2015) stresses, if the starting position for mindfulness is based on a commercialised brand, authenticity might be absent as mindfulness is not a tool or technique to go in a teacher's toolbox, as per a reductionist approach. Neither is it a commercial product, one trademarked for personal indulgence in a consumerist society that endorses competition and glorifies the individual self (Rosenbaum and Magid, 2016). Although

undeniably, as a brand, mindfulness has been very profitable with its increasing commercialisation (Rosenbaum and Magid, 2016).

So, an important question to address now is what happens to Buddhist mindfulness teachings and practices that are de-contextualised, modified and used in a secular context?

MBIs and secularisation

Secularising mindfulness can be defended if we consider how many people's lives are transformed in some way by authentic practice, which would otherwise not have been as a result of them avoiding mindfulness if presented in a more traditional Buddhist framework or vocabulary (Gause and Coholic, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2017). Secularisation, therefore, allows for mindfulness training to be a viable product on the open market (Purser and Loy, 2013). It could be argued that this is the unavoidable cost of developing and operationalising new and secular Dharma-based programmes such as MBSR and MBCT (Kabat-Zinn, 2017). However, as Sellman and Buttarazzi (2020) contend, minimising spiritualty, which is often considered unavoidable, though this in itself is questionable, should not come at the cost of depth.

Indeed, Xiao et al., (2017) highlight how Buddhist texts treat mindfulness as a continuing practice; one that progresses through various phases of development from being more aware of bodily sensations to a more lucid awareness of deeper cognitive processes and emotional states to having an altered view of self in relation to the universe. In contrast, Western psychology labels mindfulness as a stable psychological skill and overlooks its Eastern origins' developmental and contextual sides (Grossman and Van Dam, 2011). In this way, mindfulness is operationalised from intellectual knowledge and contemporary measures like self-report assessments and not direct phenomenological experience. It does not consider the gradual refinement of the practice (Xiao et al., 2017), the subsequent increases in experiential vividness, or the challenges of bringing mindful awareness into everyday life (Grossman and Van Dam, 2011).

In Cohen's (2010) critical account of the psychologisation of Buddhism, the success of mindfulness as a secular therapeutic activity appropriated from its cultural context resonates with how Buddhism seems overwhelmed by the Western sense of deserving to be happy irrespective of moral behaviour. Cohen (2010) describes how the Buddha's conception of happiness was strongly linked to notions of ethics, with personally pursuing happiness that lacks an enlightened view of the world as being pivotal to our communal problems (Cohen, 2010). According to Safran (2014), rushing to secularise and commodify mindfulness into a more marketable technique denatures this ancient practice, resulting in what is sometimes referred to as 'McMindfulness', a term coined by Buddhist psychotherapist Dr Miles Neale. For Neale (2010), McMindfulness lacks the integrity of the tradition and lineage from which it originates. It is purely "meditation for the masses, drive-through style, stripped of its essential ingredients, pre-packaged and neatly stocked on shelves of the commercial self-help supermarkets" (Neale, 2010, p. 13).

When presented in this way, Chisholm (2015) questions if something essential is lost, especially as mindfulness needs to be linked to morality and wisdom for the benefits to be fully realised. As Hyland (2016b) observes, McMindfulness strategies where the techniques of present moment awareness are detached from the ethical underpinnings of mindfulness in Buddhist traditions become useless regarding the critical function of cultivating empathy, and other-regarding virtues, which are vital for mindfulness in school settings, where the cultivation of values merges with the general aims of education (Hyland, 2016b). Dearden et al., (2010) consider this kind of reductionist instrumentalism needs challenging; it destroys the fundamental values constitutive of an educational enterprise focused on increasing knowledge, understanding and values to develop active, morally sensitive, emotionally resilient, autonomous and well-informed citizens.

Purser and Loy (2013) note how advocates of secular mindfulness downplay or consider irrelevant or unnecessarily politicised questions around ethics and

social considerations, asserting that ethical development is inherent to the practice. This approach neuters the Dharma's inherently subversive element and accommodates vested interests (Bazzano, 2014). It aligns well with a worldwide understanding of human beings as transcending culture and context and with a perennialist view with its underlying dialogue that mindfulness is a worldwide typical human capacity with no obligation to any historical or cultural context (Purser et al., 2016). Such a laissez-faire 'innatist' philosophy puts MBIs in danger of being used as a skill to support people in adapting to the individualistic, entrepreneurial and commercial values of a Western world. It is in direct opposition to the development of a critical pedagogical framework for MBIs, one that could question and change deeply-rooted Western cultural values and assumptions (Purser et al., 2016).

Adding to this argument, Simpson (2017) highlights how the pursuit of awakening and compassionate action, not endurance, is the more ambitious goal of Buddhism. The implication by some mindfulness evangelists that the world will change if we pay more attention to ourselves "serves a system reliant on hyper-individualism and could exacerbate the narcissism inflamed by social media" (Simpson, 2017, p. 49). Purser and Loy (2013) equate the consequences of de-contextualising mindfulness from its original liberating and transformative intention, supported by social ethics, to a 'Faustian bargain'. Instead of mindfulness being a way of alerting individuals and organisations to the unpleasant origins of greed, animosity and delusion, it is modified into a clichéd kind of self-help therapy that ultimately supports those origins. Building on this suggestion of a 'Faustian bargain', Rosenbaum and Magid (2016) reflect on concerns around mindfulness morphing into various strains of self-improvement, self-actualisation or merely self-involvement of a consumerist culture. Self-involvement is not the same as self-awareness.

In its Buddhist context, mindfulness is not a separate technique for alleviating stress; on the contrary, it is part of a contextualised set of attitudes, exercises and practices that deconstruct the illusion of a stable and separate self; this separate self is thought to be the underlying cause of suffering (Brown et al., 2007; Brito, 2013). Conversely, in presenting the other side of this argument,

Gelles (2015, p. 227) responds to such suggestions by dismissing what he terms the "McMindfulness fear-mongers". For Gelles (2015), accusations that capitalism is co-opting mindfulness borders, at times, on conspiratorial and paints a fake picture of clandestine brainwashing. A consequence of this is that individuals and organisational change are denied the possible therapeutic benefits, although Gelles (2015) concedes it is right to raise concerns regarding the increasing superficiality of mindfulness.

From a different angle, Lindahl (2014) questions whether addressing such concerns, particularly ethical concerns, will change the perceived secularity of MBIs as additional Buddhist values, practices and frameworks, either implicit or explicit, would then become present. The confusion around whether contemporary mindfulness is universal in a secular sense, or is faithful to its Buddhist origins, has already resulted in conflicting goals and outcomes. Arguably, according to Lindahl (2014), if contemporary mindfulness is secular, it does not warrant an evaluation based upon its fidelity to traditional Buddhist concepts of ethics, suffering, liberation or awakening. Furthermore, 'right mindfulness' might not be suitable for contemporary mindfulness, as adopting Buddhist theories and moral frameworks could lead to MBIs being seen as advancing or overly entwined with religion, thereby threatening their continued use in educational settings (Lindahl, 2014).

Sub-theme five: environment – pupils' perceptions

Within the literature on mindfulness and education, while reference is made to mindfulness being a feasible and acceptable intervention to implement, there is limited data in this respect. Therefore, in this study, the pupils' perceptions were sought to ascertain how acceptable it is in reality and the perceived challenges to practising it. Lack of time and remembering were highlighted earlier; however, some pupils also referred to the physical environment of the school setting as problematic. Lack of space, distracting noise and feelings of embarrassment during practice was mentioned.

> Sonny – (year 5 pupil) *Well, because when only one class is doing it, the surrounding other classes are quite loud.*

> Max - (year 5 pupil) *I think I can't do it because sometimes when I get into a fight, and I'm too stressed because usually the person I get into a fight with is just right next to me, and then it's hard for me to actually concentrate without kind of thinking what is he thinking? Is he going to do something?*

> Rhiannon – (year 6 pupil) *I think sometimes that if you wanted to do it before tests and you are the only person, you can't really because you almost feel embarrassed to do it if not everyone's doing it.*

The pupils' comments highlight the varied potential problems when practices modified from an adult, clinic-based mindfulness programme are transformed into a school-based programme (Burke, 2010). It could support the argument that while some pupils benefit from mindfulness, other educational programmes have also been proven to reduce pupil stress and raise academic achievements effectively (Forbes, 2015), programmes designed more specifically for being implemented in the unique setting of a school environment.

Sub-theme six: environment – teachers' perceptions

The teachers' perceptions were also sought vis-à-vis anything they considered made practising mindfulness challenging. Like their pupils, they too regarded the physical environment as problematic - lack of space, too much noise, embarrassment for some pupils and the school environment's unpredictable nature.

> Sue - (year 5 teacher) *We spend a lot of time having to, you know with faffing really, you know there's things that happen in this school where it's not, it's not predictable. Like you could go into an office and say, right, we're going to spend the first five minutes of the day doing this or that. Children don't work that way; they come in in the morning with all different things and letters. So, if you wanted to do it the first thing in the day, you don't always have that guaranteed.*

> Holly – (year 3 teacher) *I do think you've got children who find it incredibly difficult to access it, and I find that that can make it quite*

> *hard, you know. I don't want to force it on them in a way. You know, I know that they found it very difficult to sit still or to listen, or to you know, for some of them it will go straight over their heads, especially at this age they are quite young.*

Teachers with the younger pupils (seven and eight-year-olds) considered teaching mindfulness to this age group an additional challenge, with problems cited as being the children's inability to sit, be quiet, or stay engaged for the length of the MBI lesson, despite the MBI being designed for children aged between seven to eleven. It was an issue raised earlier in sub-theme four of this chapter. Re-considering this issue further now, it is worth referring to a study conducted by Flook et al. (2015), where it was found that kindness and mindfulness training over twelve weeks appeared to work with children as young as four years old; grades improved and, compared to their counterparts in the control group, they were keener to share.

Critically, the teachers' suggestions in this study that the pupils were too young for the MBI despite positive feedback from most, including the pupils deemed too young, could have been a convenient excuse for those preferring not to be involved outside of the lessons delivered. In this study, the year six teachers were most inclined to consider mindfulness as appropriate because of SATs and mindfulness was seen as a welcome 'tool' for calming. However, a year six teacher did comment that the MBI was beyond some pupils' comprehension, particularly when they were required to think about and articulate how they felt emotionally or physically. This inability could be attributed to young people, unlike adults, needing more scaffolding to make connections between seemingly abstract tools and real life, particularly when they are not feeling distressed at that moment in time (Johnson et al., 2017).

MBIs – and suitability

It is currently not known how trait mindfulness emerges developmentally (Felver and Jennings, 2015). Consequently, neither is it known the ages at which it would be most productive to intervene during the period of rapid cognitive changes from childhood to adolescence (Felver and Jennings, 2015).

160

However, what is thought is that the mechanisms involved in practising mindfulness are similar for adults and children (Zelazo and Lyons, 2012). Consequently, existing research examining the outcomes of MBIs for children has adapted the format of programmes designed for adults (Greenberg and Harris, 2012). Such adaptation is necessary due to the differences between adult's and children's developing cognitive abilities, life experiences, culture (Grossman et al., 2004; Burke, 2010) and issues resulting from children being, to a variable extent, entrenched within their families, schools and to varying degrees dependent on adults (Saltzman and Goldin, 2008).

Child-based interventions, therefore, focusing on attentional skills, need to consider the attentional capabilities of those they are training (Jha, 2005); to take into account how the adolescent period for developing attentional skills varies so that some pupils have the attentional capabilities to perform specific techniques while others have not developed the required skills to do this successfully. Johnson et al., (2016) highlight how currently, no model of mindfulness in youth exists to explain the developmental trajectory of its different facets, either with or without intervention. Consequently, according to Burke (2010), without cross-sectional measurements of mindfulness facets in different age groups in youth and mediational pathway research within age brackets, MBI developers are, to a certain extent, proceeding by guesswork in applying a model that might not be that applicable to this group.

Maynard et al., (2017), in their systematic review examining the effectiveness of school-based MBIs on cognition, behaviour, socio-emotional outcomes and academic achievement, reported mixed effects. According to Maynard et al., (2017), while there was some indication that they could improve cognitive or social outcomes, there was no support for MBIs improving behaviour or academic achievement; thus, leading them to conclude that despite increasing support for MBIs for adults, youth might not benefit in the same ways or to the same extent as adults. Consequently, Maynard et al., (2017) contend that when considering adopting MBIs in schools, although not well investigated at present, unsubstantiated evidence advises that these

interventions' costs and potentially harmful effects should be better studied and considered against the small to no effects on different types of outcomes.

Extending this viewpoint, Johnson et al., (2017), somewhat more controversially, suggest teenagers' brains are too cynical for mindfulness. Their analysis of an MBI reported that it had no impact on anxiety, depression, weight/shape concerns, wellbeing and mindfulness. However, while agreeing with the findings, Bailey et al., (2018), from a more compromising perspective, point out that such findings are extreme and acknowledge they are in direct opposition to all other evidence showing the potential benefits of teaching an MBI. Undeniably, therefore, not all studies demonstrate the advantage of mindfulness over other approaches. Indeed, research highlights how very few psychological or physiological processes are universally beneficial and that several mindfulness-related processes can produce adverse effects under certain circumstances (Britton, 2019). It is a matter discussed further in sub-theme seven, where the issue of the conscripted audience, as identified in the thematic analysis process, leads to questions about MBIs having the power to heal and harm.

Sub-theme seven: conscripted audience – pupils' perceptions

Being part of a conscripted audience was raised by only four pupils during the thematic analysis process. Despite this, I considered it a point that merited some attention, so I made it a sub-theme.

> James – (year 6 pupil) *I don't really find mindfulness that useful because I don't have any major worrying problems. But I can see how it would help other people with worrying…I'm quite an attentive person; I normally pay attention quite a lot, so don't really seek help with it.*

> Charlotte – (year 6 pupil) *There are a few people who just …they don't want to do it. I've told them to close their eyes. There are people sort of whispering to each other who are just … they, don't want to and they've just decided right I'm not going to take part in it, and it gets on my nerves and the nerves of other people who find it useful.*

The extracts show, just as previous ones have, that the pupils regarded mindfulness as useful purely in times of stress/worry and/or for improving attention. They also reveal a reluctance by a few and the feeling of being coerced into practising it. While invariably there are always some pupils less engaged than others in any lesson, in terms of mindfulness more critically, if we consider the issue of pupil resistance and forcing them to practice it, this does seem to be the very antithesis of mindfulness. It could even be viewed as unethical if we consider how mindfulness introduced into education, superficially or otherwise, could unleash suppressed and distressing material (Farias and Wikholm, 2015; Fisher, 2017). It brings us back to the question asked in chapter one, i.e., can mindfulness taught via an MBI be exploited or misappropriated in ways that may become harmful, either by omission or commission?

MBIs – power to heal; power to harm

Undoubtedly, many MBSR and MBCT courses are clearly directed toward assisting people in managing difficult emotions by simply being with them instead of trying to avoid them through futile worrying or escaping them through temporary gratification (Crane, 2009). Nevertheless, if a child, for example, is suffering abuse at home, from a critical perspective, is it right to give them space and time to allow thoughts to drift through their minds? Sellman and Buttarazzi (2020) contend that the processing of such issues is valuable on both an educational and therapeutic level; crucially, however, this requires dedicated and qualified support. Without such support, MBIs could be considered a good way of saving money in educational institutions by not employing higher salaried, experienced and qualified counsellors and therapists (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). Ergas (2017a) questions the feasibility of asking teachers/lecturers to become involved in students' lives in such a way that it could elicit disturbances in their emotional lives in ways that might be hard to handle.

Widening the critical lens still further, if teaching an MBI to pupils results in them gaining greater awareness of the controlling and reproductive purpose

of schooling and yet have no support, power or chance to change anything, it raises questions about the ethics of teaching MBIs (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). Pupils in such circumstances are left with two, arguably unpleasant options: quietly tolerate the now prevailing feeling of dissatisfaction until schooling is complete, a manner Sellman and Buttarazzi (2020) describe as 'inauthentic' or 'unmindful', or question/challenge the system and pay the consequences.

Therefore, implementing an intervention in a school should be accompanied by knowledge and empathy of the pupils' broader context as pupils are subjugated to orders and systems they cannot control (Chadwick and Gelbar, 2016). As Forbes (2015) points out, lacking critical awareness of the wider neoliberal context within which education functions results in MBIs with an emphasis on individual consciousness and behaviour not only acting as a form of social control but, as discussed earlier in this chapter, also masking social and cultural factors which are often the main reasons for teacher and pupil stress and difficulties in the first place. Ironically, therefore, disregarding the socio-political nature of schools leaves the stress and problems for pupils and teachers alike still in place. Hence the need for an MBI.

Other ethical concerns emerge when further considering the issue of the conscripted audience. According to Semple et al., (2017), impressionable children are being taught skills that, in profound ways, may change how they think, perceive and interact in the world. It is claimed that mindfulness alters the structure and functioning of the brain; if so, we are altering children's developing brains in ways that are not yet known (Semple et al., (2017). As Rosenbaum and Magid (2016) wisely contend, if something is powerful enough to help, then it will probably be powerful enough to harm, or it would not be effective; indeed, no medication exists that does not cause side effects in some people, and no solution does not create unexpected consequences. Likewise, Britton et al., (2021) point out how all treatments can cause some harm some of the time, and multiple sources suggest that mindfulness-based practices are no exception. In their study, Britton et al., (2021) found that mindfulness meditation practice – including focused attention and open-

monitoring practices either alone or combined - was associated with temporary distress and enduring negative impacts on life and functioning at similar rates to other psychological treatments.

Deepening the discussion, Baer et al., (2019) also note how in well-established approaches to health and wellbeing, e.g., psychotherapy and physical exercise, some participants get worse or suffer severe harm; a finding that appears to apply to meditation and contemplative traditions. Evidence-based mindfulness-based practices have important commonalities with these approaches; they work with thoughts, feelings and sensations which can be distressing and challenging; they raise issues about adherence, dosage and dose/response relationships; they include various exercises which can be uncomfortable, and they place the formal practice of mediation at their core (Baer et al., 2019). Currently, the literature on harm in evidence-based mindfulness practices is limited, with only a few studies showing worsening symptoms and the majority showing the benefits; however, such evidence, according to Baer et., al (2019), should be treated with caution as most studies report only group averages which might mask meaningful deterioration in some participants.

Similarly, Britton et al., (2021) highlight how adverse event monitoring in mindfulness-based practices is inadequate and inconsistent, resulting in varying frequency estimates contingent on how adverse events are defined and measured. Therefore, it would not be unfair to say that widespread implementation of MBIs in schools has proceeded regardless of insufficient information about possible harms they may cause.

From a different perspective, O'Donnell (2015) suggests that while communicating mindfulness to conscripted audiences like students is essential, not providing any regular time to practice (an issue at the school in this study) is also ethically questionable as it carries negative messages. According to O'Donnell (2015), it sends the message that mindfulness for mental health is not important enough to be included in the core curriculum; thus, mental health is the pupil's concern and not externally supported. Poor

mental health becomes the pupil's failure, as discussed in chapter seven, even though they are in a setting that does not give them enough time to follow suggested actions such as mindfulness to prevent mental health issues (O'Donnell, 2015).

Adding to this argument, Bailey et al., (2018) suggest that pupils already feeling under pressure due to time constraints are unlikely to engage in the optional extra homework mindfulness practice represents. Including another activity to an already busy day and not removing another activity is loading the pupil with an additional incumbrance they cannot implement and benefit from, so they may ignore the activity or, worse still, feel more stressed due to the additional mindfulness activity (Bailey et al., 2018). It is unfortunate as evidence suggests that the benefits of mindfulness practice only become apparent for those who practice above a certain level (Jha et al., 2016).

Sub-theme eight: understanding mindfulness concept – pupils' perceptions

Bishop et al., (2004) highlight how the inclusion of intention, i.e., why one is practising, is a central component of mindfulness and crucial to understanding the process. Hence, for Bishop et al., (2004), a more precise explanation of mindfulness demands an additional component, i.e., adopting a specific orientation to one's experience. It is often overlooked in contemporary definitions of mindfulness. The pupils in this study demonstrated no fundamental understanding of this aspect of mindfulness, which, arguably, can be attributed to the narrow focus of the MBI. As the mindfulness teacher, I adhered very rigidly to the strict guidelines for delivering the course as requested by the programme trainers. Intention did not play a pivotal role in any of the lessons provided.

Walsh (2016) stresses that while mindfulness practices should represent a full breadth of social interests, it is essential that they also delve into the practitioner's context and intent. Without being guided by right view or motivated by right intention, a person could be practising bare attention without it ever developing into right mindfulness (Wallace 2008). Though there is value in cultivating bare attention, it is wrong to equate it solely with mindfulness, as it can lead to the misconception that cultivating mindfulness has nothing to do with ethics or developing wholesome states of mind and lessening unwholesome states (Wallace, 2008). Despite the absence of intention in the delivery of the MBI used in this study, one pupil inadvertently touched on it when discussing why she practised mindfulness at home.

> Molly – (year 3 pupil) *I'm using it to make my brother cross and to calm me down.*

Molly described how her calmness seemed to 'wind' her brother up when they had arguments. Consequently, she saw mindfulness practice as a successful kind of 'payback'; this was the intention behind her practice. While practising mindfulness to calm herself down during a stressful time was positive, more critically, Molly, by simultaneously using it to exact revenge, was practising

mindfulness with wrong intention. It marks a return to Wallace (2008) and his distinction between right intention and wrong intention as described in chapter two, which used the example of a sniper waiting to shoot his enemy, thus practising wrong mindfulness and bare attention without an ethical component. As Ricard (2015, p. 6) states: "there can be mindful snipers and mindful psychopaths who maintain a calm and stable mind. There cannot be caring snipers and caring psychopaths".

Purser and Millilo (2015) describe how Buddhist mindfulness development depends on a balanced and integrated application of the eight path factors. It is a formula that clarifies that mindfulness is not just a compartmentalised tool for improving attention. While increasing awareness and cultivating stillness in the present moment helps improve focus (Peacock, 2014), they are not an end in themselves. Instead, they provide the necessary conditions for striving to cultivate the moral and spiritual virtues that can help us deal with the trials and tribulations of everyday life (Teasdale and Chaskalson, 2011). Hence, as Peacock (2014) observes, Sati (the Pali word for mindfulness) performs more dynamically than the easy non-judgmental observation of experience. Indeed, Buddhist mindfulness is informed and influenced by many things - our perception of reality, our thoughts, speech and actions; the way we make a living, and our efforts to shun unpleasant and unskilful states while nurturing those that are skilful and beneficial to being healthy and living harmoniously (Purser and Millilo, 2015).

Thus, Buddhist mindfulness is just one aspect of a transitional path that is complex and multi-faceted, embedded in affective, behavioural, cognitive, ethical and social dimensions (Grossman and Van Dam, 2011). For Hyland (2016b), if affective and moral development is to be enhanced and sustained, progression beyond a minimalist mindfulness stage will be needed; this will require a continuous renewing of the links between MBIs in education and the values expressed under the universal dharma. In essence, it will necessitate questioning the crude commodification process by highlighting mindfulness programmes' ethical and genuinely educational aspects (Hyland, 2017).

Indeed, mindfulness is guided by an ethical obligation, necessitating that the practitioner cultivates an understanding and sympathetic ethos of care and engagement towards self, others and the world (Ng, 2015). Thus, if mindfulness is to be synergistic with education's wider concern for eudemonia/human flourishing, it needs to retain its original emphasis on spiritual connection and ethical behaviour (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). Without this emphasis, as discussed earlier in the chapter, mindfulness risks becoming submissive to the covert purposes of education, i.e., class reproduction and reliance on societal structures (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020).

Sub-theme nine: measuring - teachers' perceptions

Surprisingly, given the current educational climate, only three teachers referred to the challenge of measuring mindfulness; however, despite this, I considered it worth further exploration precisely because of the current educational climate. Within the literature, reference is made to concerns regarding the tension and potential conflict of implementing mindfulness, a paradigm with many dimensions appearing to be inherently unquantifiable, into education, a paradigm that emphasises measurement and outcome. Fran, a year five teacher, regarded the challenge of measuring mindfulness as a potential problem for implementing it in the school, stating:

> *Measuring it, doing it and providing proof is always going to be difficult. I always find the best way to get something adopted is having it measured. That would be very difficult to measure because it comes side by side with maturing anyway.*

What gets implemented in real-world settings varies between settings; consequently, there is a necessity for evidence-based practices to evaluate whether a programme is being implemented as intended. Assessing intervention outcomes is essential for testing the degree to which results can be attributed to the programme, the success of the transition from research to practice and back again (Crane and Hecht, 2018) and for gaining support and funding (Greenberg and Harris, 2012; Weare, 2013). Research within

schools is more complex as it requires consideration of the numerous social and contextual variables and targets a wider array of positive and negative outcome variables (Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor, 2010). Additionally, while the results of mindfulness practices can be demonstrated through conclusive skills measured by quantitative means, the behaviour and mental effects of mindfulness practices are subjective and personal; as such, these are difficult to quantify alone (Feagans-Gould et al., 2016).

From a critical perspective, Ergas (2013) contends that compartmentalising mindfulness to match science's ability to measure, alongside the requirement by educational policies for standards and attainments, undoubtedly affects the object being measured. Ergas (2013, p. 67) cautions:

> The *immeasurable* cannot become *measurable* without a price,
> perhaps a heavy one with substantial educational implications.

One such price is described by Hyland (2016a), who argues that positioning mindfulness in various settings as an 'intervention' with instrumental ends and measurable outcomes so comparability and standardisation between courses and training can take place results in a reductionist approach to its meaning. Similarly, Purser and Milillo (2015) note how standardising and measuring mindfulness results in it becoming grounded in the notion of being divorced from its Buddhist roots; this, in turn, results in a narrow over-emphasis on method or technique. Hence mindfulness as 'technical spirituality' (Driscoll and Wiebe, 2007) becomes a tool, as discussed in earlier chapters, for increasing productivity, effectiveness, competence and acquiring noticeable results. Such views are worlds away from the Buddhist concept of mindfulness and work in opposition.

Critics of mindfulness measures highlight substantial problems with their construct validity. Van Dam et al., (2009) note that item interpretation is a challenge due to the possible bias and individual understanding of negatively worded items; those that do/do not practice meditation might comprehend the scale items in markedly diverse ways. A further criticism of mindfulness measures by Van Dam et al., (2010) is that there is usually an absence of

consideration of the psychological processes implicit in, or that lie beneath, an individual's responses to questions. The proliferation of such measures, and the exponential growth of MBIs, has led to confusion over what exactly is being measured (Grossman, 2011); this is particularly applicable to those trusting the self-reports by MBI programme participants. Such measures suffer the same restrictions associated with most self-report measures; for example, participants might have a vested interest in viewing themselves as more mindful due to the amount of time and effort they have invested in their mindfulness training (Gold et al., 2010).

Undeniably, there is a lack of clear external referents or 'gold-standard measures' (Grossman, 2011) to define a mindful person; currently, it is impossible to assess whether questionnaire measures accurately reflect mindfulness or something else. Grossman (2011) cites the main weakness of such measures as their de-contextualising of mindfulness from its ethical and attitudinal underpinnings. Other flaws include the tendency to measure certain facets of mindfulness, such as the ability to remain in the here and now, attention span, fleeting emotional states, and, more generally, presenting a misleading and impure view of mindfulness (Grossman, 2011). When considering the challenging nature of standardising and measuring mindfulness (Flores, 2016), maybe it is, as Farran (2011) maintains, that just because something can be measured does not mean it should be.

Summary of the findings

Various arguments and perspectives were presented in the analysis of theme two, all positioned around the *acceptability* of mindfulness. The shared extracts reveal how the MBI was considered more acceptable to the pupils than the teachers. It seemed to be an acceptance based on their enjoyment of learning and practising mindfulness and the support they felt it provided them. Any challenges to the *acceptability* of the MBI were generally deemed surmountable by the pupils; conversely, the teachers viewed them as insurmountable. Lack of understanding of mindfulness resulted in the practices being nothing more than tools for behaviour management.

Unlike many studies on MBIs in education, I have endeavoured to transcend the typically narrow focus on their behavioural or psychological benefits and avoid merely providing an abundance of reasonably easy-to-gain uplifting anecdotes from participants. Instead, I have incorporated some 'everyday reality' into the study to consider the contraposition. To this end, I have probed more deeply into the extracts to elicit the underlying issues and critically examine the school's social context, goals and intentions. Forbes (2017) points out how many advocates of MBIs seem disinterested in critically contemplating the social settings of the schools they are operating in and, in addition, disinterested in the schools' aims and objectives.

My probing has led to an over-arching pattern emerging centred around the issue of ethics. It has, in turn, given rise to various dilemmas which now beg the question, how can attention to ethical issues and the definition and operationalisation of mindfulness in secular contexts be incorporated into MBIs in education to ensure mindfulness realises its full educational potential? It is a question I will explore in chapter ten when discussing the implications of the findings of this study for practice and the ethical considerations that need acknowledging and then resolving. As for the 'everyday reality' I sought during this study, the teachers primarily provided this. Contrary to their pupils' positive outlook regarding any challenges accompanying the MBI, some were weary, others sceptical. Mindfulness seemed far more acceptable in theory than in practice. Claire, a year 3 teacher, stated:

> *I don't think I would be comfortable teaching it. I think I like the idea of it, but I think that I don't know it would necessarily be manageable. It almost feels to me like one of those things where it would be good to start off with, but because there's so many other things that you have to do, it would then be the first thing then to sort of fade out if that makes sense. It's like when you do all of these sorts of things, it starts off as a really good idea, and then you just can't maintain it.*

The overall lack of *acceptability* of mindfulness in the school, despite acknowledgement by most teachers of its *potentiality*, was further demonstrated by the gradual fading out of mindfulness practices, not only

after I had left the school but even before I had left it. The *acceptability* of mindfulness in the school can be summed up by the final comments of the headteacher, which were sent to me via email a few months after I had finished attending the school:

> *If I'm being really honest, I think we are struggling to cover mindfulness as much as we would like really. And probably not as well as you would like us to be doing after all your input. I think that is the general feedback from most of the staff, although all are attempting to fit it here and there and especially when something happens that triggers us to return to it. We do have two Emotional Literacy Support Assistants providing support for our most needy children and, as I'm sure you know, do our best to embrace mindfulness whenever we can.*

While an honest admission, it is nevertheless a disappointing outcome and one that conveys two messages to take away and consider when implementing an MBI in a school.

The first message is the importance of teachers being 'on board'; if not, it is unlikely they will introduce the MBI into their classroom in a committed or sustainable way, even if requested by the headteacher or SLT.

The second message is the necessity for teachers and headteachers to understand the concept of mindfulness; this will go some way towards ensuring that mindfulness is not reduced to merely a technique to call upon when something happens, triggering a need for it. Or that mindfulness is not used purely for 'needy' children, thus relegating it to some form of behaviour management or therapy.

However, a better understanding of mindfulness is only the beginning; there is also the need for an approach where mindfulness practice is not separated from its spiritual and cultural background. Arguably, an approach that considers Buddhist and Western psychology's cultural and philosophical differences could result in more authentic and valid use of mindfulness (Cohen, 2010). Furthermore, issues centred around reductionism, oversimplification or distortion of ideas and praxis (as evidenced in this study)

could be avoided (Walsh and Shapiro, 2006; Grossman, 2010). The suggestion of such an approach is explored in chapter ten, where the findings of themes one and two are considered in relation to implications for practice.

Perhaps more of a cautionary tale, a final consideration here is the importance of MBIs not becoming part of a tick box exercise for whole school mental health and wellbeing, drawn up on a school development plan purely for an Ofsted inspection.

Chapter 9: Analysis of Theme Three – Pupils and Teachers' Perceptions of *Potentiality* and *Acceptability* of Journaling in School

Introduction

Theme three is the final theme resulting from the thematic analysis process. Like themes one and two, it is also analysed by including extracts taken from the original transcripts with commentary, discussion and the relevant literature interwoven.   My reflections during the research process on journaling are also included. This theme focuses on the pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of journaling. As explained in chapter four, section 4.4, I intended to apply a more mindful approach to the research process; this gave rise to the idea that the pupils should also become involved in journaling. Hence, journaling was introduced to the older pupils, i.e., those in years five and six, by way of a mindful moments diary they were each provided with (see appendix 2 for sample pages from the diary). It was decided that they would be referred to as diaries rather than journals based on the belief that the pupils would more likely better understand the term 'diary' rather than 'journal'.

It was a casual and not enforced introduction. I hoped that journaling would give the pupils a voice, thus offering a more democratic, participatory and empowering experience. Usually, within a school community, the pupils are invariably those with a silenced voice or unaccustomed to freely expressing their views or being taken seriously by adults in an adult-dominated society (Punch, 2002). I considered it appropriate and authentic that they, too, should reflect through journaling on the process of learning about and experiencing mindfulness. It also acknowledged that it is challenging for the adult researcher to thoroughly understand the world from a child's perspective. While we were all once children, as adults, we soon forget, unlearn and discard elements of our childhood culture (Punch, 2002). Through journaling, I hoped the pupils would communicate more willingly, unhindered by expectations, enabling them to express their views with greater richness gained from their

increased awareness and understanding achieved through reflective practice, a richness that otherwise would have been absent.

This theme comprises six sub-themes guided by matters raised during the thematic analysis process described in chapter six. Sub-theme one explores the pupils' experience of journaling. Sub-themes two and three consider pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the potential journaling has to support wellbeing. Sub-themes four, five and six relate to teachers' and pupils' views on time constraints as a barrier to journaling and their views on the potential for journaling to become just one more piece of work to 'shoehorn' into an already overly busy school day.

Sub-theme one: enjoyable/different - pupils' perceptions

Most pupils enjoyed journaling the same way they had the mindfulness lessons and practices. They viewed it as something different and relaxing and a change from the usual focus placed on academic lessons.

> Rhiannon – (year 6 pupil) *One of the questions is like write down a time when you have been kind to someone. I think when you've been kind to someone, it's almost like a secret between two people. When you want to tell other people that you've been nice to them, it's sort of a weird thing to go and say, "oh, I've been nice to someone", so like when you are writing it in your diary, it's like you're telling somebody*.

> Charlotte – (year 6 pupil) *we've had a few concerts recently, and so while everyone's been practising, we've been told to get our mindfulness diaries, and we've only been told to do the colouring.*

> Noah – (year 6 pupil) *I think it's good because it's almost mindful classes but without the class. So, it's just kind of like you've got your own miniature private class to just do what you like, really. I found that like really nice and interesting.*

While the pupils' positive feedback is expressed in these extracts, more critically, they also disclose how the diaries were used to keep some pupils quiet while others practised for concerts. It mirrors how the mindfulness practises were relegated to calming the 'wild' pupils and a form of behaviour

management, as discussed in chapters seven and eight. Indeed, some teachers mentioned the calmness accompanying journaling, just as they had referred to the calmer behaviour accompanying mindfulness.

> Stuart - (year 6 teacher) *More people asked can they do their journals err mindfulness diaries than can we do the mindfulness techniques. But I noticed that they, when we had a sort of specific task, they… when everybody was doing it, it was nice and calm, it was nice and quiet.*

Realistically, journaling will probably be experienced as a more controlled activity when carried out at school compared to the freedom of, for example, journaling at home. Journaling within a school environment raises the issue of an audience, which leads to asking for whom is the journal being written, i.e., who has decided it will be written? (Moon, 2006). In which case is there a choice not to write it? Undeniably, some pupils in this study did not want to engage in journaling.

> Max – (year 5 pupil) *I didn't like it because I don't like colouring and I don't like writing. So, I didn't really do much in it because it's not really what I like to do.*

Max's comment cannot be ignored as it once again raises the issue of the conscripted audience. In chapter eight, sub-theme seven, I debated whether it is ethical when engaging in mindfulness practices for the audience to be a conscripted one. It is an ethical dilemma that is equally applicable to journaling which invites the same questions as those previously asked in chapter eight, i.e., how ethical is it to give pupils time to reflect, potentially eliciting a release of repressed or traumatic material? What is the feasibility of teachers coping with this? Is it ethical to provide pupils with a greater awareness of their situation yet have no agency to do anything about it? (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). In addition, we could also ask whether it is ethically questionable to provide pupils who potentially have neither the experience nor skill set to self-critique in a constructive, positive and empowering way the opportunity to self-critique through journaling while providing little or no support for managing this process. When written, a negative self-critique can be very powerful; it can reinforce low self-esteem

and, very damagingly, be frequently revisited – a not dissimilar practice to the one often evidenced in social media.

Moon (2006) ponders the question of who will see the journal? Will others assess and see it in that context, or just the teacher who may ask only helpful questions to guide reflection on unconsidered issues? Will peers see it? Some may choose to share aspects of their journal with others for mutual benefit or just for their benefit. However, as Moon (2006) points out, while there are benefits to sharing journal writing, there are also risks. The knowledge that is being shared can distort the process of writing. Writers of a personal journal, for example, may become aware they are writing for a particular audience. Undoubtedly, coercion, the power, and the nature of the audience can all be significant influences on journal writers and their journals (Moon, 2006).

There is also the matter of confidentiality. As Moon (2006) queries, will someone be prying on the journal or not, and if someone is, does it matter? Moreover, is it all right for someone else to learn more about the writer's views and reflections – more than would be revealed in a conversation? Martin (1992) cautions how, for children, journaling may be stifled most when written as though someone is looking over their shoulder. Undeniably, when we write knowing that the thoughts presented will be viewed, self-censor is a risk, consciously or unconsciously. Exposure to the fear of being judged detracts from the 'letting go' experience. Consequently, as Martin (1992) suggests, a journal will probably be more useful when written with the carefree abandonment of someone who knows it will go up in smoke one day rather than be published.

In acknowledgement of this, in this study, I requested that the pupils be given complete ownership of their diaries and not have to hand them in to their teacher. It was hoped this would provide them with a greater sense of freedom with what they wanted to write. As such, some pupils did mention how they enjoyed writing, knowing that no one would read what they had written.

> William – (year 6 pupil) *If you want to get something out of your system, then it is helpful. And you know if something's holding you down, it's your little private thing, yeah… and well no one else is going to read it so you can write whatever you want in there* (year 6 pupil).

> Ravinder – (year 6 pupil) *It's nice to have something that you can put all your thoughts and feelings into, and it's almost like your diary; erm, your journal is almost like a person you're telling about all these questions you've got. And it's quite nice just writing down something you wouldn't really tell other people. Or maybe just like I'm quite nervous telling other people stuff, so it's been quite nice.*

Conversely, and from a different perspective, it could be contended that although journaling can be challenging, it can also go unchallenged; thus, the writer of the journal could continuously process and re-process the same ideas, which might be a restriction of this lone act (Hubbs and Brand, 2005). As Brookfield (1998) explains, a self-confirming cycle can take root, where our uncritical accepted notions influence our actions; this, in turn, serves only to confirm the truth of those notions. Undoubtedly, we can find it challenging to stand outside ourselves and look at how some of our most deeply held values and beliefs can lead us into impartial and constrained ways of being (Brookfield, 1998). Potentially, therefore, this could provide a reason for including an 'audience' in the process. Such a presence may encourage the writer to reflect, re-evaluate and critique their perceptions on a deeper level and with greater honesty. Furthermore, it allows others to glimpse what the writer is experiencing or has experienced at a given time.

Sub-theme two: journaling for pupil wellbeing – pupils' perceptions

Teachers, therapists and others in the helping professions have for years been advocating the benefits of keeping a journal as a tool for finding oneself. The craft of writing is a powerful tool for careful observation that leads to insight (Bender, 2000). Solgot (2005) notes how journaling is a way of developing a more acute sense of self-awareness through reflecting by examining and understanding our thoughts, communications and behaviours over some time. Similarly, Goldberg (1991) notes how journal writing has a fascination with

the self, emotion and situation; it tends to be about thought, rumination and self-analysis. When we have freedom from the restrictions of 'proper writing', journaling allows us to tap into our creative and authentic voice. A voice that perhaps sits just out of reach of our conscious critical minds. It enables us to write without thinking, with an openness and curiosity; also lauded traits of mindfulness (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020), to see what unfolds as we write things down in black and white.

Ryan (2007) maintains that any kind of reflexivity can nourish reflections as introspection leads to increased awareness, change, development, and improvement of self. In this study, some pupils referred, albeit in passing, to how the process of journaling had provided them with an increased ability to understand their thoughts. Furthermore, it allowed them to reflect on their past behaviour or accomplishments.

> Mary – (year 6 pupil) *When you write things down, it sort of brings back memories, and you can kind of think I did that well. Like you sort of understand more*.

> James – (year 6 pupil) *I mainly drew on the blank pages to pass time and think about stuff, really…I can see how it would help somebody, and it certainly has allowed me to express my feelings as a kind of drawing really.*

Journaling also allowed the children to develop their own approach/technique for managing their thoughts without their teachers' influence or prompts; this tends to be rare in schools. Thus, for James, drawing on the blank pages allowed him to express himself comfortably. Bender (2000) suggests that a journal is a perfect place to learn how language communicates authenticity; too often, language is used, for example, in politics, advertising and marketing, to persuade us to buy things or make us dislike certain groups, or look through eyes unable to see the everyday wrongdoings against freedom and humanity. Learning the authenticity of your voice makes it both harder to write in an inauthentic voice or listen to one and believe what others want you to believe against your inner will. For Bender (2000), authenticity is

essential to wellbeing in a world that seems to work against finding and maintaining it.

Wegner et al., (2017) describe reflective writing in their study of a health-promoting schools project in South Africa. The participants reflected on connecting with complicated, positive and negative feelings. They perceived reflective writing enabled them to express themselves with courage and honesty, connect with themselves, recognise weaknesses and let go of negative emotions and feelings. The participants also perceived writing as non-judgmental, providing a sense of relief and release and evoking emotions. Ultimately, according to Wegner et al., (2017), reflective writing enabled the participants to recognise personal changes, development and insight into their emotional states and experiences. These findings echo the sentiments expressed in some of the extracts resulting from the school in this study. A few children touched on the more therapeutic benefits gained through their journaling practice, and others commented on how it cleared their minds or bought back good memories or increased their understanding of situations

> Keiran – (year 5 pupil) *I think that it's good you can jot down all your worries, and it will make you feel better, and it will make you feel like you can just leave them all behind and you don't have to think about them. Put it behind me.*
>
> Herjeet – (year 5 pupil) *All the situations are then in black and white. It helps you seeing them rather than in your mind.*

For Parnell (2005), the ultimate goal of writing is to find our centre of emotional balance and recognise ways to recover balance when faced with emotional dilemmas. In committing ourselves to this 'growth process', we can develop self-awareness to achieve and maintain emotional and spiritual balance in our lives. Journaling, therefore, can assist us in developing the self-awareness needed to recognise when we are not emotionally or spiritually centred. In this study, one pupil, in particular, was experiencing a time of great emotional turmoil; he spoke of the benefits to his wellbeing that he had gained through journaling.

George – (year 6 pupil) *When I'm like sad or like worried about something, I find it quite hard to say it because … like you have to put erm… like different like ways of saying it when you're speaking. But when you're writing, I find it easier because you don't put emotion really on writing*.

George discussed how journaling had become a source of comfort and support. His mother had died recently, and he was finding it increasingly difficult to speak to adults about his feelings, having noticed that it seemed to upset or shock them when he became emotional or angry. George spoke of how it seemed as though the adults did not want to listen to him, to hear of his pain and grief. He had decided this was because it was too distressing for them to cope with as they, too, were in pain. So, to protect their feelings, George felt it better to be careful about what he said and, more importantly, from his perspective, how he said it. Through journaling, he found a voice that was not accompanied by even more pain than he was already enduring. It was an outlet that allowed him to freely express some of his grief and find a sense of peace.

Indeed, journaling can pay witness to and give a voice to the often forgotten, overlooked, quieter or silent parts of ourselves (Hubbs and Brand, 2005). When writing a journal, it is not expected to conform to any style, category, representation or discernible meaning. It only needs to have substance and value for the writer; it is the process of recording on paper the dialogue taking place in the writer's mind and making sense of it. It takes an order of its own as the words are being written down on paper, and it is a way to be heard when it feels like no one else will listen (Williamson, 2009). Journaling can give voice to your 'self' in the sense that it can enable you to speak to yourself in a language of clear and genuine understanding; thus, "the reflective journal provides a vehicle for inner dialogue that connects thoughts, feelings and actions" (Hubbs and Brand, 2005, p. 62).

Sub-theme three: journaling for pupil wellbeing – teachers' perceptions

Parnell (2005) suggests that keeping a journal offers a way of releasing emotions that can negatively impact one's wellbeing. In this study, George, in particular, the pupil referred to earlier who was experiencing grief and the emotional turmoil that accompanies it, recognised the benefits to his wellbeing that he had gained through journaling. His class teacher also recognised the emotional and spiritual benefits for him.

> Mark – (year 6 teacher) *One child, particularly who's started the writing of the questions when he's feeling quite emotional, quite strained because his mum died recently. He'll take himself off with his diary and sit quietly and does a bit of writing and things like that. That's really helped him, actually. He's been really active with that.*

Journaling, therefore, can provide a library of self-information that can be accessed in the present to recognise healthy coping mechanisms. Alternatively, it can be accessed later to reflect how previous challenges and obstacles were conquered (Parnell, 2005). Similarly, Holly (1989) notes how sometimes it seems necessary to write and other times, important not to write. There are also those times when we are perhaps just too close to an experience to face reflecting on it in writing, and yet a few days later, it may be very beneficial. Despite George's teacher acknowledging the benefits of journaling, it rarely happened in class.

Parnell (2005) stresses how anyone wishing to expand beyond their personal barriers for emotional growth must first believe that we are not just physical beings but also emotional and spiritual beings. It means that we should not emphasise thinking over feeling; instead, we should understand that both represent the truth about life and us in general. They both reflect who we are and where we are in our personal development. According to Parnell (2005), by maintaining a high level of simultaneous awareness of our emotions and thoughts, we are less limited in our responses to others and various life situations.

Sub-theme four: Work – teachers' perceptions

Teachers' views on journaling were varied. While most liked the idea, in practice, they regarded journaling as something else to pull in or more work. Some teachers spoke of their intention to get pupils involved with journaling on a deeper level by considering the guiding questions in the diaries, but it never happened.

> Sue – (year 5 teacher) *I don't know if it works for everybody because I know I've tried journaling before, and I find sometimes it's oh no, I've got to journal this, and I find actually, that puts pressure on me too, to write, even though I know it, it has benefits to it. But at that time, when you're feeling a little bit frazzled-minded, it helps to get things out, but I think maybe, the children think, oh, it's another piece of writing to do that's something I find hard, therefore …. I don't want the writing to turn them off practising the mindfulness.*

> Carrie – (year 6 teacher) *They've loved it as well, whenever it's been like quiet reading, "oh, can we get our mindfulness diaries out", and you know I think it's a good idea. They like jotting a lot. Some children won't; I think you know they'll be mixed. There'll be the children that don't and even just having time to reflect. I think they've all enjoyed some aspect of the diaries, whether maybe not so much writing it down, whether it's like a drawing or the quotes looking at those, I think. I think there's been something for everybody they've enjoyed, and like I said, they've all used them in their own ways, but they've all certainly enjoyed getting them out and have asked me several times, "oh can we get our diaries out?"*

As discussed in chapter eight, the importance of teachers 'being on board' with an intervention undoubtedly determines how productive and beneficial it will be (Mazza-Davies, 2015).   In this study, the year five teachers acknowledged the potential benefits of journaling; however, in reality, they were more concerned with the challenge of just getting the children to engage in the physical act of writing.

> Fran – (year 5 teacher) *Yeah, I think the principle of it itself is fine. I think there are many, many children who struggle to get much down on paper in terms of writing anyway. There are obviously other children who would take it and just run with it, and it depends on the individual…*

> *but I mean, given the trouble of getting them to write, getting them to write proper sentences anyway, I don't want to turn that into another writing exercise.*

Thus, dislike of writing was the second main reason cited in some classes as a barrier to journaling alongside lack of time. When designing the diaries with my supervisor, we anticipated some difficulty in this respect. Hence, we designed them to be accessible to all. Indeed, as Morris (2009) observes, there will always be some children whose faces fill with dread at the prospect of writing. Therefore, with this in mind, the diaries also offered the choice of doodling, drawing and colouring. We also thought that giving the pupils an exercise about themselves and not grading them might overcome their dread of writing, and they would grow to enjoy the exercise (Morris, 2009). Referring to the diaries as potentially becoming just another writing exercise also suggests the teacher may not have studied the diaries to see what they involved or required of the pupils. It brings us back to the issue of teacher commitment and being 'on board' with an intervention.

Sub-theme five: Work – pupils' perceptions

While a teacher's commitment to an intervention impacts how productive and beneficial it will be, it can also influence their pupils' attitudes. For example, in this study, in one of the year five focus groups, none of the participants even knew where their diaries were. In this case, it could be argued that they reflected their teacher's view on the diaries, which meant time away from other, more valuable activities for this particular teacher.

> Caitlin – (year 5 pupil) *I don't know where it is*.

> Henry – (year 5 pupil) *I'm actually quite sad to say that I don't really have the time because I'm a very sporty person. I already do hockey and rugby, and I've just started karate*.

Sub-theme six: Time constraints – teachers' perceptions

Not enough time was one of the two main reasons the teachers avoided journaling altogether or only made a half-hearted commitment to them, despite stating that the mindfulness diaries were a good idea and the pupils enjoyed using them when they got the opportunity. It was evidenced by the fact that journaling was never put on the timetable; instead, it happened ad hoc, usually as a time filler for some pupils while others were busy with something else.   On such occasions, the emphasis was placed on colouring and drawing in the diary; these activities were viewed as something that would not require teacher input and keep the children quiet.

> Helen – (year 5 teacher) *I really like them; I think they really like them. Again, we haven't given them a lot of time in school, I'm afraid, but I think it's a really good idea and it will get them used to writing down their feelings, and yeah, I think it's very positive.*

> Fran – (year 5 teacher) *We have so many other things to commit our time to. I understand that you know journaling can be a very, very good way of sorting your thoughts out, getting these down on paper. I get it, but the practicalities of getting all that into school time has been less easy. So generally, they are still sitting in trays, and occasionally we'll get them out, but you know….*

Undoubtedly, removing ourselves from the busyness of our lives long enough to write about them is not easy, yet as Holly (1989) notes, if writing seems to be time-consuming at first, ultimately, writing can help you save time by helping you become more aware of how you use time.

Journal – Friday 13 April 2018

> *Returning to the issue of time constraints is familiar territory; just like with mindfulness practices, there's no time for journaling. It seems an easy excuse for some, especially as the children have talked about the times when they sit around on their desks chatting. Surely ten minutes a week can be found, especially as most teachers think they're a good idea and have heard from their pupils how beneficial they've found*

them. Maybe I'm being too judgemental? In truth, I don't know if I'd have listened to the pupils and made time for journaling when I was teaching. Perhaps I'd have been too busy?

In this study, time constraints and pupils' writing reluctance were the reasons for the demonstrated lack of commitment to journaling. However, looking at the bigger picture, arguably, it is, as Ergas (2017a) states, that we have come to think that maths, for example, counts as subject matter, yet our fear or love of maths does not. In this way, 'education' has become about 'society'; it is 'out there' instead of being about our embodied minds 'in here', our emotions, sensations and the internal narrative we each listen to throughout our daily lives (Ergas, 2017a). Consequently, the education we have constructed as a society tends to shape our view so that we see these internal domains as being something marginal or as interfering with education (Ergas, 2017a). It is, therefore, an educational climate that undoubtedly conspires to make introducing journaling into a school not easy.

Summary of the findings

The data reveals that teachers and pupils alike, in theory, were 'on board' with the idea of journaling and were able to see, in varying degrees, its potential for supporting pupils' wellbeing. The teachers, however, were far more conscious of the barriers to journaling, such as time constraints and the challenge of getting pupils to write. These barriers outweighed any perceived benefits. Undoubtedly, what was agreed as helpful in theory was not agreed as practical in practice, thus, echoing the findings on the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of mindfulness, as discussed in chapters seven and eight.

A particularly significant finding was that journaling, in common with mindfulness, triggers various ethical concerns that prompt similar questions to those asked in connection with mindfulness. Questions such as:

- How ethical is it to ask pupils to reflect through journaling, thus giving them greater awareness of their situation, yet a lack of agency to change anything?

- Is it right to add journaling to a weekly school timetable when the audience is predominantly conscripted?

- How ethical is it to give children time to reflect, thereby potentially prompting a release of repressed or traumatic material? Is it feasible or fair to ask teachers to cope with this?

- How ethical is it to provide children who potentially have neither the experience nor skill set to self-critique in a constructive and empowering way with the opportunity to do so through journaling while providing no support for managing this process?

- Will journaling become another form of behaviour management?

After critically examining the data on the potentiality and acceptability of journaling in a school, several messages can be taken away. First and foremost is acknowledging that barriers and ethical concerns associated with journaling will exist in a school environment. Some of these barriers, such as time constraints and reluctance to write, can be overcome with commitment, determination and perseverance. However, the ethical concerns that have been highlighted in this theme will require further consideration and will undoubtedly have significant implications for practice. Irrefutably they will require a rethink of our understanding of education's role and require us to envision a different type of education from the current one with its preoccupation with outer achievements, where the priority is acquiring information over knowledge and virtue (Ergas, 2017a). Such requirements are explored next in chapter ten, titled 'implications for practice'.

Chapter 10: Mindfulness and Ethics - Implications for Practice

Introduction

Various challenges concerning bringing mindfulness into a school were identified during the analysis of the findings in chapters seven, eight and nine; challenges like teacher buy-in, time constraints, lack of understanding of mindfulness and inability to measure it. However, most notably was the ethical thread of concerns and dilemmas that increasingly emerged, weaving into each of the three themes. In light of the vulnerable and conscripted audience at which MBIs are aimed, this thread now occupies a prominent position within this chapter as it has significant implications for practice. The most critical ethical concern is how mindfulness can be exploited or misappropriated in ways that make it harmful, as discussed in chapters seven and eight.

It leads to the question of how attention to ethical issues and the definition and operationalisation of mindfulness in secular contexts be incorporated into MBIs in education to ensure mindfulness realises its full educational potential? The most central ethical dilemma is how education and mindfulness, often viewed as two conflicting paradigms, can be bought together more harmoniously. To resolve both, it is essential to interrogate education further by querying its role to determine the relationship or role mindfulness could play and decide whether we emphasise its functional or ethical role (Ergas, 2018). The former being where the emphasis is currently placed, the latter better positioned to address some of the concerns and ethical dilemmas present with mindfulness and education.

Hence, this chapter starts by considering in section 10.1 the role of education as revealed by mindfulness research and then asks, 'what role should education play for the twenty-first century'? An argument is made for mindfulness 'as' education; however, this has implications for practice. It requires a radical rethink of education's role and a fundamental change in our approach to teaching and learning, which is discussed in section 10.2, leading

to a review in section 10.3 on education and the role of mindfulness. It paves the way for the discourse in section 10.4 on the importance of including critical inquiry.

Critical inquiry offers a better opportunity for mindfulness to be implemented more ethically as it moves mindfulness away from its current typically instrumental approach toward an integral one (Forbes, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). Such a move provides a greater possibility of inclusivity, respect and mutuality (Forbes, 2016b), thus advancing a direction that would potentially support mindfulness to survive 'a coming backlash' (Drougge, 2016). An integral approach would address the concerns regarding ethics and mindfulness not realising its full educational potential, as debated in section 10.5, and where the need for an ethical framework is highlighted. Consequently, a dialogue on both implicit and explicit approaches to ethics and mindfulness follows, finishing with an exploration of a more integral approach for future MBIs.

10.1 The role of education as revealed by mindfulness research

In considering the question 'what is the role of education?' more than a decade ago, Claxton (2008) posited the question in his book ' What's the Point of School'? While endeavouring to answer, Claxton consulted teachers and a list was compiled of what they considered could form the basis of a curriculum appropriate for preparing young people to flourish in a complex and uncertain world. Included on the list, an extensive one which precludes it from being repeated here in its entirety, were: - ethics, empathy, neuroscience, relaxation, body awareness, resilience, collaboration, imagination and willpower; interestingly, all associated with mindfulness. The list is noteworthy for several reasons. For Claxton (2008), the most striking was that many items were not 'subjects' as they are usually recognised, i.e., they do not represent a body of knowledge that can be simply mastered; instead, they were all qualities, traits, values and habits of mind.

Remarkably the list still holds now as it did then, as evidenced by the countermovement increasingly emerging within an educational climate

focused on accountability, standardisation and performativity (Ergas, 2018). It is a countermovement that sees a rapid rise in implementing and researching contemplative practices such as mindfulness across educational settings (Ergas, 2018) and sees a growing area of somatic approaches to complement mindfulness. It is a countermovement that also highlights the necessity, in light of the challenges for mindfulness and education, to consider the role education needs to play specifically for the twenty-first century and the type of pedagogy required to support it. In this consideration, it is helpful to turn to the description of traits, values and the kind of minds necessary for the twenty-first century articulately described by Hart (2014, p. 117):

> These days require minds that are as uniquely imaginative as they are practical, as logically astute as they are intuitively sensitive, as able to see forest as they are tree, as attuned to information as they are to relations, as critical and calculating as they are available for awe and compassion.

For Ergas (2017b), the most significant task of education will be to overcome how it is regarded, i.e., as a process that is 'done to' the mind by society and is limited to specific ages, institutions and/or times of the day. Education viewed in this way shows a mind that has been restricted by it. For Ergas (2017b), the role of education is to shape a mind that is prepared to question its ways of seeing and being by taking responsibility for working with its attentive powers. Once a mind has been shaped to question its way through a 'reflective I' and a 'contemplative I', it can recognise the dangers of being restricted and work to change this; thus, according to Ergas (2017b, p. 316), "it becomes a mind that attunes *in* to constantly be in touch with the way it perceives, the motivations underlying its actions, and the results of its inner workings as they affect others".

However, commitment to facilitating both attending 'in' and 'out' requires a radical transformation in the nature of classroom organisation and pedagogic practice (Berila, 2016). It requires equal attention to the crucial sphere of human emotions (Hyland, 2013); these are equally essential dimensions to education but ones often neglected, misunderstood or disdained by contemporary education (Hyland, 2014). Instead, fixation is on 'outer

achievements', with priority resting on acquiring information over knowledge and virtue and with education being about society and regarded as 'out there' rather than about our embodied minds 'in here', i.e., our feelings, sensations and the lifelong internal narrative we hear daily (Ergas, 2017a). However, according to Ergas (2018, 2019a), mindfulness could mobilise a contemplative turn in education, favouring more in-depth personal inquiry, overall personal growth and empowerment.

Likewise, Ng (2015a) maintains that mindfulness provides an opportunity to develop contemplative approaches to learning and inquiry as it reorients education away from being purely outcome-driven and as a 'means to an end' towards broader, ethically and socially involved ends. While agreeing with this, Hsu (2016) also contends that secular mindfulness in education can only help in so far as assisting in the cultivation of a paradigm change in education, one that recognises education as being a public good, appreciates the importance of various cosmologies of knowing/being and supports communal wellbeing. Ultimately, though, a new conceptualisation of education and human progress will be needed (Hsu, 2016). Therefore, returning to the central ethical dilemma regarding bringing together mindfulness and education - mindfulness will require a different approach to teaching and learning to support it and realise its full educational potential.

10.2 A different approach to teaching and learning

The contemplative has been a constant, though sometimes invisible, presence in education, indicating it is not a fad; indeed, the contemplative state of consciousness is a fundamental part of who we are and how we learn (Morgan, 2015). Contemplation has been recognised and described across time, culture and disciplines as central to the quest for knowledge, wisdom, and complementary analytic processing (Hart, 2004). Yet, despite this, it has mostly been excluded from any viable role in contemporary education; indeed, as suggested throughout this thesis, education tends to be more about replicating the status quo, i.e., safeguarding the dominant hegemonic norms. Consequently, technical skill, aptitude to retain data and mechanical precision

are valued in contemporary education (Magill and Rodriguez, 2014). Thus, educational relationships between teachers and pupils and the subjects they study are viewed in purely instrumental terms rather than helping towards an ethical engagement with life (Todd, 2015).

Indeed, rather worryingly, little time is allotted to the value of being open to practical experiences other than what can be known through facts or reasoning (Todd, 2015). Therefore, if schools do not engage their pupils with respect to their capabilities to withstand change or maintain an inner life that can also respond to others, they have, as Todd (2015, p. 242) declares, "sacrificed their broader ethical role on the altar of measurable results". Irrefutably, in the West, the modernist episteme emphasising this attention to what is measurable, exterior and material and a rational, categorical and linear mind has nudged the contemplative out of favour (Hart, 2014). Ergas (2015) reasons that contemplative practices like mindfulness, which cultivate attention to observe the present moment, seemingly question curricular aims with their focus on somewhere else and later; this is the opposite of being in the present moment here and now.

Nevertheless, more recently, an increasing interest has emerged in incorporating contemplative practices (Greenberg and Harris, 2012), with initiatives like mindfulness now entering schooling. Undeniably, however, mindfulness is more compatible with a contemplative pedagogy with non-didactic experiential learning/teaching strategies encouraging pupils to explore practices at their own pace within a critical community of inquiry (Hyland, 2016b; Ergas, 2017a; Ergas, 2019a). Mindfulness does not fit well alongside didactic, materialist, objectivist and performative modes of teaching (Ergas, 2017a). Examples of this dichotomy are frequently cited in descriptions of pedagogies focused on cognitive skills. Indeed, generations of educational philosophers, policymakers and practitioners have criticised the mindlessness of schools with their inclination toward suppressing imagination, inquisitiveness and enthusiasm and nurturing passivity and superficial learning (Ritchhart and Perkins, 2000).

From a more critical perspective, Fisher (2017), while maintaining a keen personal interest in contemplative practices, questions some of the claims made by proponents of contemplative pedagogy; for example, focusing on cognitive skills teaches students what to think and not how to think, self-knowledge nurtures compassion, or that education needs a contemporary epistemology centred on spiritual and emotional experience rather than intellectual. For Fisher (2017), these claims underestimate students' diversity and the complexity of what it means to think and know, as thinking involves contemplation. Arguably, according to Fisher (2017), encouraging a greater focus on feelings and views can impair students' social and intellectual tendency to avoid or ignore new or opposing perspectives. Therefore, instead of opening them up to questions or purpose and meaning, it could reinforce what Fisher (2017, p. 10) calls "cognitive pragmatism in which an opinion is as good as an argument, and speculation as useful as interpretation". Furthermore, the ability for introspection may become a preoccupation with oneself when students need to go beyond their worries and fears and engage with other views, particularly ones far removed from their own (Fisher, 2017).

Fisher (2017), while not suggesting contemplative teaching methods should be banned as evidence shows the many benefits for health and wellbeing resulting from contemplative practice, cautions against assumptions that such experiences will necessarily translate into good pedagogy. Fisher (2017, p. 18) states:

> It may be reckless to presume that what constitutes wellbeing for me applies to my students. We do not share many of the same 'big' questions because we occupy different life stages. My students prepare to embark on their careers as I start to think about finishing mine. They are creating attachments; I am learning how to let go. They go to more weddings; I go to more funerals. Their friends get new jobs; mine retire. These are natural but different life transitions, so why should I expect a practice that benefits me to be equally good for my students?

Fisher (2017) concludes that those contemplative practitioners who presume what is personally good for them must also be good for their pupils potentially turns teaching into proselytising. From a different but equally critical perspective, Weare (2010) notes how the incorporation of contemplative

practices currently entering schooling has undoubtedly prompted concern among those who see it as a damaging preoccupation with self and feelings and who demonstrate total antipathy to schools broadening their remit to the social and emotional territory. Such dissenters, while lone voices, are against what they call a 'therapeutic' approach to education, deeming it undermines the long-established, conventional and genuine role of schools, i.e., the transmission of culture and subject-based knowledge, and requires teachers to interfere in areas where they have no expertise, potentially causing additional harm (Eccleston and Hayes, 2009).

It is a very contentious challenge and one that has itself been challenged on the grounds of the existing tendency towards neglecting the affective domain (Hyland, 2014) and on the implausibility of actually being able to find therapeutic elements within the current education system; a system subjugated by standards, skills, competencies, out-dated qualifications, league tables and results (Cigman, 2008). Weare (2010) highlights the importance of recognising that the cognitive and affective domains are not mutually exclusive; instead, they are inextricably connected and mutually dependent, so one should not be prioritised over the other. However, one is, i.e., the cognitive over the affective. Consequently, it necessitates restoring some balance to the educational process, thus ensuring a more knowledgeable and skilful population and a more humane and enlightened one (Ng, 2105a).

The contemplative mind enables us to pay attention, turn our gaze inward, observe the content and process of our consciousness, and adjust our perceptions, allowing us to see the world and ourselves more clearly (Hart 2014). Bringing contemplative practice to the classroom is not bringing anything new to children. Young children, in particular, are natural contemplatives; they ponder about the world around them, find wonder in nature, reflect on their existence and find silence in certain places unique to them. When translated into classroom outcomes, opening the contemplative mind can engender concentration and awareness, critical reflection, emotional regulation, creative opening and sensitivity (Hart, 2004). Thus, a

contemplative mind takes nothing away from literacy, numeracy, action or reasoning. On the contrary, it deepens our capacity to engage and understand information and ourselves in context, in relationships, in our lives (Hart, 2014). Contemplative practices like mindfulness have enormous transformative potential regarding individual wellbeing and more socially concerned features of human cultures, such as understanding, kindness, perseverance and determination (Jennings, 2015).

However, while mindfulness can provide such transformation, it is often an opportunity unable to be fully realised within the current educational climate. The research carried out in the junior school featured in this thesis and its findings discussed in chapters seven, eight and nine provide some evidence for this argument. It brings us back to the central dilemma regarding mindfulness and education and how these conflicting paradigms can become more harmonious. In order to resolve this dilemma, in the first instance, in terms of implications for practice, mindfulness will need the backing of a more contemplative pedagogy throughout education to ensure it is viewed as a process for personal and social transformation, not replicating the cultural status quo (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020).

Importantly, mindfulness will also need to be viewed as an educational intervention rather than a psychological one (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). Such framing insinuates that what we usually call education is being interrupted by something not yet considered within the construct; consequently, it is regarded as interrupting the social curriculum by something that is either a scaffold for education or extracurricular activity (Ergas (2017b; Ergas, 2015). Extending the discussion further, as Ergas and Hadar (2019) highlight, mindfulness also tends to somewhat confusingly be applied across educational settings based on varied modalities, processes, definitions and intentions. Three modalities are identified: - socialisation-oriented mindfulness 'in' education, holistic mindfulness 'as' education (Ergas, 2019b; Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020) and a 'radical-critical mindfulness 'of' education (Ergas, 2019b). These three modalities are worth considering in more detail,

as they also have implications for practice and how mindfulness sits within the current education system.

10.3 Education and the role of mindfulness

- Mindfulness 'in' education is more mainstream and has an instrumental focus. As discussed in chapter seven, it scaffolds education by conforming with 'the system', i.e., supporting its functioning and improving performance and wellbeing within it, thus reinforcing the socio-economic system, i.e., neoliberalism (Forbes, 2017, 2019; Hyland, 2017).

- Mindfulness 'as' education (Ergas, 2018) is less common. It is a more transformative strand and manifests in contemplative pedagogy in higher education and some whole-school implementations (Ergas and Hadar, 2019). In this modality, rather than simply scaffolding education, it is viewed as an educative process in its own right, a learning activity that, like any other subject, is part of the school day. While education commits to skills and knowledge, mindfulness 'as' education is a commitment to education, making not only skilled and knowledgeable human beings but kinder ones; as such, it presents the more profound ethics of incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum (Ergas, 2018).

- Mindfulness 'of' education is a critical and rarer form of mindfulness (Ergas, 2018), which leads to 'reconstructing education' through mindful attention. In essence, it is learning about how we understand the nature of education and the education system based on mindfulness practice itself.

Returning to mindfulness 'in' education, when subjected to critique, it is argued that this modality results in a superficial promotion of limited, occasionally ethically dubious, objectives regarding self-transformation, namely paying attention and personal wellbeing. Paradoxically, such focused

attention on how we relate to suffering can prove damaging if not accompanied with a critical inquiry about systemic sources of oppression (Reveley, 2015; Forbes, 2016a), an issue discussed in chapter seven when considering the question of whether mindfulness can be exploited or misappropriated in such a way that it becomes harmful. Building on this earlier discussion, we will now consider the question, how can attention to ethical issues and the definition and operationalisation of mindfulness in secular contexts be incorporated into MBIs in education to ensure mindfulness realises its full educational potential?

Purser (2015) notes the omission of critical inquiry resulting from the rapid psychologisation of mindfulness and its merging with the self-help industry, reducing it to a path for personal salvation or a self-help technique. Both are equally short-sighted and uncaring about social, political and economic aspects of suffering and leave the reasons for stress and unhappiness as residing solely within the individual (Purser, 2019b; Forbes, 2017; Reveley, 2015). As Purser (2015) insists, it is an illusion to imagine that by healing ourselves, we heal the world; inner and outer are connected, and both need working on. In terms of future practice, it suggests a need to include critical inquiry as a starting point.

10.4 Including critical inquiry

As Forbes (2016a) elucidates, a critique can help shift our everyday perceptions and provide the room to think about how things could be different. We all have culturally constructed views, customs and rules that tacitly scaffold everyday meanings; for example, our notions regarding race, class, gender and sexuality (Forbes, 2016a). As such, most people think what they see 'out there' is out there and that the same world exists for everyone if only they look (Wilber, 2016). On the contrary, as Wilber (2016) clarifies, developmental studies unmistakeably show that we see, feel and interpret the world in dramatically different ways at each level of our development. Each level has its grammar, structure and map of the territory it is being exposed

to; these are varied and, once recognised, can be seen all around us, guiding us in most areas of our life without our realisation (Wilber, 2006).

If awareness of these cultural frameworks is not bought to centre stage, MBIs fall victim to what Wilber (2006, p. 175) refers to as the "Myth of the Given". In essence, this means that everyday incidents and actions are perceived as given, detached facts instead of socially constructed, open to interpretation and unresolved meanings that can be exposed, debated and changed (Forbes, 2016a), as demonstrated by educators who never interrogate the challenging, socially constructed school environment and school values within which they offer MBIs. It results in mindfulness becoming an ideology that strengthens and supports the philosophy of neoliberal schooling, as discussed in chapters seven and eight. Consequently, pupils and teachers are pushed to see things as a given reality, allowing hidden culturally constructed meanings to be overlooked and remain functioning, albeit in the background (Forbes, 2016a).

As a response, Ng and Purser (2016) suggest a 'critical mindfulness', where critique becomes positive and useful, a redemptive act that employs mindfulness to demolish attachments to conditioned patterns of dominant beliefs. It would then present possibilities for more evolved and encompassing perspectives, although these would also need critical discussion and endorsement (Ng and Purser, 2016). Likewise, Berila (2016) supports the call for more critical forms of mindfulness that include a social justice orientation. According to Berila (2016), such forms would examine language, historical discourse and its authorship by the powerful, and any other phenomena with controlling effects and examine constructive relationships, agency, community and how humanity creatively and compassionately transforms these conditions. After all, as Krishnamurti (1966) stated, 'it is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society'.

This remark applies to contemporary mindfulness if its chief aim is reduced to ensuring individual adaptation to, and unquestioning tolerance of, the existing state of affairs (Purser, 2015). It is a remark also applicable to mindfulness 'in' education. Currently, no connection is made between mindfulness and

complex ethical and social justice values and conditions, and neither is any thought given to how they help to serve as creating stress, which mindfulness and other social-emotional learning programmes are then expected to alleviate (Forbes, 2012; Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020).

So, while mindfulness in schools could be a process of liberation that would provide pupils with a pathway to purposeful engagement with the world, without a social and moral dimension, it will remain merely as a way of inducing calm, with the purpose of individual flourishing (Simpson, 2017). In which case, while some pupils do benefit from mindfulness, it needs to be noted that other educational programmes have also proven to be equally effective in reducing pupil stress and raising academic achievements; thus, supporting the argument for critical inquiry into the enthusiasm for implementing secular mindfulness in schools (Forbes, 2015). To move beyond the current limited aims of contemporary MBIs to guarantee the wisdom and integrity of mindfulness practices will be preserved and presented so that their transformational potential is accessible to all and their full educational potential realised, an expansion of their foci will be required.

MBIs will need to encourage critical thought and an examination into the wider social and political reasons for social suffering in order to assist people to identify the mentally damaging aspects of their social contexts (Purser, 2015). However, including critical inquiry, in turn, leads to recognition of the need for contemporary MBIs to include an ethical framework. Currently, the well-intentioned attempts to secularise mindfulness, provide scientific proof showing its effectiveness and present it en mass have reduced the rich contribution that mindfulness practices, positioned within a broader ethical framework, can make to human lives and educational practices (O'Donnell, 2015).

10.5 Including an ethical framework

According to Sun (2014), to have the power for personal and social transformation and distance itself from becoming a temporary solution or fad,

mindfulness will need to regain Buddhist concepts, particularly its ethical framework. Ethics are defined here as the development of an internal and embodied set of attitudes and values resulting from the practice of intentionally turning toward direct experience in a certain way (Grossman, 2015), rather than being a list of instructions based on theistic callings or responsibilities. To date, contemporary mindfulness has not developed an effective, ethical framework in an openly desirable or permissible way combined with practice (Purser, 2015). Indeed, in numerous domains, the debate on the role of ethics in MBIs remains incredibly complex and multifaceted; their implementation is not without challenge.

10.5.1 Challenge of including an ethical framework

How a term is understood can result in behavioural and ethical consequences; contemporary mindfulness resides in an area full of disputed meanings, standards and contexts (Compson, 2017). As contexts change, meanings and standards also adjust to accommodate these changes; therefore, as Compson (2017) theorises, countless ethical decisions regarding the suitability of mindfulness are dependent on numerous notions, beliefs and value judgements about what it means for something to be 'religious' or 'secular'. Davis (2015) considers how cultures have wide-ranging opinions regarding the ethical qualities human beings should cultivate. Therefore, it is only possible to answer questions over whether MBIs should follow Buddhist visions of ethical action (if it is at all possible to answer them) if they are part of an ongoing discussion on "the very general ethical question of how it is best for a human being to be" (Davis, 2015, p. 46). It cannot be ignored, though, that some would regard foisting a pedagogy tacitly built on a Buddhist view of how human beings should be on those who do not already consider such a view as ethically questionable (Davis, 2015).

Goto-Jones (2013) notes a gradual emergence of concerns around the intersections between mindfulness, wisdom and ethics. While highlighting the social significance of mindfulness as a movement, they also expose a conscious avoidance by advocates of secular mindfulness around questions of

ethics in their teachings, as previously touched on in chapter eight, sub-theme four. As Goto-Jones (2013) elucidates, while no one says mindfulness practices do not find their roots in Buddhist traditions, the secularisation of mindfulness as a kind of "technology of the self" (Goto-Jones, 2013, p. 8) is considered essential for its acceptance as a clinical or therapeutic tool in predominantly Christian societies. Thus, secular mindfulness has self-consciously distanced itself from the ethical traditions associated with its historical evolution to ensure it does not cause ethical offence in Western societies, where the history of ethics is very different (Goto-Jones, 2013; Purser and Loy, 2013).

Lindahl (2014) similarly suggests that the explicit adoption of Buddhist conceptions of ethics and suffering may prompt suggestions that MBIs try to promote a religious outlook, which leaves them unacceptable in some contexts. Indeed, some would argue that there is a very subtle historical and cultural bias against anything that seems like religion (Pradhan, 2016). More contentiously, McCaw (2020) posits that many mindfulness researchers, even though they draw inspiration from Buddhist customs, consider purely secular credentials are necessary for participating successfully in the various institutions and organisations connected with contemporary education; for example, to gain funding, get published in recognised journals, or influence policy.

Consequently, advocates of secular mindfulness downplay ethics and what the 'good life' comprises, maintaining instead that ethical development is implicit in secular MBIs, or 'built into' the practice (Purser et al., 2016) and specific ethical training is either unnecessary or potentially problematic. As an example, Forbes (2016a) notes how Kabat-Zinn, rather than basing mindfulness ethics in a moral tradition, bypasses this issue and adopts a relativist position leaving the question of ethics to the quality of the mindfulness instructor's experience, proficiency and background; some who may or may not have Buddhist backgrounds.

10.5.2 An implicit approach to ethics

To amplify, proponents of this 'implicit' approach maintain that in respect of MBIs, the whole enterprise is wrapped up in compassion and ethical awareness. Indeed, teachers are bound by codes of ethical conduct, mindfulness itself is fundamentally ethical, and the practice of mindfulness encourages kindness and compassion towards self and others (Baer, 2015). Grossman (2015) likewise contends that a fundamentally ethical outlook towards oneself and others is fostered through practising mindfulness. However, as Cheung (2018) notes, it cannot be ignored that each teacher will embody ethics in their way, and each participant and class will develop their unique relationship to the practice, thus, providing a challenge to the façade of standardisation of these programmes. Consequently, it is problematic offering simple 'across-the-board' statements regarding ethical cultivation; furthermore, conceptions of ethical conduct vary (Cheung, 2018; Baer, 2015).

From an implicit approach perspective, there is the suggestion that in Western settings, the effectiveness of MBIs may actually result from the adaptations that make them less consistent with Buddhist teachings (Baer, 2015). Irrefutably, several MBIs with robust empirical backing attesting to their effectiveness have been primed by Buddhist tradition; as such, it could be suggested that if MBIs were even more consistent with Buddhist teachings, they might be even more effective (Baer, 2015). Currently, however, this is an untested proposition. It is one that would undoubtedly pose some challenges in schools due to the support for the necessity to remove Buddhist aspects of mindfulness to broaden its appeal to the widest spectrum of participants and expedite approval of it within secular institutions (Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

Sun (2014) suggests this oversimplification of mindfulness is a tactical and desired scaffolding, a clever re-contextualisation, rather than de-contextualisation, which helps introduce Buddhist ideas reframed in a culturally acceptable way. Ergas and Hadar (2019) similarly maintain that although secularising and familiarising mindfulness through MBIs may have

reduced the more robust ethics it can potentially bring with it from its origins, without this process, mindfulness would have probably remained outside the educational discourse as it did before this progression. It illustrates how, more generally, the popularity of something depends on the extent to which it is deemed culturally relevant/needed and whether people can relate to it (Sun, 2014).

Baer (2015) notes how for professionals adhering to the codes of professional ethics to respect cultural diversity and self-determination, teaching ethics founded upon certain religious or spiritual frameworks in contemporary contexts is tricky. Consequently, methods built on self-identified values or cross-culturally recognised qualities and personality strengths have a few advantages over openly Buddhist-based methods to ethics training; i.e., they can be used in various non-spiritual contexts and are suitable for a wide variety of people irrespective of their religious convictions (Baer, 2015).

Conversely, while MBIs are often described as secular versions, some question whether this is a defensible contention when being consistent with Buddhist teachings is still a vital concern (Purser, 2015). Indeed, even while maintaining that explicit ethical teachings are intentionally missing from MBSR curricula, Kabat-Zinn (2017) stresses that the foundational ethical teachings of Buddhism remain the 'soil' these programmes are rooted within. More critically, Ng (2015b) notes that while advocates of secular mindfulness downplay ethics or insist that ethical development is implicit in secular MBIs, or 'built into' the practice, others argue it is the ethical and philosophical framework afforded by Buddhist ontology and epistemology that is vital to fully realise a holistic form of mindfulness. The term holistic is used here to denote practice that considers the whole person, which incorporates the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual aspects of the lived experience (Gause and Coholic, 2010).

Extending this argument, those with ethical misgivings about secular mindfulness' popularisation consider it the Buddhist origins of mindfulness that render it unsuitable to be used in secular contexts when the ethical and

philosophical origins are not clearly 'owned' and explicit (Compson, 2017). It is an argument gaining momentum; increasingly, there has been a call for explicit ethics in programmes where they are absent.   Indeed, Monteiro et al., (2014) query if Buddhist ethics should not have a more explicit and prominent role in MBIs.

10.5.3 An explicit approach to ethics

Monteiro (2016) maintains that while ethics and mindfulness practice are inseparable, it cannot be assumed that ethics will just naturally or implicitly be incorporated. Monteiro (2016) also opposes the notion that MBIs are value-neutral, claiming three dimensions exist: 1) they are value-laden; 2) they contain implicit or explicit ethics; 3) the teacher modifies or embodies ethics and clientele's desires and intentions represent specific values. Thus, the necessity for exploring and incorporating explicit teaching of Buddhist conceptualised ethics in MBIs as mindfulness in the recognised Buddhist sense is not ethically impartial and is more than just bare attention; it is attention set within the intention and behaviour that leads to freedom from sorrow and misery (Monteiro et al., 2014). Presenting mindfulness when it is removed from its original framework and dissociated from its ethical foundations leaves it vulnerable to misappropriation for purposes not intended (Compson, 2017; Crane, 2016).

Mindfulness practice was originally developed to facilitate a path connected to renunciation and a strict ethical code of right living (Harrington and Dunne, 2015). However, ignoring the cultivation of wisdom and discernment leaves mindfulness vulnerable to becoming hostage to peripheral values, possibly even hostile towards the traditions from which the practices arose (Harrington and Dunne, 2015). As discussed in chapter eight, if technique is the main focus and ethics and insight is neglected, it encourages people to be more mindful of themselves; hence it becomes a mindfulness modality mirroring the requirements of a competitive market system, where personal resilience rather than making society less destructive is emphasised (Simpson, 2017; Arthington, 2016; Reveley, 2015).

From an educational perspective, such superficial implementations of mindfulness detached from the universal *dharma*, as promoted by Kabat-Zinn and others, result in many educational advantages of mindfulness, i.e., nurturing inner knowledge, emotional strength and moral and spiritual vision disappearing (Bazzano, 2014). They also become ineffective regarding the critical role of fostering compassion and other-regarding virtues, which are vital for mindfulness in education, where cultivating values dovetail with general educational aims (Hyland, 2016b). Arguably, therefore, there is a need for mindfulness to follow through on its own ethical principles and bring them to bear on the education system itself (Forbes, 2012). Particularly if we consider how mindful qualities like compassion and openness do not spontaneously and automatically lead a person to engage in skilful and healthy behaviour, or right action, as referred to by Buddhists (Purser, 2015).

While it would seem ethics are currently not a priority in contemporary mindfulness, connection to others is also not one either (Simpson, 2017), thus drawing attention to the need for a broader approach to develop what Forbes (2016b, p. 12) refers to as a "democratic, civic mindfulness" whereby an equitable and shared meaning of the common good is created. It would shift the attention from ourselves to others and, in the process, avoid narcissistic self-absorption (Simpson, 2017). Stepping out of the normative systems of current mindfulness modes and critically examining them from more encompassing, transcendent perspectives would encourage the more inclusionary relationships of social justice, compassion, connectivity, healing, achievement and wellbeing for everyone, i.e., eudaemonia (Forbes, 2016b).

Communal wellbeing is essential for authentic happiness; however, a feasible way of working towards even this secular goal will be challenging long term if mindfulness remains nothing more than a form of 'mental fitness' pursued in isolation (Purser, 2015). The implication of this for practice is the necessity for contemporary mindfulness to move from its instrumental approach toward an integral approach (Forbes, 2016a, 2017).

10.6 An integral approach

An integral approach would allow a practice with much potential to become an authentically transformative approach. It is a form of mindfulness far more harmonious with education's wider concern for human flourishing. An integral approach would offer a comprehensive framework to expand ways to express and clarify mindfulness which contemporary mindfulness currently does not do (Forbes, 2012; Wilber, 2016). Indeed, mindfulness could be understood as a practice whereby students, as Forbes (2019, p. 206) articulately states, "uncover, challenge, and transcend how our thoughts, feelings and actions are conditioned by unhealthy cultural practices and social institutions that (re)produce greed, meanness and delusion".

Thus, while critical and discerning, an integral approach is a more holistic form of mindfulness (Forbes, 2016b) and would consist of many viewpoints, including developmental, cultural contexts and systemic ones (Forbes, 2016a; 2019). Ergas (2019a) describes four key elements that support a more integral approach to mindfulness within education: -

- The non-discursive, sensual-emotional curriculum, i.e., a whole-person approach where educational processes include embodied elements to learning such as sensations and emotions, rather than just focusing on the mediums of language, thinking and reasoning.

- The private-internal curriculum, i.e., where the focus is on the 'self' so that knowledge studied exists not just in the public domain of the classroom but also within the student.

- A spontaneous curriculum, i.e., the ability to teach this hidden internal curriculum and move away from conventional practices that include planning. It would align with contemplative practices where there is no aspiration to arrive at a predetermined point, unlike conventional teaching, which aspires to do this.

- Recognition of the 'ephemeral' nature of such practices, i.e., acknowledging contemplative experiences, can be challenging to express, measure or test using traditional and accepted assessment procedures.

10.6.1 Mindfulness and transformation

Ng and Purser (2016) consider how moving towards an integral approach would also permit mindfulness to become a 'disruptive technology', a way of opposing and transforming dominant systems. As Berila (2016) stresses, mindfulness is an anti-oppressive pedagogy; it provides a way of navigating complicated power dynamics in classrooms and communities. Oppression - race, class, gender, ethnicity, ability etc., work together, putting us in complicated power dynamics, and operates through social institutions like the government, media and education; therefore, it is vital to educate the whole student (Berila, 2016). Thus, mindfulness could simultaneously help heal and create new relationships to achieve optimal personal progress and a fairer world (Ng and Purser, 2016).

Cannon (2016) similarly proposes the need for a more socially engaged mindfulness, allowing it to be understood as a social justice practice; when understood in this way, the deficit of 'school failure' and 'troubled communities' would be transferred to shared responsibility. By shifting accountability, attention is moved away from managing the behaviour of difficult pupils towards critically examining the social circumstances creating their suffering (Cannon, 2016). After all, as Cannon (2016) asserts, true awareness means seeing the reasons and circumstances giving rise to the present moment and seeing structural coercion, societal pain and institutional inequality. It is in direct contrast to when mindfulness is detached, rather than underpinned, by social justice, introduced into schools, manipulated and then used as a tool for boosting test scores, improving attention and controlling behaviour; this is anything but mindful, with ends that have little to do with actual education and optimal self-development (Forbes, 2012).

So, while the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in the typically ignored domain of the education of the emotions justifies introducing MBIs into schools (Hyland, 2011; 2014), such interventions, as discussed here and in chapters seven and eight, can also undermine the wider aims for holistic education and human flourishing at both an individual and societal level. Ultimately, as Forbes (2019, p. 10) maintains, they become a "self-serving, privatised, individualised, neoliberal practice that ignores social and cultural contexts" and serves to reinforce the damaging and inequitable existing status quo. Undeniably, therefore, mindfulness taught via an MBI can be exploited or misappropriated in ways that could be harmful - one of the sub-questions of this thesis.

In sum, divorcing mindfulness from its holistic roots results in the process of operationalising mindfulness and its outcomes, unwittingly promoting narrow and flawed understandings of mindfulness and developing ones that support the perception that mindfulness creates individuals detached from broader life (Gause and Coholic, 2010). Practices favouring individual wellbeing over care for others obstruct loving attention to the world and those within it (O'Donnell, 2015) and necessitate considering how contemporary mindfulness can be accountable for collective forms of suffering caused by systemic domination. As a response, Cannon (2016) recommends that the principles of compassion, interconnection and solidarity are integrated alongside tangible ways of endorsing these principles to enable community empowerment and social justice. When compassion and justice are 'unified', advises the Buddhist monk Bhikkhu Bodhi (Lam, 2015, para. 15):

> It gives birth to a fierce determination to uplift others, to tackle the causes of their suffering, and to establish the social, economic, and political conditions that will enable everyone to flourish.

10.6.2 Mindfulness and human flourishing

Indeed, the heart of mindfulness is a collaborative practice that unites people to act for the common good. As Neale (2010) clarifies, the foundational training in Buddhism is moral ethics, which necessitates developing vigilance

and sensitivity in our behaviours and interactions with others, particularly in our speech, actions and livelihood. Ethical conduct and restraint of automatic, self-preoccupied, self-gratifying impulses impact and lessen reactive behaviours in the stress cycle. By consciously choosing to act in harmonious and respectful ways that honour self and others equally, we plant the seed for future happiness (Neale, 2010), and the foundation for human flourishing and social transformation is established (Purser, 2015).

Human flourishing involves a mindfulness practice consistent with a way of living that encourages our own genuine happiness and that of others; therefore, according to Wallace (2005), we must not devalue our engagement and interconnectedness with each other. In his theory on how people flourish, Seligman (2011, p. 15) states, "the Meaningful Life consists in belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self", while "connections to other people and relationships are what give meaning and purpose to life" (Seligman, 2011, p. 18). Hence, a central element in the meaning of life is that we all have something to offer others and equally something to receive from others. It is an aspect of mindfulness that tends to be absent from mindfulness in education. Consequently, Wallace (2005) calls for a mid-course amendment that prioritises interdependence and an interpersonal view of the mind inseparable from the broader socio-cultural context.

10.6.3 Mindfulness and cultural contexts

Developing this discussion further, Kirmayer (2015) hypothesises how instead of being intrinsic, the relationship of mindfulness to compassion and ethical action may well depend on specific interpretive frameworks supplied by cultural contexts; after all, suffering is unequally distributed globally in ways that reflect social arrangements and political-economic forces. Sun (2014) likewise suggests that mindfulness does not spontaneously generate ethical, astute and calm humans; it is dependent on the social and cultural contexts within which it is delivered. Different individuals, varied practice traditions and diverse cultures have assorted views of how it is best for a human being to

be, as such presentations of mindfulness will differ within traditional contexts and between traditional and modern contexts (Davis, 2015).

It is, therefore, worth considering at some length here the discussion by Forbes (2012) on how mindfulness from an integral perspective can clarify the implicit cultural contexts within which it operates. According to Forbes (2012), cultural worldviews are shared meanings, i.e., social constructions created by the implicit understandings and relationships between people. Forbes (2012) describes how cultural contexts fall into developmental frameworks such as traditional, modern, postmodern and universal. The army's culture is an example of a traditional framework, where loyalty, obedience, an order of command and a system based on rewards and punishments are favoured; a modern framework has a culture where individual hard work, competition and entrepreneurial initiative are valued, and a postmodern framework has a culture favouring collaboration, consensus and non-hierarchical relations (Forbes, 2012).

When the cultural context is made explicit, mindfulness's role in reinforcing the shared values that the culture endorses then becomes more apparent. As Forbes (2012) explains, culture is socially constructed; it is dependent on second person – you and I – perspectives that create a shared 'we', dialogue and standard practices which help shape and change the culture. Forbes (2012) highlights how this second-person perspective addressing the context of shared meaning tends to be omitted from mindfulness discussions. Therefore, according to Forbes (2012, p. 8), "an outside way to get at this perspective is to make conscious the unspoken norms, values and worldview that operate and frame interactions".

Conclusion

Undoubtedly it is too late to ask the question should mindfulness be implemented in educational contexts; it already is. Besides, as Hart (2004) compellingly states, if it were known that certain readily available activities able to increase concentration, improve learning, wellbeing, social and

emotional growth and catalyse transformative learning were excluded, it would be cheating pupils. Therefore, the question should be reframed to ask what are the best ways of implementing mindfulness. In answer to this, there is a growing call for movement away from the instrumentalist approach toward a more integral approach (Ergas, 2015; Forbes, 2015; Hyland, 2015).

To date, despite this call and the early and potentially promising findings regarding the compatibility of mindfulness with social justice, there has not been any great exploration of the capacity mindfulness has for transformation and social justice. Ethical considerations to date have also been a neglected area in mindfulness research; an absence of a coherent ethical theory accompanying the practice is now increasingly being seen by some critics as a challenge to public morality (Goto-Jones, 2013).

Ng (2015b), when considering the question of who gets mindfulness right, maintains it is not, or ever was, the aim of engaged Buddhist critics to assume that anyone who begins to practice mindfulness will follow the Buddhist path of 'awakening'. Ng (2015b) also maintains that neither do they reject the possibility that people may feel happier with the aid of non-Buddhist versions of mindfulness. In this respect, O'Donnell (2015) similarly proposes that denatured and more simple forms of mindfulness might be helpful to pupils despite their inherent limitations. Indeed, the pupils who participated in the study in this thesis reported many benefits from the simplified form of mindfulness introduced to them; consequently, it could be argued that some form of mindfulness is better than nothing.

The concern lies more in how reductive translations of mindfulness are used for coping with stress under challenging circumstances. They divert attention away from the generative circumstances of fundamental and universal inequality and injustice that shape these conditions (Ng, 2015b), thus, giving rise to ethical dilemmas that have implications for practice. So, while the necessity to remove the Buddhist aspects of mindfulness to facilitate its acceptance into secular contexts like schools will probably remain, it would seem the time is ripe for introducing its social and ethical dimensions into

contemporary mindfulness, thus providing an opportunity for realising a mindfulness practice that is embodied, comprehensive and interpersonal. Such a form would move mindfulness away from colluding with controlling systems (Magee, 2016) and emphasise collective wellbeing instead of individual wellbeing, thus aligning with education and human flourishing goals.

For others, such as Ergas (2015), contemplative practices presented as curricular 'interventions' with a focus on instrumental aims, e.g., improving attention, enhancing executive functions, improving behaviour, and so forth, erode a more meaningful ethical educational possibility intrinsic in the roots of contemplative practices found within wisdom-traditions. It has implications for practice; in the context of a school, it suggests the need to consider the aims of MBIs regarding their potential instrumental or holistic possibilities and processes of 'schoolification'. It would, therefore, be prudent for those involved in developing, implementing, and/or advocating MBIs in schools to consider attention to ethics, values and the cultural context into which they are being implemented. Furthermore, to keep in mind that the trait of mindfulness is the ultimate goal and not just the conditions that promote it (Ritchhart and Perkins, 2000).

As Sun (2014) cautions, we cannot assume secular mindfulness will be denatured as extreme critics warn or transformative as optimists suggest without such consideration. Adopting a more balanced stance, the likelihood is that mindfulness's future discourse and impact will continue to be decided by the framework it is taught and the training and aims of those promoting the practice (Sun, 2014). It is a sentiment shared by Crane (2016), who draws attention to how any conversation about integrity, ethics and governance necessitates considering the underlying intentionality when delivering a programme to a specific audience in a specific setting.

A final interesting suggestion to consider here is the one proposed by Purser and Millilo (2015), i.e., that instrumental and de-ethicised forms of mindfulness could be better represented by abandoning the term mindfulness

and relabelled as a method of attentional control training. Their aims and intentions would then be more transparent and honest. Ultimately, however, as Purser and Millilo (2015) warn, theorists and practitioners need to note that a 'Buddhist-inspired' mindfulness cannot be detached from its civic aspect, representing the broader, ethical, social and political element.

It would seem, therefore, that in terms of implications for practice, it is, as wisely suggested by Ng (2016, p. 149):

> We thus face a collective search for a more critically and civically oriented discourse of mindfulness'. One that does not hinder the helping of individuals with their wellbeing, but supplements it by a greater identification and acknowledgement of both the prevailing cultural logics and the current precarious socio-political conditions and effects.

Summary

This chapter began by considering the role of education as revealed by mindfulness research and the role it will need to play in the twenty-first century. It was recognised that generally, education, and efforts to improve it, are embedded in an operating system that validates one aspect of knowing while only faintly recognising there is another (Hart, 2014).   This other knowing, as Hart (2014) describes, moves us, provides us with context and can be transformative; however, as it cannot be measured, manipulated or managed by us in the same way, it has been devalued. It led to a description of the different modalities of mindfulness and acknowledgement that mindfulness 'in' education is the one primarily implemented in these settings.

A discussion followed on how mindfulness 'in' education lacks critical inquiry, which arguably results in a superficial endorsement of limited, at times ethically questionable, objectives regarding self-transformation.   It was suggested that including critical inquiry would offer a greater opportunity for mindfulness to be implemented in a more ethically viable way, thus ensuring it is better placed to avoid misuse and more in line with education and human flourishing goals. Implicit and explicit approaches to ethics were discussed.

It was then acknowledged that, more recently, a critical discourse has started to emerge, leading to the creation of new classifications for distinguishing different mindfulness orientations or philosophical agendas, e.g., civic mindfulness (Ng, 2015a), social justice mindfulness (Berila, 2016) and integral mindfulness (Forbes, 2015). These frameworks were explored as a way of positioning mindfulness as a process for personal and social change instead of replicating the cultural status quo. In essence, the main messages to take away from this chapter are:

- The need for a radical rethink of education's role.
- A fundamental change in our approach to teaching and learning.
- Mindfulness needs to be implemented in a more ethically viable way.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter is divided into four sections. Section 11.1 presents a brief overview of the study's findings, and section 11.2 their contributions to knowledge. The findings result from reflecting through personal journals and the thematic analysis process as they relate to the overarching inquiry focused on researching the *potentiality* and *acceptability* of mindfulness, taught via an MBI, in a junior school to support pupil wellbeing. Section 11.3 touches on the most recent developments in mindfulness and education since starting this study, and section 11.4 suggests some future directions. In the closing section, 11.5, I share some final reflections.

11.1 Overview of findings

At its core, the research sought to give prominence to the everyday realities of bringing mindfulness, taught via an MBI, into a junior school. Transparency, authenticity and honesty were regarded as essential to the study; therefore, the pupils' and teachers' perceptions, i.e., those at the receiving end of the MBI, were sought and explored. Adopting a more mindful method ensured the desired transparency throughout the research process and enabled me to probe beneath the participants' narratives on their mindfulness experiences and the learning process to disclose the essence of their ontological perspectives. At times it was a procedure that became deeply personal as it involved revealing parts of my own life; as a result, I also became a part of the research process. The study's findings were reported in chapters seven, eight and nine. A critical analysis of the findings reveals that various ethical concerns and dilemmas emerge when contemporary MBIs, often lacking an ethical framework, are introduced into an educational setting. These concerns echo those just beginning to gain momentum in this field of research and, therefore, require further consideration and resolution.

11.1.1 *Potentiality* of mindfulness

- The findings of this study align with current research suggesting mindfulness, taught via an MBI, is a very promising approach for supporting positive mental health and wellbeing of children (Greenberg and Harris, 2012; Maynard et al., 2017). They reveal that most pupils viewed mindfulness as a way to induce feelings of calm and relaxation and help manage relationships.   While agreeing with the pupils that mindfulness has the potential to support pupil wellbeing, most teachers did not view it as a way of supporting their own wellbeing.

- The findings show that the teachers' perception of mindfulness was primarily cognitive and behavioural based, a technique to learn and apply to calm pupils, and, therefore, potentially another form of behaviour management.   Some consciously and/or unconsciously regarded mindfulness as a tool to support academic achievement, as illustrated by the year six teachers' allegiance to mindfulness practice during SATs.

- The findings demonstrate how pupils and teachers associated mindfulness practice with providing support in negative situations or challenging times. This association could be attributed to the MBI itself, with its narrow emphasis on improving focus and ability to pay attention and practices to help reduce stress, rumination and worries.

11.1.2 *Acceptability* of mindfulness

- The findings of this study convey how, in theory, mindfulness and journaling were acceptable and enjoyable to the pupils. However, in practice, time constraints were a significant barrier to the *acceptability* of mindfulness when introduced into a typically overly busy school day. Nevertheless, the pupils believed time could be found, unlike the teachers who did not share this belief. Their priorities lay elsewhere, i.e., with core curriculum subjects, testing, assessment and other activities impacting their performance as teachers.

- The findings reveal that teachers' lack of understanding or relatively limited understanding of mindfulness was a significant challenge to bringing mindfulness into the classroom. It was a level of understanding that remained after the programme had finished.

- Most notably, the findings of this study highlight how many ethical concerns and dilemmas begin to emerge when considering the *acceptability* of mindfulness in a school context.

11.1.3 Ethical concerns and dilemmas

Dilemmas were raised over the reductionist approach of MBIs and their consequent lack of authenticity (Hyland, 2016a), i.e., mindfulness being turned into a technique to learn rather than embody (Cheung, 2018) or used as a method for behaviour management. Ethical concerns materialised relating to mindfulness being devalued or exploited by only engaging with symptoms rather than sources of suffering (O'Donnell, 2015), as well as how they tend to under-estimate or overlook the socio-political nature of schools (Simpson, 2017; Forbes, 2015) thus, helping to perpetuate inequalities in society (Forbes, 2015; Purser et al., 2019b). In this respect, it was noted how well MBIs support the fundamental intentions of a neoliberal agenda (Lavelle, 2016; Purser, 2018; Forbes, 2017) and can be used for schoolification and/or pathologising pupils (Flores, 2016).

Ethical concerns emerged regarding mindfulness helping pupils cope with and 'survive' school (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020). Ethical concerns surfaced vis-à-vis the appropriateness of transferring an adult concept into a classroom or offering only a partial application of mindfulness. Other concerns arose in respect of teaching mindfulness when it is unknown if or in what way children's brains are being altered (Semple et al., (2017); in addition, concerns surfaced around teaching mindfulness to children, a

conscripted audience, who have little or no authority to change their situation (Sellman and Buttarazzi, 2020).

These ethical concerns and dilemmas and their accompanying discourse highlight the increasingly complex and contentious nature of bringing together mindfulness and education. The deep exploration of this topic has provided an enlightening perspective that advocates that more research in this field is required and supports the view that a more qualitative approach is warranted. The main messages to take away from the findings of this study are: -

- There is a need to acknowledge and resolve the ethical concerns and dilemmas inherent when MBIs are introduced into educational settings. To do so will require considering the broader socio-political and cultural context when implementing them and for contemporary MBIs to move away from their current instrumental approach towards an integral approach.

- Contemporary MBIs with an instrumental approach and no ethical framework need to demonstrate greater transparency of intention.

11.2 Contributions to knowledge

This study has contributed new knowledge by exploring bringing mindfulness to a junior school, contrary to most routinely carried out studies in secondary or higher education settings. In terms of generalisability, while I acknowledge the study was conducted in one junior school and the findings documented in chapters seven, eight and nine apply to that particular school, they can still be viewed as helpful in understanding the place of mindfulness in schools as they present an in-depth look at a specific problem and professional concern within mindfulness and education research. Furthermore, the personal, social, emotional and environmental factors discussed offer valuable insight into how mindfulness taught via an MBI is received directly by those on the

receiving end; knowledge that is indispensable to ensure they are taught in the most suitable ways.

Most research to date has concentrated on explaining, demonstrating and examining the positive outcomes of mindfulness in education (Ergas and Hadar, 2019). While this study likewise considers these effects and, in keeping with other studies, acknowledges the potential mindfulness has for supporting pupil wellbeing, more uniquely, it also explores a somewhat overlooked area in the field of mindfulness research, i.e., the *acceptability* of mindfulness in a school context in the current educational climate. At times, the feedback and subsequent discussions paint a rather stark picture of the existing tensions; however, my aim was not to argue that education and mindfulness cannot coexist in a mutually supportive and harmonious way. On the contrary, as Claxton (2011) maintains, one of the 'bugbears' of the debate currently around mindfulness and education is the supposition that it is either/or. It results in an awful polarisation existing between traditional and progressive where if you are 'hardnosed', your priority is league tables and raising standards, and if you are for the 'other stuff', you are regarded as 'wishy-washy' and putting standards at risk (Claxton, 2011).

My aim, therefore, was to explore the *acceptability* of mindfulness in a junior school by investigating the everyday realities in this context; however, it simultaneously revealed underlying and less investigated ethical concerns and dilemmas during the research process. In terms of methodology, Ergas and Hadar (2019) reveal the predominance of quantitative research in their 'map of the developing academic discourse on mindfulness dating from 2002 to 2017'. However, this study provides a qualitative piece of research by adopting the rarely used method of journaling. Journaling is a method that harmoniously aligns itself with mindfulness, the research subject, and is revealed as a powerful and insightful real-world research method (Crawford et al., 2021). Through journaling, a more holistic type of self-report was gained from the young participants who, at times, offered honest, real-life and perceptive feedback to share in this thesis. Considering and reflecting on such perceptions provides a notable contribution to knowledge as the

perceptions of the recipients of the MBI, i.e., the pupils and teachers, often tend to be under-explored.

11.3 Recent developments and research

Since starting this thesis, there have been developments in education and mindfulness. Unsurprisingly, there has been an explosion of smartphones and web applications invented to support mindfulness practices for the general public, with a sub-set created and marketed for school-aged children (McCaw, 2020).   The applications tend to provide audio-guided mindfulness meditations modified to suit various ages and different school year levels and infrastructure for observing and exploring mood and other health factors (McCaw, 2020).

Regarding the most recent research, Wigelsworth and Quinn (2020), recognising teacher endorsement determines how effective and beneficial an intervention will be, conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of MBIs. Wigelsworth and Quinn (2020) noted that while a lack of understanding of mindfulness was apparent, there was nevertheless a willingness to deliver them to benefit teacher and pupil outcomes. Similarly, a study conducted by Kenwright et al., (2021) found that teachers viewed MBIs positively and recognised the link between the skills developed from mindfulness and valued classroom behaviours. The teachers also indicated that the classroom teacher should be responsible for implementing the MBI and that it could be integrated into daily practice at school (Kenwright et al., 2021). Both studies, however, typically focus on behaviour benefits and pupil outcomes.

A recent study by Warren et al., (2020) explored the developmental understanding of mindfulness-awareness and how it naturally happens and is supported during adolescence. Warren et al., (2020) suggest that instead of showing normative change with age, mindful awareness develops more ideographically, reacting to numerous internal and external influences. Thus, mindfulness changes more for some young people than others, leading Warren et al., (2020) to conclude that dispositional mindfulness might be

person-specific, dependent on context and aptitude and the fluctuations depending on the complex dynamics of each individual's unique and continually advancing developmental system.

Regarding the measurement of mindfulness, the development and psychometric properties of the "Teaching Mindfulness in Education Observation Scale" (TMEOS) (Broderick et al., 2018, p. 36) is described as a 28-item instrument that incorporates qualitative and quantitative facets of mindfulness instruction and can assess and monitor the quality implementation of mindfulness programmes/curricula in classroom settings (Broderick et al., 2018). It leads Broderick et al., (2018) to conclude that observational assessment of numerous dimensions of implementation quality, including adherence to, and process-oriented facets of implementation like embodiment, can be reliably used for assessing the implementation quality of MBIs in educational contexts.

Building on the emerging critical discourse around mindfulness being misappropriated in ways that make it harmful, for example: - used for purposes of schoolification to support a neoliberal agenda, assisting in pathologising pupils, ensuring the status quo is maintained and perpetuating existing inequalities, as discussed in chapter seven, Brito et al., (2021, p. 261) discuss what they refer to as the "iatrogenic effect" of mindfulness. It is an effect that contradictorily encourages, through its simplistic focus on wellbeing, appeasement to exploitative conditions with systemic failure reframed to become individual fallibility (Brito et al., 2021).

11.4 Suggested future directions

It is crucial how mindfulness is interpreted, situated and embedded in educational research, policies and practices (McCaw, 2020). To date, scientific evidence has demonstrated the potential mindfulness practices have for supporting pupils' wellbeing and helping them become more focused and effective learners. For Ng (2015a), such potential implies new ways and new goals for learning and inquiry, and contemporary cultural and social functions

of education are awaiting discovery. These new possibilities offer different kinds of expertise in pedagogical theories and methods, cultural analysis and social critique; furthermore, they would be outside the realm of health sciences, which usually governs discourses on mindfulness in education (Ng, 2015a).

11.4.1 Exploring how mindfulness is experienced

Indeed, mindfulness practice now needs to be anchored within broader conceptions of education and investigated in terms of how it is interpreted when implemented into educational systems (Ergas, 2019c). Currently, for example, the dominant logic of neoliberalism governing existing programs and research is left unquestioned and, as such, underexplored; it is, therefore, a suggested area for research.

11.4.2 Mindfulness practice and educational aims – the links

Future research could also ponder one of the more confusing domains revealed in mindfulness and educational discourse, i.e., the associations between mindfulness practice and educational aims (Ergas, 2019c). Elucidating further, some MBIs are linked with cognitive functions (Flook et al., 2010), some are aimed at social and emotional competencies (Jennings et al., 2017), and others at enhancing executive functions in primary schools (Flook et al., 2010), the list goes on. For Ergas and Hadar (2019), it prompts questions about how one practice or set of practices known by the same name can achieve or be responsible for all of the diverse professed aims. It also leads to questions concerning where mindfulness in education is heading and how pupils experience learning mindfulness, an important element in this study. Future research involving longitudinal studies would help explain how practices are sustained and evolve. As demonstrated in this study, sustaining mindfulness via an MBI can be extremely challenging.

11.4.3 Combining mindfulness and critical theory

At present, within the field of mindfulness and education, there is still a paucity of critical papers (Ergas and Hadar, 2019), the most pressing question has been whether mindfulness 'works' instead of understanding how it is experienced (Goto-Jones, 2013). For example, the ethical issues associated with teaching mindfulness to a conscripted audience and possible adverse effects of mindfulness practice, while discussed in this study, such issues are rarely investigated (Burrows, 2017). Likewise, any possible apprehension regarding proselytising predominantly occurs in popular media and, to a lesser degree, in empirical studies (Gregoire, 2013). There is also a lack of comparison and discussion concerning mindfulness as a holistic process compared with mindfulness as a set of cognitive behavioural techniques (Gause and Coholic, 2010).

Thus, future studies could explore how to combine the teaching of mindfulness with critical thinking, thereby exploring its transformative and social justice potential, as discussed in chapter ten. Despite promising and favourable findings on how compatible mindfulness is with social justice, it is as yet an under-explored area compared to scientific, quantitative research on mindfulness. Indeed, while mindfulness has demonstrated its potential for realising individual benefits, as discussed in chapters seven and eight, conversely, as discussed in chapters eight and ten, specific modalities of mindfulness could be harmful to collective wellbeing. It indicates that we should now focus our attention outward to incorporate others in our framing of wellbeing to ensure human flourishing occurs on a more pervasive scale. As such, immediate personal gain needs to be dropped in favour of the whole person, embodied and related ways of realising communal wellbeing.

11.4.4 Mindfulness 'dosage'

Another suggested direction for further research would be determining 'dose', i.e., how much mindfulness training is needed and over what period to be feasible and effective regarding beneficial effects on children (Roeser, 2014;

2016). Such research would be very useful given the lack of time in schools and children's lives these days. Indeed, time constraints significantly impacted the *acceptability* and feasibility of sustaining mindfulness in the school featured in the study in this thesis.

11.4.5 Employing diverse research methodologies

A final thought is linked to methodology. Diversity in methodology will be necessary for future research in mindfulness and education. In this respect, journaling, the chosen research method for this study, proved to be an authentic, compelling and inclusive methodology. Thus, I align myself with Roeser (2014), who maintains that studies on MBIs and mindfulness that use detailed ethnographic descriptions, intensive studies of contextual supports and barriers and other qualitative and idiographic assessments of MBIs will be valuable in this emerging field.

11.5 Final reflections

Since I started this thesis, an ever-increasing body of critical inquiry into mindfulness has now begun to emerge. While it may be premature to call it a 'backlash', undoubtedly, there is no longer an unquestioning acceptance of mindfulness. I hope this more critical discourse will contribute to opening up a dialogue that addresses and resolves some of the ethical concerns and dilemmas outlined in this thesis. Such a dialogue, while only the beginning of what will undoubtedly be a complex and lengthy one, will be the start of discovering ways to ensure that in the future, MBIs are implemented and used more effectively and ethically so that mindfulness can realise its full educational potential.

Sharing my final reflections on the autoethnographic journey this research experience has taken me, I am aware of how my mind has become inundated with valuable knowledge. While I hope the research material emerging from this thesis contributes to the field, for me, the more significant lessons relate to the research experience itself. I am now aware of how little I understood

the concept of mindfulness; arguably, neither did the presenter of the INSET presentation delivered back in 2016. Just like the teachers who participated in the study in this thesis, I also had the ingenuous belief that mindfulness was another strategy for behaviour management or improving academic performance. From this simplistic beginning to developing my practice and then teaching an MBI, it has been a steep learning curve and a transformative and life-changing process both personally and professionally. Undoubtedly, practising mindfulness has played a significant part in developing increased wisdom and insight into my own wellbeing. Indeed, if I were to fill in the two boxes on the question sheet that I refer to in chapter one, which asked, 'what parts of your life nurture you and what parts deplete you?', the sheet would tell a very different story today five years on; a story of a life far more balanced and thus, more fulfilled.

I believe mindfulness can help open the door to more critical engagement with the world. It is not about an impassive, compliant acceptance but a deep recognition and openness to how things are; it is from this space that real change is possible. I am now far more willing to take action than in the past, which means being prepared to risk being criticised or things not turning out as I expect them to. I am aware that teaching the MBI was one of those things that did not turn out as I expected it would. I can now attribute this to the assumptions and judgements I naïvely made before teaching it. I believed that knowing some of the teachers, many pupils, and the school situated in a leafy green, middle-class suburb conspired to offer the right combination of factors for introducing mindfulness. Despite the stories I had heard during my training indicating that everyone may not welcome mindfulness, deep down before teaching the programme, I viewed my situation as different from theirs. I expected little resistance and that everyone would welcome mindfulness. I was wrong. The teachers with whom I interacted had little to no personal experience of the topic, and most were unable to relate to it and, by extension, unable to relate to me in my different roles.

Without a doubt listening to the pupils describe the positive effects mindfulness practices had on their lives was an uplifting experience during the

research process. However, my increased awareness of the ethical concerns and dilemmas surrounding MBIs has left me in a position where I would feel far less comfortable teaching one that lacks an ethical framework. Nevertheless, I also believe that having something to support pupil wellbeing is better than having nothing. Consequently, I would advocate that until the ethical concerns and dilemmas inherent in MBIs and education are resolved, those involved in developing, administering and/or advocating them to an undisputedly vulnerable and conscripted audience be more mindful of them.

There is a need to demonstrate greater integrity by being more transparent with their intentions and admitting that an intervention focused on improving attention and behaviour is offered. More radically, maybe even abandoning mindfulness rhetoric altogether, particularly as the interpretation of mindfulness is fundamentally different from the Buddhist interpretation of this term. As alluded to variously throughout this thesis, and particularly in chapter ten, much more is required in order for mindfulness, taught via an MBI, to be acceptable, to be embedded and to be sustained in an educational setting such that mindfulness can realise its full educational potential to support both individual and collective wellbeing.

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Appendix 1 – Outline of Paws.b Lesson Aims

Paws b © Mindfulness in Schools Project

Paws b Program – 6 Lessons		
Lesson one Our Amazing Brain	Learning Objectives	• Taking responsibility for keeping the mind and body safe and healthy. • Develop understanding of the functions of the prefrontal cortex. • How different parts of the brain work together. • The brain can be changed.
Lesson two Puppy Training	Learning Objectives	• Introduce pupils to their faculty of attention. • Pupils to experience that they can direct their attention. • Pupils understand the untrained mind's fickle nature – it is like a puppy. • Provide simple tools for training their attention with attitudes of kindness, patience and repetition. • Develop an understanding of the functions of the hippocampus.
Lesson three Finding a Steady Place	Learning Objectives	• Recognise we wobble. Finding ways to steady ourselves. • Expand breath awareness practices – finger breathing. • Introduce the Insula. • Teach practices that steady attention in the lower half of the body – wobble and FOFBOC practices.
Lesson four Dealing with Difficulty	Learning Objectives	• Introduce the amygdala. • Exploring the nature of the mind and human patterns of reactivity. • Nurturing attitudes of curiosity, kindness, acceptance and openness to experience in practice. • Taking responsibility for keeping the mind and body- safe and healthy by choosing a response.
Lesson five The Story Telling Mind	Learning Objectives	• Exploring the nature of the mind (trying to make sense of, guessing, assuming, believing it knows). • Learning to recognise thoughts (metacognitive awareness). • Seeing how thoughts are connected to body, emotions and urges/actions. • Noticing habits of our mind – e.g., ways the mind tries to fix difficulties by overthinking. • Explore decentring from thoughts – thoughts are not facts. • Finding ways to steady and be present moment focused when the mind is busy/scared.
Lesson six Growing Happiness	Learning Objectives	• How we can nurture ourselves and others. • Making room for and choosing happiness in our lives. • Noticing details of experience of happiness. • Exploring specific ways to savour happiness. • Connecting happiness, kindness, and gratitude.

Appendix 2 – Sample Pages from the Mindful Moments Diary

MY DIARY OF

Mindful Moments

Name

Class

In a challenging moment

Reflections:

In this moment I can name and allow the emotions that I am feeling. Go ahead and write them down.

I can tolerate the emotions I feel

Reflections:

Tell me about a time when something didn't happen as you wanted it to but it was okay. How did you feel? What did you notice?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

I chose to respond, not react
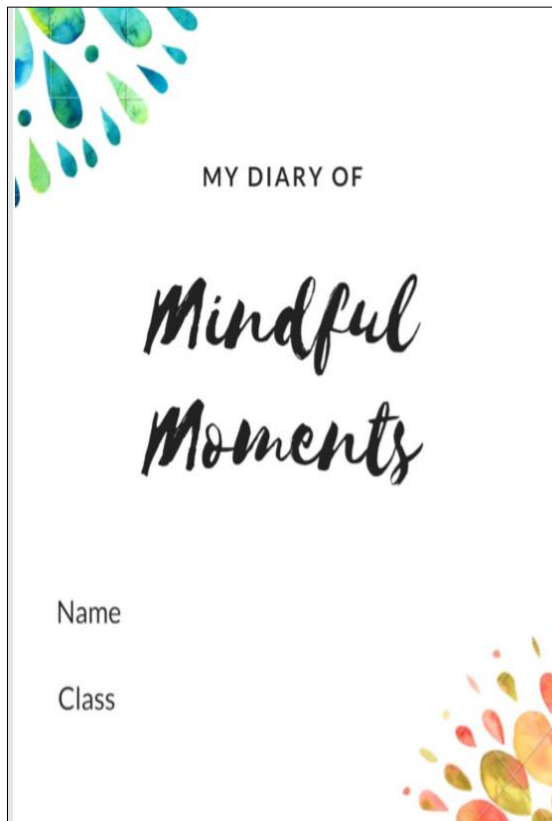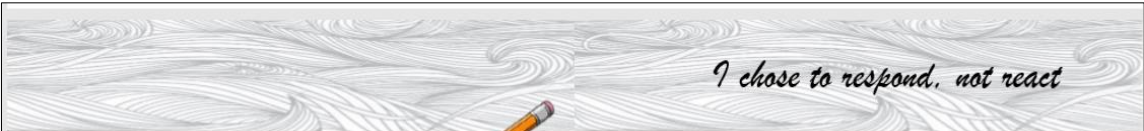
This page has been left blank for you to draw or write your own entry.

Reflections:

Can you write about a difficult time at school when, rather than just reacting, you responded in a way that made you feel proud of yourself afterwards.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 3

Research Ethics Approval Paperwork

University of Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

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Nottingham
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18/10/2017

Our Ref: *2017 / 95 (Andrea Crawford)*
CC: *Dr E Sellman & Prof. J Stephen*

Dear Andrea,

Thank you for your research ethics application for your project:

The implementation of mindfulness in schools: An action research investigation into the barriers and requirements for the successful implementation of mindfulness in the context of a junior school.

Our Ethics Committee has looked at your submission and has the following comments.

- Thank you for such a clear indication of the changes you have made. It facilitated the review process enormously.
- The project outline as an action research project is clearer now that you have provided the requested information.
- It is my understanding that this application relates to 'The next cycle involves teaching the year 5 children, followed by the year 6 children and finally the year 3 children. This next cycle is a small part of a bigger project. Ethical clearance is requested for this part of the research project.'
- Thank you for providing a concise overview of the project on the ethics submission form.
- You have confirmed the children will have the opportunity to review the transcripts and approve them for accuracy before they are analysed.
- The participant information sheets are labelled clearly.
- The typos have been amended.
- The University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (version 6) is referred to. The 7-year retention of data rule is now explained on the required documents.
- A tick box has been added to the CAMM allowing the children to choose to not have their responses included in the research.
- You have explained that the CAMM will be used as an average measure for the cohort and not as an individual measure for each child to compare before and after.
- You have stated in the letters to the head teacher and class teacher that a copy of the parental and pupil forms will be provided for their information.

However, before your research can be approved, the other reviewers made recommendations that the following amendments are made:

- Arguably your reflections and journaling are a form of data collection that you will use for research purposes. Please confirm that you will keep that material confidential and store it securely in the same way as other data. Also please confirm that people and places have been anonymised in your journal.

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278

- We still do not know how the children will be selected by the teacher. What are the criteria for participation?
- I appreciate you have made amendments to the participant information sheet. Will children have an opportunity to discuss it with their parents?

Based on the above assessment, it is deemed your research:

- Approved subject to minor amendments (an email confirming these changes and answering the questions will suffice)

We look forward to hearing from you with the information that is requested.

Email received confirming minor changes will be made 23/11/2017
Research approved 23/11/2017

KEFuller

Dr Kay Fuller, Chair of Ethics Committee

Appendix 4
Information Letter to Headteacher

Dear Head Teacher,

As discussed at our meeting, I will carry out a research project at the junior school as part of my PhD at The Nottingham University. I am grateful for your permission and support. The focus of the research is the implementation of mindfulness in schools to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. I will teach mindfulness throughout the junior school via a program called Paws.b; a mindfulness-based curriculum for children ages 7 to 11 taught in a purely secular context. Here is a summary of what the research will entail for your staff and pupils:

- I will provide a presentation to teaching staff to discuss the mindfulness-based program called Paws.b.

- All pupils in the school will be taught Paws.b; this is comprised of 6 lessons taught over 6 weeks. The program will be implemented in year 4, then year 5, followed by year 6 and finally year 3. The lessons involve activities, practices and discussions. Each lesson is approximately 50 minutes long, with members of school staff being present throughout.

- With your permission, all children in years 5, 6 and 3 will fill in a short questionnaire called Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) before starting the Paws.b program. They will be asked to complete the same questionnaire once they have completed the Paws.b programme 6 weeks later. All information provided by the children will be anonymous, confidential and stored securely.

- With your permission, all children in years 5, 6 and 3 will fill in a questionnaire at the end of the Paws.b program. This will take no longer than 15 minutes. I think it is an important part of the research to 'hear the children's voices'; for them to discuss their experience of learning mindfulness, any personal impact it may or may not have had on them and their thoughts about learning mindfulness in school. A letter requesting parents/carers' consent for this will be sent out (copied to you for your information).

- With your permission, at the end of each block of 6 weeks, I will request that each teacher from each class selects 2 boys and 2 girls to participate in a focus group. The focus groups will discuss their experience of mindfulness, any personal impact it has had on them and their views on having mindfulness taught in school. A letter requesting consent will be

sent home to those parents whose child has been invited to take part in the focus group (this will be copied to you for your information and to each class teacher). The focus groups will meet at an agreed time by their teacher.

- Those children chosen to be part of the focus group will also receive a letter requesting their consent to take part (copied to you for your information and each class teacher).

- With your permission and the teachers, I will seek feedback from the teachers in respect of their thoughts, opinions and views on the implementation and teaching of mindfulness within the context of a junior school. I will also seek feedback in respect of any perceived impact mindfulness may or may not have had on any of the pupils in their class. This feedback will be gained via recorded semi-structured interviews lasting no longer than 30 minutes, at an agreed time that is convenient to the teachers.

I will of course be able to provide you with a summary of my findings once the data has been analysed. I guarantee confidentiality of information. I will only report information that is in the public domain and within the law. I will not reveal anything of a personal or compromising nature. If I intend to use any information that is in any way sensitive, I will seek the permission of the originator before using it. There will also be total confidentiality of pupils', teachers' and parents' names and I will not name the school without permission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further details or if you have any questions.

Once again, many thanks.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Crawford

Contact details:
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Supervisor: Dr Edward Sellman edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 5

Information Letter to Class Teacher

Dear Teacher,

As discussed at the staff meeting, I will carry out a research project at the junior school as part of my PhD at The Nottingham University. The focus of the research is the implementation of mindfulness in schools to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. I will teach mindfulness once a week for 50 minutes throughout the junior school via a program called Paws.b; a mindfulness-based curriculum for children ages 7 to 11 taught in a purely secular context. *Here is a summary of what the research will entail for you and your pupils:*

- Before starting the Paws.b program the children in your class will be required to complete a short questionnaire called Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM). The questionnaire is comprised of 10 questions and should take about 10 minutes to complete. I would be grateful if this could be completed in class during the school day, with support given to any children who find any of the questions hard to read or understand. I will collect the questionnaires when I come into school.

- The children will be asked to complete the same questionnaire again once they have completed the Paws.b programme 6 weeks later. The two questionnaires will be compared to provide an average measure for the cohort. All data gathered from the class will be anonymous and stored securely. The data will only be seen by me (the researcher) and my supervisor.

- Following the Paws.b program, I will ask each class teacher to select and invite two boys and two girls from their class to take part in a focus group. The focus group will provide them with an opportunity to discuss their experience of mindfulness, any personal impact it may or may not have had on them and their views on having mindfulness taught in school. A letter requesting consent will be sent home to those parents whose child has been invited to take part in the focus group. I will provide each teacher with a copy of the letter. The focus groups will meet at an agreed time by you, their teacher.

- All children in years 5, 6 and 3 will fill in a questionnaire at the end of the Paws.b program. This will take no longer than 15 minutes. I think it is an important part of the research to 'hear the children's voices'; for them to discuss their experience of learning mindfulness. A letter requesting

parental consent for this will be sent home. I will provide each teacher with a copy of this letter.

- With your voluntary agreement, I will seek feedback in respect of your thoughts, opinions and views on the implementation and teaching of mindfulness within the context of a junior school. I will also seek feedback in respect of any perceived impact mindfulness has had on any of the pupils in your class. This feedback will be gained via a recorded semi-structured interview lasting no longer than 30 minutes.

- You have the right to withdraw from this research at any point, and you are not obliged to give a reason. Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me (Andrea Crawford – the researcher) or my supervisor Dr Edward Sellman, Education Department, The University of Nottingham.

- Should you wish to make a complaint relating your involvement in the research please contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, The University of Nottingham.

Many thanks. Yours sincerely,

Andrea Crawford

Contact details:
Researcher: Andrea Crawford andrea.crawford@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Edward Sellman edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

If you are happy to participate in the semi-structured interview please complete and sign the consent form below and return it to the researcher (Andrea Crawford).

I agree to take part in the above research.

Name of Teacher   _____

Signature   _____

Date   _____

Aim of the research:

The study is about bringing mindfulness into schools as a way of supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing. The study will look at: -

- What is needed to bring mindfulness into a junior school?
- Are there any challenges/difficulties to bringing mindfulness into a junior school? If so, what are they?
- What is needed to keep mindfulness in the school long term?

What the research involves:

I have been teaching Paws.b, a mindfulness-based programme, in the junior school as a way of introducing mindfulness into the school. Now I would like to know your thoughts on learning about mindfulness during the school day, as well as any personal effect mindfulness may or may not have had on you. In order to do this, there will be 12 discussion groups (focus groups), one for each of the 12 classes in the school. In each group will be 4 children; 2 boys and 2 girls. The groups will meet with me at the junior school during the school day, at a time agreed by the class teacher.

Anonymity

Each group discussion will last about 30 minutes and I will record it using a Dictaphone. I will be the only person able to listen to the recording. The recording will be private, anonymous (no name) and stored safely. The recording of the discussion will then be written out in a document. You will be able to read what has been written in the document (with help from the researcher/teacher if needed) to check it is accurate before it is analysed (studied). I will study the document to see if there are any similar ideas or thoughts between the different groups. The only people who will read the document are my two supervisors and the examiners.

If you do not wish to be recorded and have ticked the box on the consent form to say this, then I will write down your responses (answers).

You may wish to discuss taking part in this study with your parents/guardians. You do not have to take part in this study and you may leave the small group discussion at any time. If you decide during or after the study that you do

not want any of your responses, put in the research report; please let me (Andrea Crawford) know and I will make sure they are not put in.

If you have any further questions or concerns (worries) about this study please get in touch with me - Andrea Crawford (the researcher), or my university supervisor (Dr Edward Sellman, School of Education, The University of Nottingham). If you have any complaint about your involvement in the research, please get in touch with the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, The University of Nottingham.

Contact details:

Researcher: Andrea Crawford andrea.crawford@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Edward Sellman edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 7

**Pupil Agreement to Take Part in a
Small Group Discussion (Focus Group)**

You have been invited to take part in a small group discussion as part of a research project. The project is about bringing mindfulness into junior schools to support mental health and wellbeing.   The group will discuss their experience of being taught mindfulness at school and any personal effect mindfulness may or may not have had on them.   This discussion will be recorded using a Dictaphone and should take about 20 minutes. The group will meet during the school day at a time agreed by the teacher.

Researcher's name: Andrea Crawford
Supervisor's name: Dr Edward Sellman

- I have read, or had the participant information sheet read to me, and I agree to take part in this research by being part of the small group discussion.

- I understand what the research is about and my part in it.

- I understand that by taking part in this small group discussion it will mean I will be interviewed about my experience of learning mindfulness in school and any personal effect this may have had on me.

- I understand the interview will be recorded on a Dictaphone and that this data (information) will be kept private and will not be deleted or reused.

- I understand my data will be made anonymous (no name on it) so it cannot be traced back to me.

- I understand the data will be written into a document that I will be able to read (with help from the researcher/teacher if needed) to check it is accurate before it is studied.

- I understand the data will be kept for 7 years and stored on a password-protected pc and in a private and locked drawer.

- I understand that my taking part in this study is completely voluntary (chosen by me) and I can withdraw (pull out) from the study at any time without giving a reason and this will have no effect on me at all. I also

understand that I can withdraw my data from the study up until the point it is made anonymous.

- I understand that if I have any further questions or worries about this study I can speak to Andrea Crawford (the researcher), or her university supervisor (Dr Edward Sellman, School of Education, The University of Nottingham).

- I understand that if I have any complaints about my participation in the research, I can contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, The University of Nottingham.

☐ **Please tick here if you or your parents do not want to have your interview recorded.**

Signed: _____
(Research Participant)

Print name: _____Date: _____

Contact details:
Researcher: Andrea Crawford andrea.crawford@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Edward Sellman edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 8
Parent Information Sheet
Small Group Discussion (Focus Group)

*Aim of the research***:**

The study is researching into the implementation of mindfulness in schools as a way of supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing. The research will focus on: -
*   What is required to implement mindfulness into a junior school?
*   What, if any, are the challenges/barriers to implementing mindfulness?
*   What is needed to sustain mindfulness in a school?

What the research involves:

I have been teaching Paws.b, a mindfulness-based programme, in the junior school as a way of introducing mindfulness into the school. Now I would like to know the children's thoughts on learning about mindfulness during the school day, as well as any personal effect mindfulness may or may not have had on them. In order to do this, there will be 12 discussion groups (focus groups), one for each of the 12 classes in the school. In each group will be 4 children; 2 boys and 2 girls. The groups will meet with me at the junior school during the school day, at a time agreed by the class teacher.

Anonymity

The discussion in the small group will last no longer than 30 minutes and I will record it using a Dictaphone. I will be the only person able to listen to the recording and all of the data will be confidential, anonymous and stored securely. The recording of the discussion will then be transcribed (written out). Pupils taking part will be able to review the transcripts (with assistance from the researcher/teacher if required) and approve them for accuracy before they are analysed. They will be analysed by me to see if there are any central themes (similar ideas, thoughts, findings) between the different groups. The transcripts will be used for my analysis and the only people who will read them are my two supervisors and the examiners who assess my PhD thesis.

If your son/daughter <u>does not</u> want to be recorded there is tick box on the consent form stating this. Their responses will be written down by me instead.

Your son/daughter may want to discuss this study with you. They do not have to take part in this study; if they do, they may leave the small group discussion at any time. If they decide during or after the study, they do not want any of

their responses put in the research report, then they should let me (Andrea Crawford) know and I will make sure they are not put in.

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please get in touch with me - Andrea Crawford (the researcher), or my university supervisor (Dr Edward Sellman, School of Education, The University of Nottingham). If you have any complaint about your involvement in the research, please get in touch with the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, The University of Nottingham.

Contact details:

Researcher: Andrea Crawford andrea.crawford@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Edward Sellman edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 9

Parental Consent Form for Your Son/Daughter to Participate in a Small Group Discussion (Focus Group)

Your son/daughter is invited to take part in a focus group (small group discussion) as part of a research study on the implementation of mindfulness in schools to support children's mental health and wellbeing. There will be three other pupils from their class participating in the focus group. Following the completion of the Paws.b programme, a mindfulness-based programme currently being taught throughout the junior school, the focus group will meet during the school day at a time agreed by their teacher. The focus group will discuss their experience of being taught mindfulness at school and any effect they think the mindfulness programme may or may not have had on them. This process will be recorded on a Dictaphone and should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Children and young people under 18 years of age require written consent from their parents or carers to take part in research. Please read the participant information sheet which gives details of the research study before signing this consent form.

Researcher's name: Andrea Crawford
Supervisor's name: Dr Edward Sellman

- I have read the participant information sheet and I agree to my son/daughter taking part in this research. I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he/she can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and this will have no effect on them.

- I understand that my son's/daughter's responses will be confidential and stored securely on the researcher's computer. The data will be made anonymous so that it is not possible to trace it back to an individual pupil.
- I understand my son/daughter will be able to review the transcripts (with assistance from the researcher/teacher if required) and approve them for accuracy before they are analysed.

- I understand the data will be stored securely on a password-protected pc and in a private and locked drawer for 7 years. It will not be deleted or reused. These responses will only be used for this research project and only the researcher and supervisors will have access to it.

- I understand that either my son/daughter or myself are able to withdraw their data from the study at any point until the data has been made anonymous and no longer possible to trace it back to pupils individually.
- I understand I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am also free to withdraw my son/daughter from participation in this study and discuss my concerns with the supervising member of staff Dr Edward Sellman, School of Education, The Nottingham University.

- I understand that if I wish to make a complaint relating to my son/daughter's involvement in the research I can contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, The University of Nottingham.

I, _____(NAME) give consent for my son/daughter to participate in the study conducted by Andrea Crawford, School of Education, The Nottingham University with the supervision of Dr Edward Sellman, School of Education, The Nottingham University.

☐ Please tick if you or your son/daughter does not want the focus group discussion to be recorded.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Print name: _____ Date: _____

Contact details:
Researcher: Andrea Crawford andrea.crawford@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Edward Sellman edward.sellman@nottingham.ac.uk
School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 10 - Annotated Original Transcript (Year 6 – Class 11) - Red Focus Group

Emergent Codes	Annotated Original Transcript (Year 6 – Class 11) - Red Focus Group	Exploration of Comments
Good for calming (play and sleep)	**Interviewer - Thank you for taking part. What has it been like for you learning about mindfulness in school?** Mary – I find it quite calming, like when I was like in an argument in the playground, I sort of felt it more easier to step back and like realise what was going on. Err, I quite like, I really like the petal practice I did that sometimes before I went to bed. Erm…. Interviewer – what was it about that you particularly liked? Mary – I don't know, I just found it like really calming, and I just thought it was really nice. Erm, I found it quite easy, like doing it. Like I don't really sort of struggle to do any of the practices, not concentrate or anything. I sort of I was quite like I focused on it quite a lot. Interviewer – Good, thank you. Anybody else? Your experiences about learning about mindfulness, what did you think?	*Pupil used mindfulness to allow himself to step back and really see what was going on— reflecting on the situation. Pupil recognising mindfulness is good for getting to sleep.*
Mindfulness enjoyable/different	William – Erm…I enjoyed it. I thought you know it's nice to have something different occasionally. Err, my favourite was the finger one. Interviewer – why was that your favourite? William - Well, I suppose I just like the feel of like tracking my finger across my others and yeah, erm, I'm not too keen on the petal practice. But yeah, I really enjoyed mindfulness.	*Pupils' perception of the curriculum – it has become narrow, boring and very restricted.*

Mindfulness enjoyable/different	Interviewer – good; anybody else? George – I enjoyed learning about the brain because I didn't really know anything about that and the …and the like the learning about flight freeze and erm …what's the other one? Interviewer – fight. George – fight, yeah, like attack. Interviewer – so you liked the science side? George - Yeah and what, like what your ego chooses and stuff and like and I also liked the finger one. Interviewer – the finger practice.	
Improves focus	George – because I liked how it was physical, and it made it easier for nothing to distract it. Like, like when there's other stuff going on in my mind, I found it easier how it was physical to focus on that one thing. Interviewer – OK lovely, thank you very much.	*Perception of mindfulness practice as being good for focusing attention.*
Mindfulness enjoyable **Empathy**	Olivia – I enjoyed learning about mindfulness, particularly about our feelings, how we feel and other people, when we are feeling tired, etc. My favourite practice was the petal practice because it was fun. **Are you using any of the mindfulness practices in your life now, and can you tell me about your experiences of them?**	*Encourages empathy, thinking of others and their feelings, as well as exploring our own feelings.*
Good for conflict resolution **Good for relaxation**	Mary – I, when on the playground, if there's like an argument going on, I find it easier to like step back, and sort of realise what's going on and like figure it out like how I'm feeling. Err, I do it before I go to bed; I find it like easier, like more	*Pupil choosing to use mindfulness practice outside of school*

Good for focus	relaxing and like easier to sleep and stuff. Erm, before I go to my dance classes to help me concentrate, I normally do a bit of it, like just to focus my mind on my dancing and like understand my steps and stuff. Interviewer – brilliant, so you are using it a lot. Anybody else?	*during dance. Pupil notes mindfulness has made them less reactive during arguments.*
Good for stress **Good for reducing sadness** **Induces calm**	George – I use it a lot in like high-pressure situations like say I'd like have butterflies before a erm what like a competition, or something like that and like if I'm feeling quite emotional and like sad, I find I find it easier to just like to like calm myself down and just like stay, get back to normal. Just try and go on again.	*Pupil using mindfulness outside school for promoting resilience and perseverance.*
Induces sleep	Interviewer – fantastic, good, I'm pleased to hear that. William – erm…, I usually do it like to get myself; I suppose just mindful before I go to bed or something just so it makes me a bit more tired and stuff. Interviewer – OK. For relaxation?	*Whilst not doing mindfulness regularly at school, pupils are practising at home in certain situations*
Applicable to sport (home practice)	William – Yeah, and also say I'm about to go to a football match or something. I just do it with a warm-up or something to get myself in order.	*where they perceive it will help.*
Calming nerves **Improving focus**	Interviewer – perfect, thank you. Olivia - I use it when I am nervous and going to do a vault in gym. I've seen someone get hurt doing that, and it makes me nervous. Also, before I go to tap dance, it makes me focus.	
Helps memory **Good for calming**	**In your experience, what effect does mindfulness practices have on you?**	

	Mary – I find like since I've been doing mindfulness, I've been able to understand the steps more at my dance classes. I've been generally more sort of calm when there's like trouble. There's something happened. I just find it more like I just feel more calm than I would have done before you started mindfulness.	*Useful if there is trouble; helps calm things down.*
Greater awareness Good for calming, generally	Interviewer – lovely, thank you, anybody else? No 3?	
	George – I find it like easier, like easier to calm other people down as well as me. Like, say like I'm in a group and we're all quite like on edge or something like if I'm like doing it like the whole group goes calm. Like everything goes a bit quieter, and like we just realise what's going on and just calm down.	*Helps in times of conflict at school. Pupils are easier to calm down more aware*
Good for academic performance/ Focusing	Interviewer – good, good, excellent, anybody else?	*of what is happening. Pupil considers*
	William – erm… now we have like SATs and stuff coming up recently. I find it helps for a test or something.	*mindfulness useful in test situations for*
Good for academic performance	Interviewer – What is that - to calm you down or focus you?	*calming them down and focusing them.*
	William – Both. So, I don't like, you know, misread any questions or anything.	
	Interviewer – good. No Olivia?	
Good for calming (tests)		
Calming (after argument - intrapersonal)	Olivia – It keeps me calm after an argument and also for SATs.	*Useful to practice after an argument.*
Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	**Has learning mindfulness changed you at all? If so, how?**	
	Mary – if there's like any problems, it sort of its helped me sort of like realise that there is a way round things. Like even if it seems like it's really bad, there is always a way like to get rid of it and like control, your mind, more like not let it like think that it's a really bad thing when it's not actually that bad.	*Pupil recognising mindfulness helps prevent the 'storytelling mind' take*
Reduced impact of negative thoughts		*over. Helps keep*

	Interviewer – good, so you think you can handle things a bit better?	*things in perspective and therefore offers a better way of dealing with issues etc.*
	Mary – yeah.	
	Interviewer – OK, lovely, anybody else?	
Improves interpersonal skills **Good for calming** **Increased awareness**	George – I think erm… you can like erm… I think you can like if someone's doing it you're more like cautious around them which is like sometimes it can sometimes be a signal which is quite good like you're not like jump over and all rowdy and stuff and be like all play… like you might have to go over like and … it's it's quite good like in your friendship if you all know that someone's sad if they're in the corner doing it it's like a signal type of thing.	*Pupil perceives mindfulness as making them more empathic, respectful and understanding of others.*
	William – I'm not really sure, to be honest. Erm, it's just really; I suppose it's just made me appreciate like that just taking some time to just I dunno like just calm yourself down or just breath erm it helps.	
	Interviewer – what about in other things like the way you look at things or maybe the way you eat or anything like that has anybody ….	
	George - Yeah, sometimes when I look at like when I see films, and I see like art like I see like how much work people have put into it.	*Pupil showing greater awareness and noticing what's happening around them. This is leading to a greater appreciation.*
	Interviewer – so you are looking a bit more carefully at things you would say?	
	George – yes.	
	Interviewer – OK lovely, well done. Good.	
	Are there any things (barriers) that make practising mindfulness at school difficult?	
	Interviewer – can I just ask you, first of all, have you practised it as a class since I sort of left, have you…	

Good for academic work (tests) **Time constraints – barrier** **Environment – barrier**	Collective yes. George - <mark>We've been practising it like we've been doing it a couple of times before tests.</mark> Interviewer – so you've been doing it before tests, so you are still doing it. Good OK. What barriers do you think there are in school that would make it difficult to do mindfulness? Mary – well, I think so because a <mark>school day is normally quite busy, so sometimes like you don't get enough time to sort of do mindfulness enough like what we really should be doing. And like in the playground, it's sort of really like noisy and its sort of hard to concentrate on like breathing and like stepping back sometimes but on the whole, I do find it quite easy.</mark> George – <mark>I find that like people say, oh yeah, if you want to be quiet, go to the library, but then you're not always allowed in the library, and it's like, oh, and then there isn't really anywhere else. And then if you are gonna do it, you would probably have to do it at lunch or at break and….</mark> Interviewer – so it's finding a quiet place to do it… George – yeah. Interviewer – that would be …. that's a problem. OK All nodding. Interviewer – erm… anything else? You've mentioned about time that's an issue. Any other things you can think of?	*Teacher's perceptions of mindfulness – good for test situations.* *Pupils recognise time is a constraint in practising mindfulness as well as the environment. Finding a suitable place to practice where it is quiet.*

Time constraints – barrier **Teacher reluctance – barrier** **Good for positive thoughts**	George – <mark>I think that like sometimes we like we could have a mindfulness slot where you could do your erm mindful books, and you could err like have time like say if like recently the teachers notice that we've had quite a busy time and we've been rushing around quite a lot like getting a lot in we could have like a mindfulness time for about fifteen minutes maybe</mark>. Interviewer – good idea, perfect. Mary – just to add on what No 3 has just said, err I think if we did have like a special time for mindfulness, I think it would be better like near the end of the day so you can like think about the day and like <mark>you can focus on the positives of the day rather than doing it in the morning like when you've just got to school it's quite like busy and like rushed.</mark> Interviewer – yes, that's a nice idea; actually, finish on a good note finish on a positive note. Interviewer – anybody else? **What things in school would make it easier for you to practice?** Interviewer – question 7, which is a little bit about what you were talking about - what things in school make it easier for you to practice mindfulness? So, I think you've kind of mentioned a time for it and a place. Anything else you can think of? Mary – maybe like because like if you did have a special space to do mindfulness, it might be like cos some people might get there and like and like someone might be like you could have like a teacher there just to supervise in case like if anything went wrong like if someone was being naughty. Just to make sure. **Would you like to continue to have mindfulness lessons at school?**	*Recognition school is busy, stressful place, and yet it would be possible to pull in some mindfulness practices. Possible teacher not 'on board' sufficiently to allocate time.* *Recognition of benefits of mindfulness for more positive approach.*

Improves interpersonal skills	Mary – I really liked the mindfulness, so I would like it to carry on, and it's like <mark>it's helped with like friendships like you can like understand like how people feel like if they are on a different side of the argument, you can sort of like understand both sides and help it like help solve it quicker.</mark> George – It helps me. I prefer I would like to have more lessons erm because it helps me as I said before, like in a group situation. Interviewer – so for friendships, you feel it's helped you. George – yeah, and like Mary said.	*Pupil views mindfulness as beneficial for friendships, empathic understanding, conflict resolution.*
Good for calming **Good for dealing with issues**	Olivia - Yes, <mark>I feel calmer. I would like it in the morning and after lunch before each lesson would be good.</mark> William <mark>– I think it would be good to keep on doing it, and you know it's something to take into the Comp. You know there might be some stuff happening there or whatever.</mark> Interviewer – I think there is, but there is also erm there's also mindfulness for secondary schools though I'm not trained to teach that I'm only trained for primary, but actually, there is a whole programme for secondary schools and I think that's quite important as well. George – Do you know if there's anything outside school that you could like do after maybe? Interviewer – mindfulness outside of school? There aren't for children, I think. There are for adults, but I haven't noticed anything for children. I don't think so; I'll look into it, though; that's an interesting question; nobody has asked me that.	*Perceives mindfulness as being able to transport you into a calmer place.* *Pupil views mindfulness as being useful for helping deal with issues as they move to secondary school, where they consider the possibility of issues arising.*

	Tell me your thoughts on journaling; what do you think about the mindfulness moments diary?	
Journaling beneficial Relaxing Different	Mary – well, with our mindfulness stuff erm diaries, I've really found it like really sort of benefitting, like writing like write it like like it like when you write things down it sort of brings back memories and you can kind of think well I think I did that well. Like you sort of understand more like yeah and then like and then with the colouring it's just really sort of relaxing, and you just think like it's a nice thing to do at school because you don't normally get that time to do colouring or write down your thoughts.	*Views journaling as not only beneficial but pleasant and something different.*
Journaling good for emotional support		
Journaling good for emotional support	George – Er, when I'm like sad or like worried about something, I find it quite hard to say it because erm like you have to put erm like different like ways of saying it when you're speaking, but when you're writing, I find it easier because you don't put emotion really on writing.	*Pupils perceive journaling as a way of dealing with private thoughts, feelings and emotions that are sometimes difficult to share; or ones that they simply do not wish to share. The pupils consider journaling helps you to work through such emotions and get them out of 'your system'. It offers freedom as you can write what you want without the fear of upsetting anyone else.*
Journaling enjoyable Teacher acceptance	Brief discussion (all trying to speak at same time; quite animated) on benefits of journaling and how it's private, and once you write it down, it's out of your system. George also talked about how when he says things to people concerning how sad he's feeling, it can upset them and wondered if, because of this, they perhaps don't always want to hear it. So, it's easier writing it down. (Parent died recently).	
	William – well, as you said, if you want to get something out of your system, then it is helpful, and you know if something's holding you down, it's your little private thing, yeah, and well, no one else is going to read it so you can write whatever you want in there.	
	Olivia - Having a diary is helpful; it's nice answering the questions.	

	Interviewer – so, have you actually had an opportunity to use your diaries at school? Mary – yes. Interviewer – so your teacher has got you to do some journaling? All – yes.	*Teacher recognising the benefits of journaling.*

Emergent Codes	Annotated Original Transcript (Year 3– Class 1) - Teacher	Exploration of Comments
Lack of understanding of concept. **Behaviour management strategy.**	**First of all, thank you for your time. In your experience/opinion, have the mindfulness lessons had any impact (beneficial or other) on individuals and/or the class as a whole?** Paul – Erm…, I know there's some children who have been… that have said they've used some of it at times, erm, and I know that erm, I did actually notice one child doing it when he got quite upset about being told off (laughs). He was doing deep breathing in his chair. So, some of them, obviously some of them, are taking on board some of it. Erm… in terms of overall behaviour, I wouldn't say I've noticed a huge difference. Then we are coming from a community where the children are quite well behaved anyway, erm… so you know behaviour has never really been an issue, so it's always been quite good anyway. So, I don't know; I don't know if the programme would have a better, be more effective if the children weren't err… were a bit more challenging in that sense. So, I wonder if that makes a difference. But I can't say I've had… I've noticed wholesale changes in many of the kids.	*Recognition pupils are using practices to cope with tricky situations.* *Associates mindfulness with behaviour. Thinks it's more of a behaviour management strategy that, in this instance, is not necessary.*
Good for focus.	Interviewer – What about attention or focus because it's not actually about behaviour management, so focus or attention or… (Teacher interrupting at this point). Paul – Yeah, there are some children who recent… who I think over the last term or so have been a bit more focused so and, and so that again mindfulness might be behind it's …it's so there are a few children who have sort of been a bit more on it and a bit less daydreamy and airy-fairy. So, there have been some.	*Recognition mindfulness may support ability to focus/concentrate.*
	Interviewer – and sort of like stress-wise or worrying? Paul – again I don't… I'm not sure if the kids have been a lot less stressed. But then they don't; they're not, they aren't particularly stressed. They don't come	*Does not consider pupils are stressed to*

	across anyway as particularly stressful like, like; they don't display much the, children that do don't do it that often anyway. And it's so, and I don't think, it's, it's, not something I've noticed anyway, a different change.	*any great extent or has not noticed it. (Pupils mentioned feeling stressed in the focus groups).*
Barrier – Remembering.	**Are you using any of the mindfulness practices in your class during the week, and if so, can you tell me about your experiences of them?**	*Teacher attributes time and remembering as*
Time – barrier.	Paul – I would say that very occasionally. Not particularly often purely because one, one, it's me remembering to do it, and two, it's fitting it in, fitting it in and finding the time to do it when we're trying …you know if we've got an hour to fit	*and remembering as reasons for not practising mindfulness.*
Not a priority.	a lesson in, just even to spend five minutes doing something then it chips away at that, and there's other things I need to get done. So, I think purely one is …one is me remembering to do it and that not building the habit properly, but that's probably happening because I'm focusing more on fitting everything into what I need to fit in first, really.	*Also, other priorities – it is not as important as other things. (Teacher not 'onboard'. Did not attend some lessons, in others marked work or put up*
	Interviewer – I understand.	*a display, or tidied*
Scepticism/not 'onboard'. Programme suitability.	**Was there anything you felt did not work so well in the classroom during the teaching of mindfulness?**	*library).*
	Paul – thought they spent, I don't, for their age, there was probably a lot of sitting about and for the - obviously for young, it's probably easier to do that with the older children. The younger children, for some of them, it's hard to sit	
Understanding concept.	45 minutes of sitting, and listening can be quite difficult for a lot of them, and it's going …I don't know what to do really, so I think maybe it, it needs to be something that's a bit more …just gets them a bit more involved. I think rather than just sort of talking to them and things like that. I think there needs to be a bit more things to do, stuff for them to do at that age. One for them to really understand it, and two just again to keep their …if it's about keeping focus, I think the way it comes across necessarily doesn't instil that so much because …	*Despite the pupils being fine (good feedback from them) and the programme being interactive, teacher perceives it as not suitable age-wise.*
Good for calming. Behaviour management.	because of the length of time that they are sitting down for, sitting down and listening basically.	*There is a lack of understanding about mindfulness – the*

303

	In what circumstances do you find mindfulness practice useful/helpful for the class?	*ability to sit, be quiet, just to be etc. Teacher perceives it's for older children as it requires this element of being quiet and ability to sit. Perceives it to be good way of calming pupils' excitement – viewed more as behaviour management strategy.*
	Paul – It might be stuff, it might be things like err … after lunch or something, if it's been err a bit of a busy lunchtime or something, we might say all right let's come in and have ==some time to calm down, just more… just to bring that sort of excitement and sort of energy level they had for break, for lunchtime. Just to sort of bring that down a bit so that we are ready to start our lessons basically to be focused for our lessons basically. That's the main time I've used it.==	
	Interviewer – OK, so not like getting them coping with friendship problems or anything like that?	
	Paul – not necessarily. I mean, but then I don't really have a huge amount of those kind of issues, so that's quite lucky so.	
	Whilst this is a mindfulness programme for children, has being introduced to the concept of mindfulness alongside your class changed you at all in any way? If so, how?	
	Paul – I think, I think it's kind of, er…	
	Interviewer – and I know you missed actually two or three of them because you had to be out to do …	
Good for focus. Good Coping strategy. Schools too busy/stressful environments. Beneficial.	Paul – Yeah, yeah, I missed some to do other things.	
	Interviewer – So you actually missed quite a lot.	
	Paul - Yeah, so there were a few lessons I wasn't in, but I mean, I think it's… I think it's, some of it that I thought that was, you know, was quite important for the kids to get. ==I think really er the biggest thing that they'll probably take away is the techniques and things like that from it, and about having to …allowing==	*Teacher recognises benefits such as*

Time – barrier. **Barrier – not a who school approach.** **Head/SLT supporting Programme All onboard.** **Whole school approach.** **Reminders around school.** **Good for focus.**	them to cope, allowing them to focus and allowing them to do those things. But I think it's it made me realise that actually, yeah do you know what, we probably don't do enough of that kind of stuff with kids. We don't give them time necessarily, to not even… not even time for themselves and things like that at school. Because school's so bash, bash, bash, you have to get… you've got so much to do that you know you don't often take time just to just relax and do that very much and actually you know it's something that maybe we need to try and be more aware of and give them… those kids that time to just be themselves sometimes and time just to do something they'd like to do and just pull back a bit. Interviewer – it is very hard when you're under pressure, and you've got to get all these sorts of academic things done. I understand it's very hard as a teacher. **Are there any barriers that make practising mindfulness at school difficult?** Paul - Well, again, number one is time. It's time; where do you fit it in because you know if it's… it's… it's… and it throws …and it's the sort of thing that that needs a whole school approach because then as a school you make time for it. That sort of thing. You know, because if you're going to do something like that, it's like that with anything really. If you are going to do it, then everyone has to do it. Because then everyone makes… then you are forced into making time for it, and if, if, it's not a whole-school approach one or two people might do it then it's not …it doesn't have an impact then really does it? You know, if you do it for a little bit and then the one-year group does it and the next year group doesn't do it then you, it kind of negates having err you know if they stop doing it a lot of them would lose the impact it's had. Interviewer – yes, because I've done a bit in each year group, so you know… I don't think it's… … I'm not sure how it, how it's sort of stuck…	*focusing and coping strategies. However, has typically reduced mindfulness in this context as a technique. Recognises, however, that schools are busy environments and pupils should have more time to do just be.* *Having time to fit the intervention in is perceived as a problem, even though the practices are five minutes long or less if needed.*

Good for calming. **Whole school approach.** **Ethos/culture/ values – interweaved across school.**	Paul - Y<mark>eah, yeah, I mean, I don't know the year groups, but it's not something that we've discussed as a whole school that we're all going to implement,</mark> but whether that changes or not, I don't know. Interviewer – because we discussed it at the beginning of the year when I did the presentation to all staff that it's going to be like we're going to do mindfulness, but… Paul - Y<mark>eah, but I think it was sort of from that it was sort of like everyone was sort of waiting for their turn almost, and then I don't know what happened in each individual… I think it was just left to each individual year group and classes after that. But yeah, I think yeah, time and whether again, whether it's going to be adopted as a whole school thing that makes a difference.</mark> I don't think it's possible for one teacher to do it. Because then it will lose that impact as soon as they leave that teacher. So ……	*Recognition it needs to be a whole-school approach. (This teacher knew the whole school was taking part but chose not to by being absent etc., from the majority of the lessons. Teacher not on board from beginning yet recognises for something to work, it needs to have all on board.*
Barrier – all on board. **Repetition.** **Remembering.** **Ethos/culture/ values.** **Good for emotional support.**	**What things in school would make it easier for children to practice?** Paul - As in things that we could make it easier or things that are that we can do that are in place that we can do right now? Interviewer – well, what basically in school … what would make it easy for them to practice, do you think? Paul - I think you know if you… if you had … er …like I said, <mark>if it's a whole-school approach, you might have things up in class and around school to remind them about things, and I think if you had, you know it would, it would then in that case …it would then be things like to resolve conflict, things like that, it might be part of the, the the techniques or strategies you would use to get the children to resolve conflicts to, to, to, …you know to destress and de-escalate situations.</mark> I think that it's kind of, I don't know if it's kind of like things… like it could lend itself to even if… even if at the beginning of the day it would be quite good. It's	*Equates mindfulness to a technique to resolve issues but also sees benefits as being calming and focusing. Can see the benefits yet reluctant to implement the*

	quite a nice time to start it because we come in and we could do some of the techniques and, and you know, focus, relax, ready for the day and almost start the day off, as you… or set the expectation. This is the expectation you know we are gonna do; this is how we are going to approach the day.

Interviewer – absolutely, because it it's actually a way of being and a way of doing things. I think people very often think it's to do with behaviour management and actually it's just about how you approach things, to having an open mind and attitude…. | *programme in the class.* |
| **All onboard.**
Staff training. | | |
| **Differentiated programme.** | Paul - Yeah, yeah, and I think the start of the day is often …is probably the best time for that sort of thing to happen because then you are setting something up to happen for the rest of the day then, that expectation straight away.

What would you consider key for the successful implementation of mindfulness in schools? | |
| **More opportunity.**
Time – barrier.

Not all onboard. | Paul - Yeah, whole-school approach. I think you've got to … but it's not just like, it can't just be like a well, you know… you're gonna necessarily have a mindfulness slot or something like that, it's got to… it will have to be built into the way …the way you… the school is run and to the values of the school and you know and, and, weave into things like you know …like I said like the the, …weave into things like the behaviour management policies and you know it's like you said it's not about that, but it, it, it, involves itself into that kind of thing and right across the curriculum and you're thinking …and you know you're not just thinking of …it's not just assessed as a stand-alone thing it has to be interweaved into the whole thing really. I think if it doesn't do that, it's probably not going to work.

What would you consider are the difficulties/challenges in the actual implementation of a mindfulness-based intervention in school? | *The teacher's perception now is that it should be woven into all aspects of school life for it to work. A great understanding but strange when viewed in light of how he did not attend or practice mindfulness with his class.* |

| | Paul –I think you've got to… the difficulties will probably be getting people, getting everyone on board because I think it's not something that you know… everyone's got an opinion about, I think. It's like with anything you try and put into a whole school it's; it can be quite difficult to put new things in place because some people are keen and some people aren't and, and, you know it's trying to get those people who aren't keen round to saying actually this is what we are going to do and, and, on top of that it's making sure you keep doing it. It's sort of that. Again, with anything you put in place, doing it when you first apply it, it's easy remembering to do it. It's the continuation of that and making sure, and that's why it has to be… yeah and sustaining it that's what has to be involved in… that's why it has to lead into everything because that's how you sustain it, rather than just say well you know these are some techniques we are going to use, let's start trying to use them in class and then if you just do that then it's kind of… it's not one …it's not then probably taken quite so seriously because it's just kind of a "this is some things you can do" … and then it will get forgotten and just sort of push that out of the way for other things. And you know, especially as the year progresses and more and more things pile up, and more things you need to do, and especially as it gets to the summer term. Especially your SATs and assessments and all that you know and, and, there has to be something that we …that is ongoing constant and just part of the values and the ethos of the school really.

Thinking of other interventions that have been introduced into the school, how would you consider a mindfulness-based intervention could be sustained?
Interviewer –actually, that kind of answers question eleven. I was going to ask you …thinking of other interventions that have been introduced into the school, how would you consider a mindfulness-based intervention could actually be sustained. But it's like you've just answered that really, it's just the whole ethos really… across the curriculum…. | *Teacher perceives mindfulness as not being something everyone will necessarily want to do. Recognition of difficulty of implementing anything new in a school context. Discusses how easy it is to remember something new at first and apply it but remembering to continue is harder. Earlier the teacher mentioned difficulty in remembering to do the practices.*

Perceives mindfulness as being something |

	Paul - Yeah, across the curriculum, I mean we do… I know here we do things like ELSA and that's all-emotional support and stuff like that, and you know it might be that's …that you could put mindfulness into that kind of thing because it's you know …it's that it that's you know …it's that essentially. It's like a kind of therapy thing, so then it might be something they, they, might even do it - the TAs when they might have those sorts of techniques involved when they go and do stuff with kids.

Interviewer – staff training?
Paul - Yeah, yeah, that would be …probably staff training would be needed again to make sure it's being used across the board with everyone, and everyone would need to do it. It wouldn't, it wouldn't, you know again, it's not we get the teachers to do it or the TAs to do it; you have to have everyone do it.

What are your thoughts on continuing to have mindfulness taught in this school? Would you be comfortable/interested/keen to teach an MBI yourself?
Paul – I'm not sure I would be totally comfortable teaching it, and I think it depends on what's taught. I think that would depend on the year group as well. I do think whilst some of the stuff about learning about the brain and neuroscience was quite interesting, I think there was probably quite a few kids that it just went straight over their heads and, and, I kind of get it… you know that this is why I'm telling you why it's happening, but maybe some, especially lower down the school, maybe they're not quite ready for that kind of thing. And actually, the focus would be maybe harder at school, that's fine. But I still think a focus should be if you if you are going to carry it on, the focus should be on how children can use it in their everyday life—that kind of thing rather than necessarily the science behind it.

Interviewer – Do you think then it would be good then for this school to continue with mindfulness or … | *that can be tagged onto other programmes. Regards it as a therapy and a technique.*

Seems vague as to what happens with children with emotional difficulties referring to it as stuff! There is a child with severe emotional difficulties in his class.
Teacher pertaining to fact, there should be differentiation.
Teacher understands the use of the children using mindfulness in their lives. However, more so in their home lives. In this class, children fed back every week how they used it at home but not at school as they didn't get the opportunity to practice at school. |

| | Paul - I see the benefits of it. Definitely, I get it…it's not something that I've ever been… that I've ever thought of doing. That I think I've ever really looked at or anything like that, and I know that it's kind of recently become quite a big focus, hasn't it because of children's mental health, and that kind of thing, and maybe we don't do enough of that kind of stuff here. …but I'm not sure if one we'd ever find …we'd ever be able to fit it in; we'd ever be able to slot it in. Where we'd put it into our school and, and, whether the things we already do are working for some of the kids because I think you know there are, there are in our school, some children that are, that are stressed; some children that they have, they have issues, and I think we're fairly adept at, at, doing those… at supporting those. And I think mindfulness might… could be another string to the bow. But I can't see personally …can't see it being rolled out in school. I don't know if there's enough people that would support …that would support it and say it's worth doing and whether SLT would even want to worry about putting it in with other things going on. | *Perception mindfulness useful for stressed children (pathologising it). Wonders about time element and getting staff on board. Now acknowledges there are stressed children in the school (he has a pupil in his class). Maybe it's all out of his comfort zone.* |

Appendix 12

Themes and Sub-themes

Year 6 Class Blue FG	Year 5 Class Green FG	Year 3 Class Orange FG		Year 6 Teacher	Year 5 Teacher	Year 3 Teacher
Year 6 Class Red FG	Year 5 Class Brown FG	Year 3 Class Grey FG		Year 6 Teacher	Year 5 Teacher	Year 3 Teacher
Year 6 Class Black FG	Year 5 Class Pink FG	Year 3 Class Purple FG		Year 6 Teacher	Year 5 Teacher	Year 3 Teacher

Theme one: *potentiality* of mindfulness in school

Sub-theme one: wellbeing - pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Good for calming (work)	Good for calming	Induces feeling of calm
Good for calming (interpersonal)	Induces feeling of calm	Enjoyable
Good for relaxation	Induces feeling of calm	Induces feeling of calm
Good for relaxation	Induces feeling of calm	Induces feeling of calm
Good for relaxation	Induces feeling of calm	Relaxing
Good for relaxation	Enjoyable	Calming
Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination	Enjoyable
Induces feeling of calm	Good for stress (work)	Enjoyable
Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination	Calming
Calming for all	Reduces rumination	Enjoyable/different
Enjoyable	Induces feeling of calm	Reduces nerves
Enjoyable	Relaxing/reduced stress	Reduces anxiety
Applicable to stress	Enjoyable	Reduces rumination
Reduces rumination	Enjoyable	Reduces rumination
Reduces stress (whole class)	Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination
Good for calming	Different	Relaxing
Enjoyable/different	Fun	Induces feeling of calm
Enjoyable/different	Reduces rumination	Induces feeling of calm
Enjoyable	Reduces stress	Induces feeling of calm
Good for relaxation	Relaxing	Enjoyable
Induces feeling of calm	Induces feeling of calm	Fun

Induces feeling of calm	Induces feeling of calm	Calming
Induces feeling of calm	Induces feeling of calm	Calming
Reduces stress	Relaxing	Calming
Reduces sadness	Relaxing	Peaceful
Reduces rumination	Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination
Reduces rumination	Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination
Induces feeling of calm	Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination
Induces feeling of calm	Induces feeling of calm	Reduces worry
Induces feeling of calm	Relaxing	Enjoyable
Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination/nerves	Induces feeling of calm
Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination	Enjoyable/fun
Induces feeling of calm	Reduces rumination	Enjoyable
Induces feeling of calm	Reduces anxiety/nerves	Reduces stress
Reduces rumination	Reduces rumination	Calming (stress)
Reduces rumination	Reduces rumination	Calming (worry)

Sub-theme two: pupils' wellbeing - teachers' perceptions

YEAR 6S	YEAR 5s	YEAR 3s
Beneficial	Beneficial in personal lives	Coping strategy (stress)
Calming	Calming	Good for calming/destressing
Life skill	Relaxing	Good for friendships
Beneficial	Enjoyable	Resolving conflicts
Reduces stress	Reduces rumination	Good for emotional support
Beneficial	Enjoyable	Calming
Good for calming	Beneficial - coping	Good for destressing
Good for calming	Calming	
Enjoyable	Reduces anxiety	
Calming	Enjoyable	
Enjoyable/different	Relationships	
Enjoyable/different	Enjoyable	
Enjoyable	Interesting	
	Beneficial – coping strategy	
	Calming strategy – nerves	
	Reduces rumination	

Sub-theme three: teachers' wellbeing - teachers' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Calming	Good for teacher stress	
De-stressing	Good for teacher stress	
Beneficial (kinder to oneself)		
Good for teacher stress		
Good for teacher stress		
Good for positive thinking		
Reduces negative rumination		

Sub-theme four: conflict resolution/relations – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Good for conflict resolution	Good for conflict resolution	Good coping strategy (stress during conflict)
Good for conflict resolution	Reduces stress (relationships)	Good for calming (conflict)
Good for conflict resolution	Good for conflict resolution	Coping with anger (interpersonal)
Good for conflict resolution	Good for conflict resolution (interpersonal)	Good for conflict resolution
Good for dealing with issues	Good for conflict resolution	Good for conflict resolution
Good for conflict resolution/coping	Good for conflict resolution	Good for conflict resolution
	Good for conflict resolution	Induces feeling of calm (conflict)
	Good coping strategy (conflict)	Good for conflict resolution

Sub-theme five: self-perception – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Good coping strategy – emotional support
Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Good cooping strategy – when hurt
Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	Happier person
Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Improves behaviour	More positive person
Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Intrapersonal skills (not reacting)	Happier person
Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	

Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Improves relationships (interpersonal)	Calmer person
Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Calming (conflict)	Induces feeling of happiness
Improves self-control (interpersonal)	Improves behaviour	Good for friendships
Greater awareness	Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	Calming (difficult situations)
Improves self-control (intrapersonal)	Increased awareness	Improves mindset
Improves interpersonal skills	Less automatic pilot	More positive thinking person
calming down (interpersonal)	Good coping strategy - moods (intrapersonal)	Nicer person
Greater awareness	Being kinder (interpersonal)	Keeping perspective
Improves interpersonal skills	Improves relationships (interpersonal skills)	Greater resilience
Increased empathy (intrapersonal)	Increased empathy (intrapersonal)	Positive thinking
Choosing not to react (interpersonal)	Improves behaviour	Choosing not to react (interpersonal)
	Greater awareness	Good coping strategy (difficult situation)
	Choosing not to react (interpersonal)	Improve self-control (intrapersonal)
		Beneficial
		Mental wellbeing
		Improves self-control (intrapersonal)
		Improves self-control (calming)
		Improves self-control (calming)

Sub-theme six: behaviour/calming – teachers' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Controlling certain groups' behaviour	Calming (behaviour management)	Behaviour management
Impacts on behaviour	Calming things down (behaviour management)	Calming (behaviour management)
Calming behaviour	Calming (behaviour management)	Good for calming (behaviour management)
		Good for calming (behaviour management)
		Good for calming (behaviour management)

Sub-theme seven: academic functioning - pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Improves focus	Improves focus	Improves focus
Improves focus	calming (work)	Calming (exams)
Improves focus	Improves focus	Reduces nerves (exams)
Improves focus	Improves focus	Good for behaviour
Improves focus	Calming (exams)	Improves focus
Calming nerves (exams)	Calming (homework)	Calming (stay on task)
Improving focus	Reduces stress (exams)	
Improves memory	Good for focus	
Induces calm	Improves focus	
Improves focus	Improves focus	
Improves academic performance	Improves focus	
Improves academic performance	Improves focus	
Good for calming (tests)	Reduces nerves	
Good for academic work (tests)	Reduces nerves (performance)	
Reduces nerves (competition)	Reduces exam stress	
Reduces nerves (tests)	Reduces exam stress	
Reduces nerves (tests)		
Reduces nerves (competition)		
Improves focus		
Good for focus		
Clears the mind		
Reduces nerves		
Good for tests		
Calming (exams)		
Reduces nerves (exams)		
Reduces exam stress		
Calming (exams)		
Calming (exams)		

Sub-theme eight: academic functioning – teachers' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Technique to support work-related stress	Good for calming (work-related)	Good for focus
Technique to support work-related stress	Good for work-related nerves	Good for focus
Technique to support work-related stress	Impacts on confidence	Good for focus
Technique to support work-related issues	Calming (exams/assessments)	Good for supporting assessments
Technique to support work	Calming (work-related)	Good for calming
Good for concentration	Improve results	
Good for re-focusing		
Good for academic functioning		
Calming – work-related stress		
Calming – work-related stress		
Good to support academic functioning		
Good to support academic functioning		

Theme two: _acceptability_ of mindfulness in school

Sub-theme one: time constraints – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Busy curriculum	Time constraints	Busy curriculum
Time constraints	Time constraints	Time constraints
Time constraints	Time constraints	Busy curriculum
Time constraints	Busy curriculum	Time constraints
Time constraints	Time constraints	Time constraints
Time constraints	Time constraints	Busy curriculum
Time constraints	Time constraints	Time constraints
Time constraint	Time constraints	
Busy curriculum	Busy curriculum	
Time constraints		
Time constraints		
Time constraints		

Sub-theme two: time constraint – teachers' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Time constraints	Time constraints	Time constraints
Time constraints/other priorities	Timetabling	Other priorities
Time constraints/other priorities	Time constraints	Time constraints
Busy timetables	Time constraints	Time constraints
Busy timetables	Other priorities	Time constraints
Time constraints	Timetabling	Time constraints/busy curriculum
Time constraints	Time constraints	Time constraints
Busy curriculum	Other priorities	Time constraints
Time constraints	Time constraints	Time constraints
Other priorities	Time constraints	
Time constraints	Other priorities	
Timetabling constraints	Time constraints	
Time constraints	Time constraints	
Other priorities	Teacher busy	
Time constraints		
Time constraints		
Timetabling		
Other priorities		
Timetabling		
Other priorities		

Sub-theme three: teacher reluctance – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Remembering to practice	Teacher forgetting	Other priorities
Remembering to practice	Teacher reluctant	Remembering
Remembering to practice	Other priorities	Remembering
Teacher forgetting		Remembering
Teacher forgetting		
Teacher forgetting		
Teacher reluctance		
Teacher reluctance		

Teacher remembering Remembering Teacher reluctance		

Sub-theme four: teacher reluctance – teachers' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Understanding of concept	Remembering	Lack of understanding concept
Scepticism	Remembering	Remembering
Scepticism	Remembering	Scepticism
Remembering	Reluctance	Not all on board
Remembering	Remembering	Not all on board
Remembering	Not all staff on board	Whole school approach
Remembering	Fad – one more thing	Not all on board
Not all staff on board	All staff on board	Not all on board
Scepticism/next fad	Scepticism	Remembering
Not all staff being on board	Not all staff on board	Whole school approach
Scepticism	Not all staff on board	Not all on board
Authentic teaching	Remembering	Not all on board
Remembering	Scepticism	Staff resistance
All staff on board	Scepticism	Staff resistance
Next fad		Lack of understanding concept
Next fad		Staff resistance
		Teacher reluctance
		Lack of understanding concept
		Not all staff on board
		Unmanageable fad

Sub-theme five: environment – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Self-conscious	Noisy environment	Noisy environment
Noisy environment	Noisy environment	
Noisy environment	Unsuitable environment	

Unsuitable environment	Noisy environment	
Noisy environment	Noisy environment	
	Unsuitable environment (space)	

Sub-theme six: environment – teachers' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Articulating feelings - challenging	Unpredictable environment	Programme suitability
Building – inappropriate	Busy environment	Understanding of concept
	Unpredictable environment	Differentiated programme
	Length of lesson	Age suitability
		Age suitability
		Age suitability
		Differentiation
		Appropriateness of classroom
		Age suitability
		Classroom setting – noisy

Sub-theme seven: conscripted audience – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Not all wanting to practice	Not all wanting to practice	Not wanting to practice
Not all wanting to practice		

Sub-theme eight: understanding mindfulness concept – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
Pathologizing mindfulness	Authenticity of teaching	Lack of trained teacher
Instrumentalised/technique	Lack of understanding of concept	Lack of understating of concept
Pathologizing mindfulness	Lack of understanding of concept	Intention of practice (winding people up)
Pathologizing mindfulness		Lack of understanding of concept
Lack of understanding of concept		Intention of practice (work avoidance)
		Intention of practice (work avoidance)

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s	Year 3s
No instant result/non measurable Proof - non measurable	Proof of effectiveness Measuring impact – problem Measuring	

Theme three: perceptions of *potentiality* and *acceptability* of journaling (years 5 and 6)

Sub-theme one: enjoyable/different – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s
Enjoyable and different Enjoyable Enjoyable Enjoyable Enjoyable Relaxing Different Pleasant Enjoyable Calming	Calming

Sub-theme two: wellbeing – pupils' perceptions

YEAR 6s	YEAR 5s
Good for focusing Thought provoking Clears the mind Good for emotional support Good for emotional support Encourages reflection Good for emotional support Good for focusing	Reduces rumination (negative thoughts) Reduces rumination (negative thoughts) Helpful Enjoyable Calming Relaxing

| Encourages reflection
Good for emotional support
Good for relationships
Improves self-control | |

Sub-theme three: pupils' wellbeing – teachers' perceptions

| **YEAR 6s**
Enjoyable
Focused/peaceful
Emotionally supportive
Enjoyable
Calming
Enjoyable | **YEAR 5s**
Beneficial – frazzled mind |

Sub-theme four: work – pupils' perceptions

| **YEAR 6s** | **YEAR 5s**
It's like work – not enjoyable |

Sub-theme five: work – teachers' perceptions

| **YEAR 6s** | **YEAR 5s**
Writing tedious |

Sub-theme six: time constraints - teachers' perceptions

| **YEAR 6s** | **YEAR 5s**
Time constraints
Other priorities |