The Effects of Implementing Mindfulness Into Teacher Pedagogy, and the Effects of Implementation on Stress, Student-Teacher Relationships and Classroom Climate

By

Sarah Yacoub

A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Teaching
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Copyright by Sarah Yacoub, April 2017
Abstract

This qualitative research study investigates the effects of mindfulness implementation in Ontario elementary classrooms, and the effects of such practices on the overall stress levels of teachers in their practice, the student-teacher relationships within the classroom, and the overall classroom climate. To collect data, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with elementary educators who have a personal practice of mindfulness outside of their classrooms, and who implement mindfulness into their teaching pedagogy. Through analyzing my data alongside existing literature, three themes emerged: 1) mindful elementary educators recognize that successful implementation of mindfulness stems from a personal connection to mindfulness, gathering information from a variety of sources (ie. text, online), and practicing mindfulness daily in their classrooms, 2) mindful elementary educators recognize the benefits of practicing mindfulness in their classrooms, including reduced stress levels, positive student-teacher relations and overall classroom climate, and 3) mindful elementary educators recognize the various academic, behavioural, and attitudinal challenges that come with implementing mindfulness practices in their classrooms and with their students. Implications for the educational community and myself as a teacher-researcher are then discussed based on the effects of mindful integration in classrooms. Recommendations are then made for how teachers and school boards can introduce and implement feasible mindfulness programs into their classrooms and schools. Recommendations are also made for how teacher education programs can integrate mindfulness practices and studies into their programs, to inform teacher candidates of the benefits and outcomes of introducing mindfulness into their own teaching practices.

Keywords: mindfulness, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, stress, burnout, educators, elementary, implementation, teaching practice
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the University of Toronto and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education for welcoming me into the Master of Teaching program. To Angela MacDonald-Vemic and Sarah Cashmore, thank you for your guidance and support throughout the two-year research process. To my peers and professors in the Primary Junior division, thank you for your constant support, and for always helping me to drive my thinking beyond what I thought I was capable of. To my participants, thank you for taking the time to share your experiences and critical insights with me, and for the invaluable work you do every day with your students. Finally, thank you to my family, friends, and loved ones, with special thanks to my parents and Christopher Vinelli, for your unconditional love and support throughout this process.
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................2
Acknowledgements .....................................................3

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research ..........................................6
  1.0 Research Context ..................................................6
  1.1 Research Problem ..................................................8
  1.2 Research Purpose ...................................................9
  1.3 Research Questions .................................................9
  1.4 Reflexive Positioning Statement ......................................9
  1.5 Preview of the Whole ................................................11

Chapter 2: Literature Review ..................................................12
  2.0 Introduction .......................................................12
  2.1 What is Mindfulness? ................................................12
    2.1.1 Mindfulness versus mindlessness ................................13
  2.2 Mindfulness and Views of Intelligence ..................................14
    2.2.1 Fixed views of intelligence .....................................15
    2.2.2 Malleable views of intelligence ..................................16
    2.2.3 Teacher mindfulness and student self-appraisal ....................17
  2.3 Teacher Stress and Burnout ..........................................18
    2.3.1 Motivation, self-determination, and teacher burnout .............20
    2.3.2 Teacher efficacy and burnout .....................................21
  2.4 Mindfulness Training and Teacher Burnout ................................22
  2.5 Conclusion ........................................................24

Chapter 3: Methodology .....................................................26
  3.0 Introduction .......................................................26
  3.1 Research Approach and Procedures ...................................26
  3.2 Instruments of Data Collection ......................................28
  3.3 Participants ........................................................29
    3.3.1 Sampling criteria .................................................29
    3.3.2 Recruitment procedures .........................................30
    3.3.3 Participant biographies ..........................................31
  3.4 Data Analysis ........................................................33
  3.5 Ethical Reviews Procedures .........................................34
  3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths ............................35
  3.7 Conclusion ........................................................36

Chapter 4: Findings .......................................................38
  4.0 Introduction .......................................................38
  4.1 Mindful Elementary Educators Recognize That Successful Implementation Of
Mindfulness Stems From A Personal Connection To Mindfulness, Gathering Information
From A Variety Of Sources (ie. Text, Online), And Practicing Mindfulness Daily In
Their Classrooms ...........................................................39
    4.1.1 Mindful educators each have a personal connection to mindfulness outside
of their classroom practice ................................................39
4.1.2 Mindful educators find value in gathering resources from a variety of sources, such as online, text, and through personal connections .................................................................40
4.1.3 Mindful educators implement a variety of daily mindfulness practices and strategies into their classrooms ........................................................................................................41
4.2 Mindful Elementary Educators Recognize The Benefits Of Practicing Mindfulness In Their Classrooms, Including Reduced Stress Levels, Positive Student-Teacher Relations And Overall Classroom Climate .................................................................43
  4.2.1 Mindful educators found a reduction in stress levels for both themselves and for their students through the implementation of mindfulness practices and strategies in their classrooms ........................................................................................................44
  4.2.2 Mindful educators note an improvement in their student-teacher relationships through the practice of mindfulness within the classroom .................................................45
  4.2.3 Mindful educators note that mindfulness implementation has a strong and positive impact on the overall classroom climate .................................................................47
4.3 Mindful Elementary Educators Recognize The Various Academic, Behavioural, and Attitudinal Challenges That Come With Implementing Mindfulness Practices In Their Classrooms And With Their Students .........................................................................................48
  4.3.1 Mindful educators note that a significant challenge to mindfulness implementation is lack of student interest ...................................................................................................48
  4.3.2 Mindful educators note that another challenge to mindfulness implementation is the lack of funding and resources devoted to mindfulness in education ...........................................49
4.4 Conclusion .................................................................................................................................50

Chapter 5: Implications ....................................................................................................................52
  5.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................................52
  5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance ........................................................................53
  5.2 Implications ..................................................................................................................................56
    5.2.1 The educational research community .......................................................................................57
    5.2.2 My professional identity and practice .......................................................................................57
  5.3 Recommendations .......................................................................................................................58
    5.3.1 Teacher education and professional development .......................................................................58
    5.3.2 Teachers ..................................................................................................................................59
    5.3.3 School boards, administrators, and policy makers .......................................................................60
  5.4 Areas for Further Research ........................................................................................................60
  5.5 Concluding Comments .................................................................................................................61

References ...........................................................................................................................................63
Appendix A: Interview Questions ........................................................................................................68
Appendix B: Letter of Consent ............................................................................................................70
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

In the last three decades, the phenomenon of mental health and psychological well-being has come into the spotlight of research, due to the increasing prevalence of psychological distress in both clinical and non-clinical individuals (Bohlmeijer, Prenger, Taal & Cuijpers, 2010). This has also given rise to the recent study of mindfulness, and how developing such a skill could not only benefit clinical populations, but also those non-clinical individuals who continue to face various stressors in their professional and everyday lives (Collard, Avny & Boniwell, 2009). To be in a state of mindfulness, or a state of non-judgemental awareness to one’s current experiences, has been proven to not only reduce instances of emotional stress and exhaustion, but has also been shown to alleviate how satisfied an individual is with their current job situation (Hülsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt & Lang, 2013). The benefits of various mindfulness interventions are noted in comparison to individuals who have not had such exposure, therefore insinuating the benefits that such practices can have in the everyday lives of healthy individuals (Hülsheger et al., 2013).

With such benefits of mindfulness noted, many training and participation groups have come to light. For example, a program that is now available for any willing participant is called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt & Walach, 2004). MBSR provides individuals with a structured group environment in which they work on implementing mindfulness meditation, in order to relieve and prevent the negative psychological symptoms they are experiencing (Grossman et al., 2004). The successful implementation of MBSR with non-clinical
populations has lead to the establishment of a similar mindfulness-training program called Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Training (MBCT) (Evans, Ferrando, Findler, Stowell, Smart & Haglin, 2008). MBCT is also a group treatment program that helps individuals develop strategies of how to implement a more mindful view on life through mindfulness meditation, and is also a program that is open to any individual willing to participate (Evans et al., 2008). Such mindfulness interventions and training programs, alongside the many other similar mindfulness-based programs that exist today, all have common goals in both clinical and non-clinical populations: 1) make individuals aware of what it means to be mindful and how to construct this state of mind, 2) how such a mindful state of processing has many potential psychological and life-satisfactory benefits, and 3) how to implement such skills learned through training into one’s everyday life (Grossman et al., 2004; Evans et al., 2008, Collard et al., 2009).

More recently, psychological and educational researchers have been able to link the benefits found in mindfulness training to the alleviation of stress and burnout experienced by many teachers throughout their careers (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus & Davidson, 2013). It is known that the problem of teacher stress and burnout has become increasingly prevalent in the past two decades, and is coined as a term referring to the feelings of emotional exhaustion, tension, frustration, anxiety and depression, alongside physical, emotional, and attitudinal exhaustion (Farber, 1991; Kyriacou, 1987). However, many benefits regarding preventative measures and stress and burnout symptoms have been noted through the implementation of various mindfulness training programs for teachers (Flook et al., 2013). MBSR and Mindfulness Training (MT) sessions are a significant example of cost effective methods that have been proven to
significantly reduce levels of stress, anxiety and depression in teachers experiencing burnout symptoms, alongside increasing the ability of these individuals to have a more mindful outlook in their daily teaching practice (Gold, Smith, Hopper, Herne, Tansey & Hulland, 2010; Flook et al., 2013).

1.1 Research Problem

Although the connection between mindfulness and psychological well-being has become of recent and critical interest in the field of education, it seems as though there is a gap in the existing research. Less attention has been put towards assessing whether teacher stress and burnout has a negative effect on the relationships that exist between these teachers and their students, alongside whether or not the climate of the classroom is effected on a holistic level. More attention has been placed towards researching the relationship between school and classroom psychosocial environment in relation to teacher burnout, which has continued to support the fact that work pressure and staff cooperation and consensus have a direct impact on teachers experiencing burnout symptoms such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Doorman, 2003; Gold, Smith, Hopper, Herne, Tansey & Hulland, 2010; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus & Davidson, 2013). In response, more critical research attention needs to be put towards the next steps that these teachers experiencing such burnout take, with those who specifically implement forms of mindfulness training into their pedagogical classroom practice, as a response to such symptoms. In such cases, it would be critical to assess whether or not the implementation of mindfulness into these teachers’ own pedagogy has had any effect on their relationships with their students, the affective nature of the classroom climate as a whole, and their overall experience with stress and burnout symptoms.
1.2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research study is to learn how elementary teachers implement mindfulness training into their teaching pedagogy for themselves and their students, with the hopes of learning what outcomes they observe for teacher-student relationships, overall classroom climate, alongside how this implementation effects their stress and burnout experiences in their practice. It is also conducted to note what resources these teachers are using to bring mindfulness practices into their classrooms, alongside uncovering any challenges they may face throughout the implementation process.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study is: How does a small sample of elementary educators implement mindfulness in their teaching practice, and what outcomes do they experience and observe in relation to stress, student-teacher relationships, and classroom climate? Subsidiary questions to continue guiding this research include:

- What range of mindfulness-based practices do these teachers enact and what range of outcomes do they observe as a result of these?
- What resources developed these teachers’ knowledge of mindfulness, and how do they implement them in their personal and professional life?
- What challenges do these teachers encounter when integrating a mindfulness practices into their teaching practice?

1.4 Background of Researcher

As a teacher candidate interested in the study of mindfulness and implementing a mindfulness-based pedagogy into my own future classrooms, I have a keen interest in
studying not only the benefits of mindfulness regarding one’s psychological health and well being, but how such benefits can have an impact on student-teacher relationships, and the classroom climate as a whole. I have an extensive background in the fields of Psychology and Cognitive Science as I completed my Honours Bachelor of Science at the University of Toronto in these disciplines. Throughout my years of study, I was given the opportunity to study the concept of mindfulness, the implementation of mindfulness in daily life, and various outcomes of the practice, all through the different educational lenses provided by both fields of study. I feel as though this background knowledge that I have gained throughout my undergraduate degree, alongside my curiosity regarding how mindfulness can have a significant impact on classroom experiences, acts as a significant driving force behind this study.

I also believe that my experiences working as a volunteer student teacher in a mental health day treatment centre has further sparked my interest. The day-treatment environment has exposed me to various implementations of mindfulness in a classroom setting, not only for the students’ own benefit, but for the teachers working in the facility as well. Being exposed to such a high-stress environment where teachers are highly likely to experience stress and burnout symptoms has allowed me to further realize the potential benefits of practicing mindfulness, and the various skills that one can develop through such practice. Working in this mental health facility has also sparked my interest in wanting to make the connection with how students in mainstream classrooms could also benefit from the implementation of mindfulness in their classrooms as well.
1.5 Overview

To respond to the research questions, I conducted a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling to interview three teachers about the implementation of mindfulness into their teaching practice, and what outcomes they observed in relation to the stress levels of themselves and their students, student-teacher relationships, and the overall classroom climate. In Chapter 2 I review the literature behind mindfulness and the benefits of such programs, alongside connections between mindfulness and education. In Chapter 3, I elaborate on the research design of the current study. In Chapter 4, I report my research findings and discuss their significance in light of the existing research literature. Finally, in Chapter 5 I identify the implications of the research findings for my own teacher identity and practice, and for the educational research community more broadly. I also articulate a series of questions raised by the research findings, and point to areas for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I review literature on the topic of mindfulness through highlighting what it means to be mindful, and various implications of implementing mindfulness on assessing one’s intelligence (Dweck, 1986; Langer, 1992). I also discuss teacher stress and burnout, alongside the causes behind the recent phenomenon (Farber, 1991; Fernet, Guay, Senecal & Austin, 2012). Previous research done on the negative implications of teacher stress and burnout in regards to teacher motivation and self-efficacy will also be brought forth (Fernet et al., 2012). The benefits of mindfulness training will then be discussed, while highlighting the more recent research that connects the benefits of mindfulness training to teachers’ practices. I also bring forth research that emphasizes the psychological benefits of practicing mindfulness, and how such training can be a positive resource to prevent teachers from experiencing overstress and burnout. Finally, the importance of taking an educational lens to the current research on mindfulness is highlighted, as the possibility of a connection between mindfulness and the affective nature of a classroom, including student-teacher relationships, has not been given significant attention in previous research.

2.1 What is Mindfulness?

In the last decade, research on mindfulness has gained significant consideration, and has become at the forefront of interest for individuals in both psychological and educational fields. The first influential study of mindfulness was brought forth by Ellen Langer (1992), who states that to be mindful is to be in a state of present conscious awareness, in which one is implicitly aware of the contextual information present before
them (Langer, 1992). Such a state of mind is characterized by an open and unbiased look towards reality, in which an individual is able to continually and actively be aware of their surroundings, and make novel distinctions that they may not be aware of if they had not been in such a mindful and present state (Langer, 1992). When considering the difference between mindful and mindless processing through the educational lens, it seems clear that in order for an educator to provide their students with the best possible classroom experience, regarding each individual student's type of learning and specific needs, one needs to be as mindful and consciously aware as possible.

### 2.1.1 Mindfulness versus mindlessness

A mindless state of processing is one in which an individual is stuck in an existing mind frame, that does not allow them to have awareness towards the present moment, and makes them unaware of new and varying information that differs from what they have been normalized to in their environment (Langer, 1992). These conditions leave little room for the individual to critically process the information and recognize what information is context dependent, and will thus be left in a state that doesn't allow for mindful awareness (Langer, 1992). Langer suggests that information that has been mindlessly processed due to such impeding factors has frozen in it's interpreted meaning, with little room for one to be able to come back and cognitively re-process this information in another context (Langer, 1992). In looking at the term mindfulness in a more relatable manner, to be mindful is to be able to connect to one’s present experience in a positive and accepting way (Ward, 2014). This allows for incoming information to be processed in an unbiased conscious manner, to allow for the individual to focus on their moment to moment experiences (Ward, 2014).
The work of Langer (1992) brings forth important information regarding the success of an educator in a classroom environment, as falling into a mindless state of processing can have a significantly negative impact on the both the students, the teacher, and the relationship between the two. Being stuck in a frame of mind that doesn't allow for one to be in an open and present conscious state with their students may ultimately prevent the teacher from being completely aware of the happenings within their classrooms. It is critical to note that Langer’s (1992) groundbreaking work on the importance of an open and malleable frame of mind, alongside highlighting the difference between mindful and mindless processing, has not been considered in the context of mindfulness practices having an effect on student-teacher relations, alongside the affective nature of the classroom. Looking at Langer’s (1992) research in this light ultimately provides great grounds for the current research on how elementary educators implementing mindfulness training into their teaching practices can ultimately act as a preventative measure to not only mindless processing, but benefit the psychological well being of the educator, and the relationships that they build with their students.

2.2 Mindfulness and Views of Intelligence

Another researcher that has had an impact on the study of mindfulness in relation to views of intelligence, and therefore student success, is Carol Dweck (1986). The focus of Dweck’s (1986) work emphasizes the importance of self-appraisal, known as the evaluation of one’s own strengths and weaknesses, and self-knowledge, or having an understanding of one’s own abilities, motivations, and characteristics, and how these self-evaluative tendencies ultimately affect the way one interacts with their surroundings (Dweck, 1986). With this in mind, Dweck brings forth the notion that individuals have
one of two opposing views of intelligence, and how these varying views effect how individuals assess their own self worth and self importance (Dweck, 1986).

2.2.1 Fixed views of intelligence

The first view of intelligence that some people possess is a fixed view, in which they believe that intelligence is a fixed trait, with each individual having a set and unalterable amount (Dweck, 1986). With this view, individuals believe that their performance directly measures their competence, with failure therefore indicating an ultimate lack of intelligence (Dweck, 1986). This fixed view of intelligence that Dweck (1986) brings forth is one that is highly likely to be present within elementary level classrooms, as many students believe that if they do not succeed at the task at hand, they must not possess sufficient knowledge within that subject matter. It can also be said that, if not made aware, teachers may also possess this view of intelligence, and thus may hold similar beliefs towards their students. This would entail educators believing that a students’ performance on a task directly measures their competence regarding that information, and thus leaves them providing students with evaluations on that basis. Such a view of intelligence as held by students regarding their own merit and self-evaluations, and teachers assessing their students’ educational progress, can be seen as a mindless state of assessing one’s own strengths and abilities, ultimately preventing the growth and learning of their students. Such a view does not support the notion of various intelligences within a classroom, and doesn't allow for one to understand their own learning styles, and the best way for them to represent the knowledge they do possess.
2.2.2 Malleable views of intelligence

The second view of intelligence is the malleable view, in which one believes that intelligence is not fixed, but has the potential to be continually developed over time (Dweck, 1986). In this case, performance does not directly measure competence, but measures one’s skill level, strategies, and effort on the task at hand (Dweck, 1986). Thus, if failure is indicated on a task, the task may not have been the right way to indicate what knowledge that certain individual possesses regarding that subject matter (Dweck, 1986). This view of intelligence is very important for educators to possess, as it truly highlights the importance of having a mindful and continually refreshed understanding of what each students’ strengths and weaknesses are, and what bank of multiple intelligences they do possess. Having this understanding that intelligence is malleable, and that performance doesn't directly relate to competence, is a great indicator of how mindfully aware an educator is of their students. Possessing this mindful view of intelligence can ultimately have a positive effect on the student-teacher relationships, alongside allowing for a more encouraging and accepting affective classroom environment as a whole. In looking at the connection between mindfulness and views of intelligence, it is so critical for classroom teachers, especially with the cultural diversity present in Ontario, to have an open and accepting view of the many cultures they will interact with (Thomas, 2006). To be culturally intelligent relates to one’s ability to deal with individuals from varying cultural backgrounds in a positive and successful manner (Thomas, 2006). As research has stated that one’s ability to have a mindful outlook in their day-to-day experiences allows for such individuals to be more culturally intelligent, it can be noted that such an outlook would be very positive and necessary in any classroom filled naturally made up of
students of different cultural backgrounds (Thomas, 2006). In turn, this mindful outlook and cultural intelligence could go hand in hand in allowing for teachers to analyze their students’ intelligence in a more malleable and unbiased manner.

2.2.3 Teacher mindfulness and student self-appraisal

In relation to mindfulness and views on intelligence, Dweck conducts another study proving the vast effect that teacher-praise has on students’ self appraisal, and how important it is to be mindful of the types of praise given to students based on their performance. In this experiment, students are initially given a challenging task that, through persistence, they all succeed at (Dweck & Elliot, 1988). Students are then divided into three groups, with the first being praised for their intelligence, the second praised for their efforts on the task, and the third praised for their performance (Dweck & Elliot, 1988). When students were offered a choice of what to work on next, students in the first group that were praised for their intelligence chose to work on a safe task that they were highly likely to succeed in, with 90% of the second group choosing to work on the more challenging learning task (Dweck & Elliot, 1988). Finally, each group was given a challenging task that was the same difficulty level as the first task they had completed, and enjoyment ratings were notably lower as indicated by the first group (Dweck & Elliot, 1988).

This influential work by Dweck and Elliot (1988) highlights the importance of teachers implementing more mindfulness training into their teaching practices, as this can allow them to be more aware of the type of feedback they are giving to their students, and how that positively or negatively effects their students’ own self appraisals and evaluations. Alongside this notion, Dweck and Elliot’s (1988) groundbreaking research
can also help teachers realize that a more mindful state of being can have a strong positive effect towards the affective nature of the classroom environment as a whole, allowing students to gain a better grasp of their own intelligence and mindful processing habits, and ultimately making them more mindful of the fact that their intelligence is malleable, with continuous room to grow.

Thus, it has been made clear that the influential works of Dweck (1986), and Dweck and Elliot (1988), which have brought mindfulness to the forefront of research over the last decade, should now be analyzed from the view of an educator. This research should ultimately lead elementary educators to understanding that implementing mindfulness into one’s practice can not only have the possibility of strengthening the relationship between themselves and their students, but may also positively elevate the climate of their classrooms. Ultimately, the implementation of mindfulness could allow for these elementary educators to be more attuned to, and aware of, their students educational and socio-emotional needs, all while aiding in their own psychological health.

### 2.3 Teacher Stress and Burnout

For many years in the field of educational research, the study of teacher stress and burnout has been of utmost fascination. As the job of teaching comes with many roles and responsibilities, it is no secret that at times, the job can lead teachers to feeling overly stressed and unsuccessful (Farber, 1991). As many teachers have reported feeling this way, much research had gone into the term coined ‘teacher stress and burnout’ (Farber, 1991). The phrase ‘teacher burnout’ is used to refer to three components of a teachers’ negative experience in the classroom; including the build up of emotional exhaustion,
depersonalization or losing one’s sense of personal identity in relation to their practice, along with the feelings of reduced personal accomplishment (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). In terms of the psychological well-being of teachers experiencing these symptoms, it is no surprise that with continually experiencing these symptoms comes a decrease in one’s own psychological and physical health and well-being (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999).

Regardless of whether these teachers belong to the primary, junior, intermediate, or senior teaching divisions, there have been a few common causal pathways noted that are most likely to lead teachers to experience these symptoms. Under the umbrella-terms of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, factors including a negative classroom climate, or environment, alongside an unbearable work overload that builds over time, are significant factors that lead to teacher burnout over time (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999). Low feelings of self-esteem, lack of peer support, alongside many instances of stressful decision making, in which one may not seem completely confident in the decisions they make regarding their students educational experiences, are also among the happenings that lead to one of the three main umbrella terms of teacher burnout, being the lack of a sense of personal accomplishment (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999).

As noted previously, experiencing symptoms linked to teacher stress and burnout ultimately has a negative impact on the psychological well being of the teacher, and therefore likely has negative repercussions on how they feel towards, and succeed in, their teaching practice. However, with the psychological health of the teacher being negatively affected, one can only wonder whether that these negative psychological indicators trickle down, and thus hinder, the connections that exist between the student
MINDFULNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

and teacher, alongside impeding the affective nature of the classroom environment. In researching the connection between teacher burnout and student-teacher relationships, it seems as though there has been significant findings regarding persistent patterns in judging student behaviours and daily patterns of activity, as being significantly related to unpleasant emotional experiences for teachers, and leading to teacher burnout (Chang, 2009). Thus, it can been noted that a response to such findings would be for teachers to find a way to become more aware of how they experience these emotions, and for them to understand how these emotions are triggered, while also learning how to regulate these emotions (Chang, 2009). In response, as the implementation of mindfulness has been found to aid in emotional regulation abilities (Hill & Updegraff, 2012), it only seems to be a natural progression to research how mindfulness that is implemented in teacher pedagogy could help alleviate stress and burnout symptoms through aiding in emotional regulation and control.

2.3.1 Motivation, self determination, and teacher burnout

As it has been observed that emotional and psychological well-being are directly affected by burnout symptoms, it is also important to note that one’s intrinsic motivation towards their teaching practice is directly affected by such symptoms (Chang, 2009). A study conducted by Fernet and colleagues (2012) highlights the connection between Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2002), and motivational factors, as having a direct effect on teacher stress and burnout. SDT is an approach to human motivation, in which actions driven by intrinsic, or autonomous, motivations are regarded as successful for one to function at their optimal potential (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2002). In terms of motivational factors, one can either be intrinsically motivated towards their
practice, meaning that they are teaching for pure enjoyment, or extrinsically motivated, meaning that they are working towards an external goal, such as pay (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Using an intraindividual assessment approach, Fernet and colleagues (2012) concluded that the more teachers’ perceive a positive and supportive school environment, alongside having a heightened level of intrinsic motivation towards their teaching practice, the less burnout they will experience. This is in comparison to their counterparts who feel more negatively about the school environment, and thus have lower levels of intrinsic motivation towards teaching (Fernet et al., 2012). Such findings highlight the importance of finding and developing effective interventions that can keep teachers intrinsically motivated towards being successful, available, and mindful in their practice. Consequently, these findings highlight the importance of having teachers implement a more mindful approach to their practice, in order to prevent themselves from experiencing the psychological distress of burnout, alongside heightening the possibility of hindering the relationships that they have with their students, due to a lack of intrinsic motivation.

2.3.2 Teacher efficacy and burnout

Alongside the importance of positive and intrinsic motivation in the classroom comes the significance of self-efficacy, or a belief in one’s own capabilities in order to achieve certain goals or attain desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977; 1986,). From an educational standpoint, teacher efficacy is related to one’s own belief in their capabilities to positively affect their students’ performance (Bergman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977). In looking at the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher burnout, it is noted that lower amounts of perceived self-efficacy lead to higher instances of
teachers experiencing symptoms of stress and burnout (Brouwer & Tomic, 2000). With this finding, it is critical to ensure that teachers feel positively regarding their own self-efficacy in their practice, as this has a direct influence on how they perceive their impact on their students.

A study conducted by Caldwell, Harrison, Marianne, Quin and Greeson (2010) assessed the effects of developing mindfulness through movement-based courses (i.e., pilates, yoga, taiji) on young adults, and whether this affected their self-regulatory self-efficacy abilities. These participants demonstrated an overall increase in mindfulness throughout the 15-week session of the course, alongside an overall increase in their self-regulatory self-efficacy abilities (Caldwell et al., 2010). Such findings provide great insight regarding the various methods of mindfulness implementation that can be pursued by educators, and the many benefits that such courses can have on their teaching practice. Having a positive outlook regarding one’s own self-efficacy is crucial to educators, because if a teacher does not strongly believe in their own capabilities to influence their students’ educational success, such beliefs may be evident to the students, and ultimately hinder the student-teacher relationships, alongside the way students perceive their own academic performance.

2.4 Mindfulness Training and Teacher Burnout

As teachers play one of the most crucial roles in a student’s educational experience, it is important to ensure that they feel as though they are functioning as a role model in their best capacity. Alongside the importance of the student’s educational experience is their socio-emotional well being, which can be seen as a direct reflection of the psychological and emotional tendencies that the teacher portrays out onto his or her
classroom. One of the most beneficial ways to ensure that teachers, and through their close association, their students, are psychologically well, is to limit the instances of teachers experiencing stress and burnout symptoms throughout their career. A study conducted by Flook and colleagues (2013) divided a group of public elementary school teachers into two groups; one participating in a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) four-week course, while the other acted as a control wait-list group. Findings suggest that teachers who participated in the MBSR course not only experienced a significant decrease in psychological stress and burnout, but were also found to have improvements in their overall classroom organization and management skills through observation, alongside an overall increase in self-compassion and heightened levels of mindful awareness (Flook et al., 2013).

These findings are critical, as it is noted that a great way to increase teachers’ awareness of their own capabilities as influential educators, and thus to increase the sense of positive self-efficacy present in their classrooms, is to ultimately increase the instances of mindfulness that they implement into their practice (Flook et al., 2013). Becoming more mindfully aware of one’s own capabilities and strengths through mindfulness training has been proven to be significantly beneficial to the psychological wellbeing of teachers who have experienced low levels of positive self-efficacy, while also proving to decrease instances of teacher stress and burnout (Flook et al., 2013; Roeser, Schonert-Reichl, Amishi, Cullen, Wallace, Wilensky, Oberle, Thomson, Taylor & Harrison, 2013).

On a similar note, a comparable study by Roeser and colleagues (2013), also conducted a Mindfulness Training (MT) program for one group of teachers, while having another group participate as a control wait-list group. Alongside having findings that
mimic those of Flook and colleagues (2013), Roeser and colleagues (2013) also found that those who had participated in the MT group were less likely to experience teacher stress and burnout symptoms in the following months after the program (Roeser et al., 2013). Therefore, a significant inverse relationship has been noted to exist between mindfulness training and teacher stress and burnout, which demonstrates the positive effect of mindfulness training in the practice of educators (Flook et al., 2013, Roeser et al., 2013). However, further research should be done assessing those educators who have implemented mindfulness into their pedagogies, in order to assess whether such practice has had any effect on their student-based relationships, alongside their overall classroom climate.

2.5 Conclusion

As noted with the vast findings of previous research listed above, mindfulness as a frame of mind is critical to the way one interprets their surroundings. It is also crucial to note that the issue of teacher stress and burnout is current and real, while having significant and numerous effects on the psychological well being, self-efficacy, self-determination, and motivational factors of the educators affected by these symptoms. Thus, it can be said that with a recently developed interest in benefitting the psychological health and well-being of teachers through mindfulness training, the issue of teacher burnout has been tended to. However, although these studies have shown us the significant results coming from implementing mindfulness training for their own psychological well being, little research has been done regarding the benefits of the mindfulness training on the affective relationship between the students and their teacher implementing mindfulness training into their pedagogy, alongside whether or not the
classroom climate is positively effected through this mindfulness implementation. Therefore, the current research focuses on the latter and less researched points, in order to gain an understanding as to whether implementing mindfulness training into the daily practice of the classroom teacher can have such an effect on the climate of the class, in terms of students feeling more encouraged and motivated, through the positive and more mindful energy being implemented into their teachers daily routine. The connection between practicing mindfulness and the affective nature of the relationships between students and their teacher is also looked at, alongside the variety of resources used by the teachers implementing mindfulness into their teaching practices, and any challenges they face in the process of mindfulness integration in their practice and with their students. Ultimately, it is my hope to add to the developing wealth of knowledge on mindfulness and education integration, and thus to hopefully encourage the integration of mindfulness training into the forefront of teacher education programs.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the research methodology of the current study, and highlight my methodological approach and the rationale behind these decisions, based on my research purpose and questions. I first highlight the research approach and procedure of the study, followed by the instruments of data collection. I then introduce the participants of this study, alongside the sampling criteria, recruitment procedures, and relevant information on the participants. I then describe the methods of data analysis, followed by highlighting the proper ethical review procedures taken in this study. Finally, I discuss any methodological limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Approach

This study was conducted using a qualitative research study. I will now discuss the benefits of qualitative research through reviewing the existing literature regarding this form of study, alongside the use of semi-structured interviews. While quantitative methodologies are known to deductively test theories from existing knowledge through developing hypothesized relationships, qualitative research is done through guidance by ideas and standpoints on certain subjects (Carr, 1994). Thus, it can be noted that a qualitative means of research is appropriate for the current study, as it was motivated by curiosity as to whether the implementation of mindfulness into a teacher’s practice has a direct effect on their student-teacher relationships and the overall classroom climate. Carr (1994) highlights the fact that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods of conducting a study is superior over the other, but that they ultimately both serve different purposes.
In terms of the research question at hand, both qualitative and quantitative research methods have varying approaches as to what types of questions each method should be used in the study. Quantitative research approaches are used to test existing hypotheses, and ultimately produce generalizable results that can have widespread benefits to large populations (Marshall, 1996). These studies serve the purpose of answering more theoretical ‘what’ questions, while qualitative studies involve the questioning of more complex and humanistic issues, thus serving the purpose of answering the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions of research (Marshall, 1996). Due to the complex and psychosocial nature of the research question at hand, a qualitative method of study seems to be the most appropriate means of research.

Another difference between qualitative and quantitative studies is how sample populations are chosen. Quantitative research studies require random sampling of the population to be done, in order to allow for the generalization of the results to the larger population (Carr, 1994). On the other hand, qualitative research samples are much smaller and specifically chosen samples of individuals, in order to address the depth and specificity of the research problem (Carr, 1994). Given the nature of the current research study, it is evident that a smaller specific sample of teachers that have experienced burnout alongside having implemented mindfulness into their practice is the more appropriate approach to use when sampling individuals, ultimately supporting the qualitative nature of this study.

Schmid (1981) describes qualitative research as having two underlying principles; the first being that human behaviour is influenced by the physical, sociocultural and psychological environment, and that behaviour goes beyond what is observed
empirically. This subjective nature and personal perception of experience is crucial in qualitative research, as it is through answering the current research question in a qualitative manner that these principles are addressed (Schmid, 1981).

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

There are various methods that can be used as a means of data collection when conducting research, with interviewing being the most common form of doing so (Drever, 1995). For the purposes of the current study, semi-structured interviews were used in order to collect data from the participants. This allowed all of the participants interviewed to be asked the same questions within a variable framework (Dearnley, 2005). In order to conduct a semi-structured interview, the researcher must set up a pre-established questioning structure, through deciding in advanced what information and grounds needs to be covered when meeting with their selected participants (Drever, 1995). Semi-structured interviews differ from structured interviews, in that semi-structured interviews allow the participants to have the freedom to delve into relative discussion that can stem from questions they are being asked during the interview (Drever, 1995). Structured interviews do not allow for that freedom of extended discussion, as they require participants to respond to only the questions that they are being asked directly (Drever, 1995).

As the current study involved interviewing a small and specific group of individuals, being teachers who have implemented mindfulness into their pedagogies, semi-structured interviews proved to be the most effective and suitable means of data collection (Drever, 1995). Semi-structured interviews allow for the opportunity of hearing about teachers’ specific and lived experiences in their field, ultimately allowing
for more in-depth and relative conversation (Dearnley, 2005). This can be seen as more beneficial in comparison to data that would have been collected from a written survey or structured interview, as both of those methods do not allow for the flexibility needed to have such meaningful and intuitive conversation (Dearnley, 2005). Semi-structured interviews also proved to be the most effective means of data collection for the purposes of the current study, as they are meant to be conducted with a small and specific group of individuals in order to be able to have that flexible and in-depth conversation, with structured interviews and surveys proving to be more time efficient and appropriate for studying a large and general sample of individuals (Dearnley, 2005).

3.3 Participants

In this section, the sampling criteria of the teachers being interviewed, recruitment strategies, and participant biographies will be highlighted. The participants chosen to partake in this study shared critical parallels in their pedagogies and field experiences, in response to their use of mindfulness training in their practices.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

Purposeful sampling of participants was done in order to conduct the current study, as clear criteria have been outlined in which the teachers participating must comply with. Alongside purposeful sampling, I have also used convenience sampling when choosing teachers to participate, based on drawing from my existing networks of teachers, peers, and connections that I have made throughout my practicum experiences. The teachers interviewed for the current study complied with the following criteria:

- Teachers have at least 5 years experience in the field
• Teachers have participated or lead mindfulness training sessions, or any other form of accredited mindfulness group participation either inside or outside of the school environment.
• Teachers have incorporated mindfulness training into their pedagogies.
• Teachers are Ontario elementary educators accredited by OCT, and teach/have taught grades between kindergarten to Grade 6.

As this is a small qualitative study, it was important for the participants to comply with the specific criteria outlined (Carr, 1994). It was critical for teachers interviewed to have at least five years of teaching experience, in order to ensure that they would have, at some point, experienced symptoms of stress and burnout throughout their careers. Second, it was also essential that teachers had participated in mindfulness groups and activities either outside or inside of the school environment, in order to ensure that the participants have their own interest and understanding of mindfulness practices. Third, it was important to ensure that the teachers interviewed have implemented mindfulness into their teaching pedagogy, in order to uncover if any effects of implementation. Finally, as this is a small qualitative study, it was important to focus on a concentrated geographical location through interviewing teachers in the GTA, with a specific focus on the primary junior levels of teaching.

3.3.2 Recruitment

In order to recruit suitable participants for a qualitative study, it was important to undergo purposeful and convenience sampling (Arcury & Quandt, 1999). As working with a random sample of participants allows for one to generalize findings to a greater population, such a method of sampling is not the most effective way to conduct a
qualitative study focusing on a specific group of individuals regarding the study at hand (Marshall, 1996). Among the two methods of sampling used in this study, purposeful sampling is a method that allows for the researcher to find participants that best fit the research criteria, in order to allow for further comprehension and learning regarding the subject at hand (Marshall, 1996). This allowance for further learning and gathering of information pertaining to the topic at hand is a significant benefit to purposeful sampling. However, a limitation at hand is the lack of ability to generalize information gathered from the purposefully sampled participants to the general public, as the sample of participants was specifically chosen because they fit a specific criteria related to the research question (Marshall, 1996). Alongside purposeful sampling, convenience sampling is a method that allows the researcher to select participants that are the most easily accessible (Marshall, 1996). A benefit to convenience sampling is the ease in which participants can be recruited, based on which participants the researcher can find that successfully fit the research criteria (Marshall, 1996). In finding participants, I utilized connections made throughout my practicum experiences, alongside connecting with professors at OISE that recommended individuals who fit my research criteria. I also asked participants that I had interviewed if they could recommend other individuals that they thought would also be appropriate and interested in also participating in the current study.

3.3.3 Participant biographies

Brooke has been a teacher for six years, and is currently teaching Grades 4, 5, and 6 French for 75% of her days. She also teaches Health and Physical Education 5 five days a week to Grades 1 through 3. Brooke also has a few periods of scheduled Daily Physical
Activity throughout the week with the kindergarten classes, where she will occasionally take them through yoga classes. In the past, Brooke has taught on a similar schedule, and has done different classes on prep coverage, such as Drama and Dance. During the 2015-2016 school year, Brooke was involved in mindfulness activities throughout the school, as she ran a yoga club for students in Grades 7 and 8, while also running a mindfulness club for teachers during their lunch hour. Brooke has completed her yoga teacher training, and has pursued higher levels of yoga teacher certification outside of the classroom.

Lindsay has been a teacher for ten years, and is currently teaching Grades 7 and 8 in a core model schedule. This means that she teaches these students for the majority of their day, and in core subjects such as Math, Language, Social Studies, Science, and Art. Lindsay has previously taught Grade 6 as well, and has had a focus on core teaching in middle school over the last ten years. Throughout her ten years teaching, Lindsay has participated in extra-curriculars through coaching sports such as soccer and softball. Lindsay has had her own yoga practice since her teenage years, and has been integrating a daily mindfulness practice into her teaching practice successfully for the last four years of her career.

Tim has been practicing as an elementary educator for ten years and is currently a Grade 7/8 teacher, teaching all core subjects excluding French and drama. Throughout his ten years teaching, Tim has taught all grades spanning between Grade 3 and Grade 8. As a member of his school community, Tim has coached track and field alongside a variety of other sports, is the report card administrator, and union steward. Tim has been implementing a daily mindfulness practice into his classroom for the last 4 years, and is
driven to continue such implementation due to the whole-school approach that his school has in regards to implementing mindfulness practices into the students’ daily lives.

3.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis refers to the process of deciphering relevant data pertaining to a particular research question, through gathering evidence via sources such as participant interviews, and then deciphering what that data reveals (Caudle, 2014). In order to decipher what the data collected means, it is important for information to be described and summarized after collection, which will then allow the researcher to point out relationships between identified themes that have been noted throughout the data (Lacey & Luff, 2009). This process of data analysis allows the information gathered through qualitative means to be understood in response to the research question at hand, and allows for the researcher to uncover connections throughout the research (Thorne, 2000). This also allows the researcher to develop theories as to why and how these connections exist, and ultimately discover their significance with regards to the standing research question (Thorne, 2000).

Transcription of the interview data is the first step that follows data collection (Lacey & Luff, 2009). Throughout the transcription process, it is important for the researcher to ensure that the data is organized in a manner that is easily understood by the researcher; for example, by organizing the data through numeric coding (Lacey & Luff, 2009). It is also critical for the researcher to ensure that the identity of participants remains secure through assigning pseudonyms throughout the data (Lacey & Luff, 2009). The next key step in data analysis is for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data at hand through processes such as re-reading and re-listening to the raw data.
collected, in order to ensure that the formal analysis of the data is as accurate as possible (Lacey & Luff, 2009). Following familiarization of the data is the coding process, which means the researcher can now look for certain ideas and patterns that emerge throughout each of the participant’s data (Lacey & Luff, 2009). Coding the data gathered allows for the researcher to identify emergent themes and concepts that will aid in the researcher theorizing what the data uncovers in pertinence with the research question at hand (Lacey & Luff, 2009).

Throughout my qualitative research study, I followed the same procedure of data collection and analysis, through conducting participant interviews, followed by transcribing and coding the data in regards to my research question. I then categorized the data, followed by looking for themes throughout, related it to current research on the matter, and then discussed the significance of my findings.

3.5 Ethical Review

A significant part of conducting a qualitative research study is to ensure that the rights of the participants are valued and protected, as there are ethical issues present in any form of research (Orb et al., 2000). Throughout the current study, each participant had given their full consent of their involvement (see Appendix A for consent letter and information), and there are no known risks to participating in the current study. The identity of participants remained confidential as they were each assigned a pseudonym, with any other information they gave related to their school or personal lives either being left anonymous, or excluded from the data (Orb et al., 2000). It was important to ensure that participants were aware of their rights to privacy throughout the study, while
constantly seeking their consent and approval of the gathered data throughout the research process (Orb et al., 2000).

Once data was collected and transcribed, it was important to have each participant overlook the data before it was reviewed and coded, in order to allow for the participants to retract, clarify, and review any statements that they had made (Orb et al., 2000). This did not only secure the participants’ ethical participation in the study, but also allowed for the data that was coded and reviewed to be more credible (Orb et al., 2000).

Only my course instructor and I have access to the raw data collected from the semi-structured interviews, which will be kept on a password-protected computer for up to 5 years before it is destroyed. Participants were also made aware that they have the right to withdraw from the research study at any point in time, while also having the right to refuse to answer any questions during their interviews (Orb et al., 2000).

3.6 Methodological Limitations

The most substantial restriction of the current study is the inability to generalize the data collected, based on the small sample of participants interviewed (Dearnley, 2005). The findings of the current study represent the knowledge, thoughts, and experiences of a small sample of elementary teachers that implemented mindfulness into their classrooms, in a restricted geographical location with a limited demographic representation. Thus, a substantial restriction is in place with regards to how the current findings can be generalized to a widespread group of teachers in a variety of geographical locations and communities. Another limitation placed on the current study is the restriction to semi-structured interviews as the sole means of data collection (Dearnley, 2005). This restriction placed possible limitations with regards to the type of data
collected, as it could have been beneficial to collect information through work samples, observation, and unstructured conversations with both the teachers interviewed and their students. Although both are drawbacks to this qualitative study, a significant strength that should be noted is that qualitative data collection provides the researcher with more personable data than possible otherwise (Carr, 1994).

Carr (1994) also highlights another potential risk to qualitative research, being the possibility of intertwining the researcher’s own personal experiences with those given to them by their research participants, as this is a possibility when spending copious amounts of time with the data at hand. However, as the interviews conducted lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, and because I had no personal connection to the participants prior to conducting their interviews, this risk is not likely in the current study.

Time is also a limitation of the current study, as the research and thesis completion is done as a combined Masters of Teaching program at OISE that must meet the accreditation guidelines of OCT. However, this time restraint can be seen as a potential upside, as it is noted as beneficial to not spend prolonged periods of time with the research and data, as there will then be less chance of amalgamating my own personal experiences with those of the participants in the current study (Carr, 1994).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the research methodology of the current study, and provided reasoning behind these decisions, based on my research purpose and questions. I then highlighted the research approach and procedure of the current study, followed by a discussion of the significance of qualitative research, and the main differences in comparison to quantitative research. I then introduced the main source of data collection
for this qualitative study, being semi-structured participant interviews, and then discussed the benefits of this form of data collection. I then introduced the participants of the study, alongside the sampling criteria pertaining to each interviewee, followed by brief biographies of each participant in regards to their teaching careers. I also described recruitment procedures undergone in this study, which was purposeful and convenience sampling, in order to gather data pertaining to the specific research question at hand, and due to the guidelines of this research study. I also highlighted the methods of qualitative data analysis used in the current study, which followed the steps of gathering, organizing, coding, and identifying existing themes in the data. I then outlined the ethical review procedures of the current study, including ensuring and validating consent, re-checks with the participants, right to withdraw, and data storage processes and procedures. Finally, I discussed the methodological limitations of the current study, which included restriction of generalizability due to the guidelines of the study provided by the institution, time limitations, and biases of the researcher. In the following chapter, I proceed to report on the findings of the current research study.
Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline and discuss the findings of my investigation regarding how a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario implement mindfulness into their daily classroom practices, and discuss the outcomes they observe in terms of stress, student-teacher relations, and overall classroom climate. Through carefully analyzing and coding my data, I have uncovered three main findings: 1) mindful elementary educators recognize that successful implementation of mindfulness stems from a personal connection to mindfulness, gathering information from a variety of sources (ie. text, online), and practicing mindfulness daily in their classrooms 2) mindful elementary educators recognize the benefits of practicing mindfulness in their classrooms, including reduced stress levels, positive student-teacher relations and overall classroom climate, and 3) mindful elementary educators recognize the various academic, behavioural, and attitudinal challenges that come with implementing mindfulness practices in their classrooms and with their students. In chapter 4, I will discuss each of these themes while incorporating participants’ voices into the discourse, while analyzing the significance of the findings in connection to existing research regarding teachers’ experiences with incorporating mindfulness practices into their pedagogy.
4.1 Mindful Elementary Educators Recognize That Successful Implementation Of Mindfulness Stems From A Personal Connection To Mindfulness, Gathering Information From A Variety Of Sources (ie. Text, Online), And Practicing Mindfulness Daily In Their Classrooms

Each of the participants has a personal connection to the practice of mindfulness in their own daily lives outside of their teaching pedagogy, which they used to bring a variety of daily practices into their own classrooms. Participants introduced mindfulness into their classrooms through a variety of sources, including online and text-based resources, and through personal connections. Participants also brought forth mindfulness into their classrooms through allowing time for daily mindfulness practices as a whole class and individually throughout the day, and through a variety of mindfulness-based classroom management strategies and practices.

4.1.1 Mindful educators each have a personal connection to mindfulness outside of their classroom practice

Each participant has developed their own interest and practice of mindfulness in their personal lives. Tim developed an interest in mindfulness after attending a conference on how to become a mindful educator, with specific focus on how to bring mindfulness into schools. Lindsay has been practicing yoga since she was in high school, which is what sparked her initial interest for her own mindfulness practice. She then further developed a daily mindfulness practice after living in Korea and taking hapkido classes, which always began with a ten-minute mindful meditation practice. Brooke completed her yoga teacher training, and through this developed a daily mindfulness practice that she began naturally incorporating into her daily teaching routine. Each
participant found no support in developing a mindfulness practice through their teacher education programs, professional development opportunities, or through additional qualification courses through accredited academic institutions.

### 4.1.2 Mindful educators find value in gathering resources from a variety of sources, such as online, text, and through personal connections

Each participant recognized the value in gathering mindfulness-based resources from a variety of sources, including online, text, and through personal connections. Tim and Lindsay both shared that they have gathered resources from the online MindUP curriculum, which is a research-based curriculum that has provided them with lessons and strategies to implement mindfulness into their teaching. Both Tim and Lindsay stated that the MindUP curriculum is implemented in accordance with core curriculum to help develop their students’ ability to focus attention, build resilience to stress, develop an overall positive mindset, and improve their self-regulation skills, all of which are noted as critical skills developed through the implementation of mindfulness practices in one’s daily routine (Hill & Updegraff, 2012).

In terms of text-based resources, Tim and Lindsay shared that they find great value in gathering knowledge, practices, and strategies from Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Both Lindsay and Tim shared a great appreciation for his teachings on mindfulness, and find his teachings on living mindfully in the present moment to be a powerful and key resource. They both refer to this resource when teaching students’ about the importance of mindfulness as a means of living happily with oneself, living productively, and living an emotionally balanced life. Such a resource can be seen as one that can aid in combatting teacher stress and burnout, as emotional exhaustion,
depersonalization, and lack of sense of personal accomplishment are all contributing factors to stress that Thich Nhat Hanh combats throughout his mindfulness-based teaching (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999).

Tim, Lindsay, and Brooke also found personal connections and face-to-face interactions to be a significant resource used to help integrate mindfulness practices into their teaching pedagogy. Brooke found that participating in yoga teacher training has provided her with mindfulness yoga-based strategies that she can easily bring forth in her classroom teaching to use as a means of engagement and classroom management. Both Tim and Lindsay shared that participating in yearly educators’ retreats and conferences, on the implementation of mindfulness into teaching, is very interesting and motivating. This participation encourages them to share mindfulness with their students in an educational setting. All three participants also shared that they found great value and support through working alongside fellow colleagues that also value implementing mindfulness into their daily teaching practice, in order to share resources and gather knowledge from them.

4.1.3 Mindful educators implement a variety of daily mindfulness practices and strategies into their classrooms

When asked about mindfulness strategies and practices implemented into their classroom teaching, each participant stressed the importance of providing students with the opportunity to participate in a daily mindfulness practice, while also advocating for the implementation of mindfulness in classroom management strategies. Tim, Lindsay, and Brooke have noted that allowing students to have at least twenty minutes during each school day to practice mindful meditation is extremely beneficial, in terms of allowing
students to better develop their attention and engagement with academic activities, alongside increasing mindful awareness of one’s actions in regards to their peers. The findings of Flook and colleagues (2013) align nicely with these participant experiences, as they have found that a daily mindfulness practice leads to an overall increase in one’s mindful awareness ability (unbiased and conscious awareness towards their daily encounters and experiences), which is what each participant noted in the interactions of their students.

Tim and Lindsay also both use daily mindful moments (ie. moments of silence, reflection, personal thought, and meditation) in their classrooms, and will use mindful moments whenever they feel as though their students are in need of calming down or stress release (ie. before a test, when transitioning through subjects/recess, in the face of social conflict). Research on mindfulness based stress reduction by Flook and colleagues (2013) states that daily mindfulness based practices lead to a significant decrease in psychological stress and burnout experiences. As Tim and Lindsay both incorporate mindful moments into their teaching practice as a means of aiding in stress release for their students, it can be said that they are allowing students to use mindfulness tools and strategies in order to aid in stress reduction (Flook et al., 2013).

Tim also used mindfulness as a classroom management tool. He shared:

With the students every morning we start with mindful movements outside, and it’s about ten minutes. We do that and then we come in, and every transition throughout the day, we will do one minute meditation, or some kind of a mindful movement, or a breathing exercise [as he lifts his hands up saying this means breathe in, and lowers hands saying this means breathe out]. So I use that to quiet
them down. And whenever I need to get their attention, instead of doing the clapping that you do with respect to music, I do this motion [claps hands to centre of body and then releases them in waves outwards], and once the students see me do that, they repeat. It’s a call and response, but never done angrily. It’s a peaceful way of getting everyone’s attention and peacefully practicing mindfulness with my students.

Here, Tim outlines his daily mindfulness routine with his students, and how he incorporates mindfulness as a daily practice and classroom management tool. As Flook and colleagues (2013) noted, individuals who participate in mindfulness practices regularly experience a significant increasing success in classroom management, as Tim has noted in his own experiences. Brooke also shared that she encourages the implementation of mindfulness into her classroom teaching in a variety of ways. If she feels as though the students are in need of a ‘body break’, she will engage them in a yoga-flow sequence, allow them to take a mindful walk, or engage in a peaceful tactile activity, such as art. Brooke shared that she also uses mindful breathing and meditation with her students as a means of classroom management and bringing attention and focus back to the whole group.

4.2 Mindful Elementary Educators Recognize The Benefits Of Practicing Mindfulness In Their Classrooms, Including Reduced Stress Levels, Positive Student-Teacher Relations And Overall Classroom Climate

Each participant shared that mindfulness implementation in their classrooms lessened their stress levels related to their teaching practice, as well as the stress levels of their students regarding their academics and social interactions. Participants also shared
that they noted a significant improvement in their relationships with their students, alongside noting an overall more positive and inclusive classroom climate through the implementation of mindfulness practices into their classrooms.

4.2.1 Mindful educators found a reduction in stress levels for both themselves and for their students through the implementation of mindfulness practices and strategies in their classrooms

Each participant noted that the implementation of daily mindfulness practices and strategies into their classrooms alleviated stress and burnout symptoms that they had indicated feeling periodically throughout the school year. Symptoms noted to be experienced less frequently and less intensely due to the implementation of mindfulness practices by the participants were those of emotional exhaustion, reduced feelings of personal accomplishment, alongside physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach pains. In looking at the relationship between mindfulness training and teacher stress and burnout experiences, the findings of Flook and colleagues (2013) align well, in stating that mindfulness implementation into one’s own pedagogy allows for a significant decrease in psychological and physical stress and burnout symptoms experienced by the individual. Alongside a decrease noted in each of the participants’ own experiences of stress and burnout symptoms, Tim also noted a significant reduction in stress in his students who experienced a significant amount of anxiety about attending school. Tim noted that these students felt more comfortable with their daily schooling routine as a result of the implementation of mindfulness.

The reduction in stress and burnout symptoms experienced by each of the participants due to the implementation of mindfulness practices and strategies into their
teaching pedagogies can also be connected to the findings of Caldwell and colleagues (2010), who proposed a connection between mindfulness and feelings of self-efficacy. Tim, Lindsay, and Brooke each noted that before the introduction of mindfulness into their daily teaching practice, a frequently experienced stress symptom was that of feeling unaccomplished or unsatisfied with one’s work. With the introduction of mindfulness into each of their teaching practices, participants noted an overall increase in their feelings of self-efficacy and satisfaction with their work. This anecdote is supported by the findings of Caldwell and colleagues (2010), who also noted an increase in participants’ self-regulatory abilities and feelings of self-efficacy, after participating in a mindfulness-based course over an extended period of time.

4.2.2 Mindful educators note an improvement in their student-teacher relationships through the practice of mindfulness within the classroom

Tim, Lindsay, and Brooke all noted a significant and positive impact of mindfulness on the strength and quality of the relationships held with their students. Lindsay stated that introducing mindfulness strategies and practices in her classroom has allowed the students to form a “close bond”, ultimately strengthening their relationships with one another and with her as their teacher. She also noted that practicing mindfulness with her students has allowed her to “get to know the students for who they really are”, suggesting that the mindful space has allowed for her to develop a more genuine connection to her students.

Tim states that mindful practices and strategies in his classroom have helped him give him the language to communicate with, and develop a deeper understanding and connection with, his students. Tim stated that mindfulness “allows [him] to live in these
relationships without the filters, ego, and past emotions, that would alter [his] current experience with his students”. Ultimately, Tim’s experience with mindful implementation in the classroom, and the effects of such on his relationship with his students, supports the definition of mindfulness of Ellen Langer (1992), who states that being mindful is being able to have an unbiased and unfiltered view towards reality and one’s current experiences.

Brooke noted that the implementation of mindfulness into her teaching practice has allowed her to self-reflect on her own interactions with her students, and has increased her awareness to her reactions and interactions with her students. She stated that mindfulness helped her in:

…being able to notice when you are starting to get more reactive, and being able to just be more aware and realize that you can change your tone and the way you respond to your students. But of course, the first step is having that awareness. Being able to keep an open mind when you're dealing with your students, and gathering that patience with them. Ultimately, mindfulness really allows you to be more kind and supportive.

Lindsay, Tim, and Brooke’s notes on the positive effects of mindfulness on their relationships with their students can be connected to the work of Dweck and Elliot (1988), which highlights the importance of teachers implementing mindfulness training into their practices to allow for more mindful interactions with their students. They further suggest that this ultimately effects their students’ own self-appraisal. Through having this strengthened and positive rapport with their students, mindful teachers may be more conscious of how they interact with their students throughout the day (ie. in how
they provide feedback, deliver and differentiate lessons, etc.). According to Dweck and Elliot (1988), this can further positively affect how students engage in their own self-appraisal of their educational experience.

**4.2.3 Mindful educators note that mindfulness implementation has a strong and positive impact on the overall classroom climate**

Alongside the positive impact noted on student-teacher relationships, each participant noted that mindfulness implementation also has a strong and positive effect on the overall classroom climate and sense of community developed within their classrooms. Lindsay stated that she noted a difference in how her students interacted with one another after a few weeks of the implementation of mindfulness practices and strategies into her classroom. She indicated that the students were increasingly very kind to one another, and that they had developed “a true sense of community as a result of the mindfulness in the classroom”. She also stated that the students had become more peaceful in their interactions with one another, more conscious of each other’s feelings, and that they gained a greater understanding of how their words can directly impact people around them. Lindsay also noted that her students had developed the pattern of “really stopping to think before they act, and have really developed true compassion towards each other”.

Each of these anecdotes noted by Lindsay supports the notion that mindful implementation can aid in the development of a stronger, more positive, and inclusive classroom climate (Fernet et al., 2012).

Tim agreed that mindfulness in his classroom had led it to becoming a less stressful environment. Further, by allowing students to feel as though their classroom was a safe and open space in which they can advocate for themselves, mindfulness ultimately
aided in their ability to communicate with one another as well. Brooke also made a similar observation, stating that she felt as though her classroom had a more overall positive tone, and that she noted an increase in respect between everyone in the classroom. The experiences of Tim and Brooke in regards to the connection between mindfulness practices and a positive classroom climate can also be connected the findings of Fernet and colleagues (2012), in reinforcing the fact that mindfulness integration has lead to a more positive, respectful, and supportive school environment, in comparison to when mindfulness was not a part of their daily teaching routines.

4.3 Mindful Elementary Educators Recognize The Various Academic, Behavioural, and Attitudinal Challenges That Come With Implementing Mindfulness Practices In Their Classrooms And With Their Students

Participants noted two consistent challenges faced in integrating mindfulness into their teaching practice. A common pattern of behavioural and attitudinal challenges due to the lack of student interest, alongside the lack of funding and resources available to help develop a mindful practice in the classroom, were noted to be challenges faced when introducing mindfulness practices and strategies into each participants’ classrooms.

4.3.1 Mindful educators note that a significant challenge to mindfulness implementation is lack of student interest

The biggest challenge that Lindsay and Tim both noted when implementing mindfulness into their teaching practice is the lack of interest in mindfulness participation. Lindsay spoke to the fact that she has noted that some of her students are just simply not interested in participating in the daily mindfulness practices that are done within the classroom, and will not participate while the other students are doing so. Tim
also shared a similar anecdote, saying that there are always a few students in his class every year that are just simply not interested in participating or opening themselves up to practicing mindfulness.

### 4.3.2 Mindful educators note that another challenge to mindfulness implementation is the lack of funding and resources devoted to mindfulness in education

In order to implement mindfulness into the classroom to its fullest potential, all participants noted that various resources such as chimes, yoga mats, books, and more, can be used to enhance the mindfulness experience in an educational setting. Both Tim and Lindsay commented on a lack of mindfulness resources available to them to bring into their classrooms. Both Tim and Lindsay also noted that resources from a school board level, in terms of Additional Qualification courses on the connection between mindfulness and education, could be a significantly beneficial resource used to educate fellow colleagues and faculty in regards to the benefits of mindfulness implementation into an educational setting.

A significant connection can be made between teacher efficacy, in regards to their feelings of success towards the mindfulness integration, and the lack of funding and resources available to these teachers. As teacher efficacy is known to be related to one’s own beliefs in their capabilities to positively effect their student’s performance in their classrooms, it can be said that without the proper funding and resources, teachers can experience feelings of a lack of self efficacy in regards to their success in implementing mindfulness into their classrooms, and thus can ultimately experience stress symptoms (Bergman et al., 1977). The irony in such stress symptoms as a result of an integration that is supposed to lead to a positive classroom experience for both the teacher and
students involved is something that can be negated through the proper support and funding provided to teachers intending to integrate mindfulness practices and strategies into their teaching (Bergman et al., 1977).

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined and discussed the findings of my investigation regarding how a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario implement mindfulness practices into their daily classroom practices, and what outcomes they observe in terms of their stress experiences, relationships with their students, and how they observe their overall classroom climate. The three main findings of the current study are: 1) mindful elementary educators recognize that successful implementation of mindfulness stems from a personal connection to mindfulness, gathering information from a variety of sources (ie. text, online), and practicing mindfulness daily in their classrooms 2) mindful elementary educators recognize the benefits of practicing mindfulness in their classrooms, including reduced stress levels, positive student-teacher relations and overall classroom climate, and 3) mindful elementary educators recognize the various academic, behavioural, and attitudinal challenges that come with implementing mindfulness practices in their classrooms and with their students.

I also discussed the variety of resources and sources that the participants had mentioned using to bring mindfulness practices into their classrooms, alongside the attitudinal, behavioural, and academic challenges they continually face as they integrate mindfulness into their teaching practices. Through careful analysis and coding of my data, I uncovered three main themes in the research.
In the following and final chapter, I will be concluding the current study on the effects of implementing mindfulness into teacher pedagogies. Implications for the educational community in regards to my findings will be discussed, alongside the implications for this current study for me as a teacher researcher. I will also outline recommendations based on my findings for teachers, school boards, and teacher education programs. Questions raised throughout the course of carrying out this study will also be highlighted, alongside suggestions for the direction of future research studies in regards to these questions.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This qualitative research study investigates how a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario implement mindfulness into their daily teaching practices, and the outcomes they observe with regards to this practice in terms of stress, student-teacher relations, and overall classroom climate. I collected data for this study by conducting three semi-structured interviews with teachers who implement mindfulness strategies into their classrooms on a daily basis. This was done in order to learn about the different ways these teachers introduce mindfulness into their practice, the impacts they have observed on their own stress levels and relationships with their students, alongside the effects on their overall classroom climate. I then transcribed and coded the interviews in order to note existing gaps in research, while uncovering overlapping themes that align with current literature, followed by discussing the significance of the current findings. In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the key findings of the current study and their significance. I will then discuss the implications of the findings, as they are relevant to the educational community, alongside my own professional identity and teaching practice. I will then offer recommendations for the integration of mindfulness into elementary classrooms, followed by suggesting areas for further research on mindfulness in classrooms. Finally, I will provide a comprehensive conclusion summarizing my findings, discussion, implications and recommendations for mindfulness integration into Ontario elementary classrooms.
5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

Through analyzing and coding the participants’ interview data, three main findings were uncovered: 1) mindful elementary educators recognize that successful implementation of mindfulness stems from a personal connection to mindfulness, gathering information from a variety of sources (i.e., text, online), and practicing mindfulness daily in their classrooms 2) mindful elementary educators recognize the benefits of practicing mindfulness in their classrooms, including reduced stress levels, positive student-teacher relations and overall classroom climate, and 3) mindful elementary educators recognize the various academic, behavioural, and attitudinal challenges that come with implementing mindfulness practices in their classrooms and with their students.

The first theme is in regards to how teachers are implementing mindfulness into their classrooms. Each teacher interviewed had noted that they are able to successfully implement mindfulness into their own classrooms due to having a personal connection to mindfulness practices outside of the classroom. Such practices included meditation, yoga, and engaging in twenty minutes of stillness and silence each day. It was also noted that each participant gathered resources from a variety of sources, such as online, book-based, and through personal connections. Strategies and daily practices implemented in the classroom were discussed, which included the implementation of mindful moments, mindful movements, and various other classroom management strategies with a focus of mindfulness. Support from researchers Hill and Updegraff (2012) was connected to these findings with regards to the development of a positive mindset through mindfulness. The work of Vandenberghhe and Huberman (1999) on decreasing teacher stress and burnout
through mindfulness implementation was also discussed, as the teachers in the current study stated that in their experiences, mindfulness had decreased their experiences of stress and burnout with regards to their teaching practice. Finally, the work of Flook and colleagues (2013) was also touched upon, in terms of the benefits that stem from developing and participating in a daily mindfulness practice was also used to support the first theme regarding how teachers are implementing mindfulness into their teaching pedagogies. Although there was much alignment between the current research and the participant’s experiences with mindfulness in their own lives and teaching pedagogies, it is interesting to note that each of the teachers that participated in this study had their own personal interest in developing a mindfulness practice outside of teaching. A next step in the current research could be to interview teachers who do not have their own personal connection to mindfulness and such practices, to see whether they would be able to successfully implement mindfulness into their classrooms without having that personal connection.

The second theme that came through in my research analysis was the outcomes and benefits noted by the participants in regards to their practice of mindfulness. This included a reduction in stress symptoms and experiences by both teachers and students, an improvement in the strength of the student-teacher relationships, and an overall more positive and respectful classroom climate. Research by Flook and colleagues (2013) on the benefits of daily mindfulness practices, Caldwell and colleagues (2010) on the connection between practicing mindfulness and increased self-efficacy, were used to support the findings of the current study, with regards to the participants’ noted benefits of mindfulness integration. Ellen Langer’s (1992) definition of a true mindful state was
also used in the current study, to support what mindful teachers resorted to as their
definition of what it means to be a mindful individual. Dweck & Elliot’s (1988) study on
the interaction between mindfulness and self-appraisal was also discussed and connected
to the current research, with regards to how the participants’ felt as though they were
more successful in their own self-assessment and evaluation. Finally, Fernet and
colleagues (2012) study on the positive relationship between mindfulness and a
supportive school environment was also used in the analysis of the theme regarding the
benefits of mindfulness integration into teacher pedagogy.

The third theme noted in the research analysis were the challenges faced by the
participants in regards to integrating mindfulness into their daily teaching practice. Two
main challenges were noted, being the occasional lack of student interest in mindful
participation, alongside the lack of funding and resources provided from schools in order
to aid in the implementation of mindfulness into their classrooms. Deci & Ryan’s (2002)
research on the connection between mindfulness and intrinsic motivation, alongside
Bergman and colleagues (1997) study on the connection between mindfulness and self-
efficacy were used to support the third theme of the current study, regarding the
challenges that teachers face when implementing mindfulness into their daily teaching
practice.

The significance of the findings stemming from each participant’s observed
experience of mindfulness integration in their classrooms was extensive. These included
the positive effects of mindfulness practices integrated into the classroom on student-
teacher relationships, overall classroom climate, and lowering stress levels in the
classroom for both students and teachers. It is significant to note that each participant in
the study had developed their own personal connection to mindfulness in their daily lives outside of the classroom, which is what they relied on for integration. An increase in self reflection and development of mindful language were noted benefits, alongside a decrease in stress levels in both teachers and students. All participants also noted the significance of gathering information from a variety of resources, while finding little support from the educational community, in terms of professional development and additional qualifications offered in mindfulness.

Despite the benefits of mindfulness integration, two challenges were recognized with mindfulness implementation. Lack of student interest in participating in the daily mindfulness practices done in the classroom, and a deficiency in mindfulness resources provided by the schools and school board were said to be two of the biggest challenges with mindfulness implementation.

5.2 Implications

The current study has significant implications on the educational community, and my own professional identity and practice as a future teacher. In this section, I will discuss the implications on the educational community in terms of pre-service and in-service teacher education, school curriculum, teacher pedagogy, and classroom community building. I will then discuss the implications of the present study on my own teaching practice. Each implication addresses the desire to infuse mindfulness into school communities through teacher education programs, school curriculum, and teacher pedagogy, with the goal of creating a more holistic learning environment.
5.2.1 The educational community

The findings of my research can be seen as providing teacher education programs with the next steps in program planning, in terms of incorporating more mindfulness education training. Current research in mindfulness has found a significant correlation between practicing mindfulness and one’s mental health and wellbeing (Shapiro, 2009). However, pre-service and in-service teacher training programs are lacking any mindfulness education classes, programs, or professional development opportunities. Such educational opportunities for teachers both pre- and in-service would provide them with significant knowledge regarding infusing mindfulness into their own pedagogies and practices, ultimately giving them the grounds to create a more holistic school environment, and classroom community. Curriculum planners should also be made aware of the benefits of mindfulness practices integrated into classroom teaching, and thus make efforts to infuse mindfulness into curriculum documents. This is a main recommendation of the current study as one of the main concerns for educators interviewed in the current study was a lack of resources, funding, and support from the educational community. With mindfulness infused into the curriculum, teachers would be given the necessary tools and guidelines necessary to allow them to incorporate mindfulness into their daily teaching practice.

5.2.2 My professional identity and practice

I chose to research the effects of mindfulness integration into the teaching practice because I gained an interest in the topic while studying cognitive science during my undergraduate degree. Incorporating mindfulness into my own teaching is a meaningful area of study to me, as it integrates both of my educational backgrounds. Thus, in terms
of my teaching identity, I have only grown through my research to be encouraged to pursue mindfulness integration into my teaching practice. I have learned about a variety of resources, strategies, and classroom practices through conducting this research, and have been further encouraged to incorporate a holistic approach in my philosophy of education and teaching pedagogy. Learning about the benefits of mindfulness integration with regards to student and teacher stress, classroom climate, and student-teacher relations, I have come to see mindfulness as a tool that supports a more holistic school environment, and a stronger classroom community. I am encouraged to pursue mindfulness education outside of pre-service and in-service teaching programs, in order to further gain insight and knowledge on infusing mindfulness into my own practice.

5.3 Recommendations

Due to the positive outcomes of mindfulness integration into elementary classrooms, the following recommendations should be considered. I have organized my recommendations into three categories: teacher education and professional development, teachers, and school boards, administrators, and policy makers.

5.3.1 Teacher education and professional development

- Provide teachers with opportunities to develop their own mindfulness practice through pre-service and in-service training programs, in order to support them in infusing mindfulness into their classrooms
- Allow pre-service teachers to take a mindfulness training course, in order to help them learn what mindfulness is, how to infuse it in their own teaching pedagogy, and how to introduce it into the classroom
• Provide in-service teachers with professional development and additional qualification opportunities, to allow for further growth and development of their mindfulness practices

5.3.2 Teachers

• Develop a mindfulness practice outside of the classroom, before infusing it into your teaching practice

• Know your students, and create a repertoire of mindfulness practices and strategies that work for you, your schedule, and that your students respond to

• Ensure your mindfulness implementation goals are practicable with your schedule, responsibilities, and timelines in the classroom

• Use an optional approach with your students and ensure that they know that participation is not mandatory, and that they will not be reprimanded lack of participation

• Ensure your students are aware of what your purpose is when incorporating mindfulness into your teaching practice, and that they are aware of the potential benefits of mindfulness integration

• Establish a list of mindfulness resources, and ensure that you are keeping up-to-date with current research on mindfulness strategies and practices
  o MindUP Curriculum: http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/
  o Smiling Mind Application: http://smilingmind.com/au
  o Books: The Miracle of Mindfulness & Peace is Every Step: The Miracle of Mindfulness by Tich Nhat Hanh
5.3.3 School boards, administrators, and policy makers

- Create regular mindfulness training opportunities at the school level, encouraging all staff to participate and develop their own practice
- Create board-wide professional development opportunities and information sessions, to educate administrators and school staff on what mindfulness is, and how to implement it
- Infuse mindfulness practices into school policies, encouraging a holistic approach to education

5.4 Areas for Further Research

In this section, I will recommend areas of further research with regards to mindfulness and the educational community. First, more research should be extended to studying teachers who have not developed their own mindfulness practice outside of the classroom, in order to see whether these teachers experience the same benefits as teachers who practice mindfulness outside of their teaching practice. Each of the participants in this study had developed their own mindfulness practice outside of their classrooms, and had infused their own mindfulness practice into their teaching pedagogy. Further steps in research should see whether teachers without a mindfulness practice outside of the classroom experience the same benefits as those noted in the current study, with the proper strategies and resources necessary to infuse mindfulness into their own teaching.

A second suggestion for further research would be to take a student-centered approach to the research, having students comment on their classroom experience (in terms of their academics, peer relations, and overall enjoyment of their school experience) before and after mindfulness integration. A limitation in the current study
was that of the parameters of who could be interviewed, and thus further research should extend to hear the student voices in classrooms pre- and post-mindfulness implementation.

Another next step for further research could be for researchers to focus more on the influence of mindfulness on students’ academic success. Although the participants in the current study had made anecdotal reference to mindfulness likely having an influence on their students’ academic achievement, more quantitative research should be done in order to solidify such statements.

5.5 Concluding Comments

Existing research has uncovered the many benefits of incorporating mindfulness practice for one’s own health and well being. The current research and participant experiences have confirmed that integrating mindfulness strategies into their teaching pedagogies have lessened their teaching-related stress experiences, while also enhancing their relationships with their students, and overall classroom climate. Mindful teachers in the current study recognize that successful implementation of mindfulness stems from developing a personal practice, and gathering information from a variety of sources. The mindful teachers in the current study also recognized the various academic, behavioural, and attitudinal challenges that come with implementing mindfulness practices in their classrooms and with their students.

The implications of the current study on the educational community involve providing the knowledge necessary for them to be able to incorporate mindfulness into pre-service and in-service teacher programs. This programing will give future teachers the opportunity to become educated on the topic of mindfulness, and develop their own
practice and before entering their own classroom. Such in-service programing would also provide current teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to incorporate mindfulness into their existing pedagogies. Curriculum planners should also make efforts to infuse mindfulness into curriculum documents, in order to encourage teachers to dedicate teaching time and effort towards mindfulness integration. In terms of implications for my own professional practice, my research has further encouraged me to continually develop my own mindfulness practice, and to always keep updated on current mindfulness education research.

I have outlined recommendations based on the current research for three key areas: teacher education and professional development, teachers, and school boards, policy makers, and administrators. Teacher education programs and professional development opportunities should provide pre- and in-service teachers with the option of taking mindfulness based education courses, to allow for the growth and development of teacher mindfulness practices. Teachers should focus on developing their own mindfulness practice outside of the classroom prior to infusing into their teaching, should stay aware of current research and resources that exist on mindfulness, and should be conscious of what strategies and practices their students will benefit from. Finally, school boards, administrators, and policy makers should focus on board and school-wide approaches to infusing mindfulness practices into their communities and policy documents, in order to further encourage a holistic and mindful approach to education.

In closing, the positive impact of mindfulness on educators, students, and school communities, suggests that mindfulness implementation is a remarkable component to a positive, holistic, and community-based model of education.
References


Thorne, S. (2015). Data analysis in qualitative research. *Evidence Based Nursing, 3*, 68-70. doi:10.1136/ebn.3.3.68

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Dear _______________________________,

My Name is Sarah Yacoub and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on how a small sample of elementary educators implement mindfulness into their teaching practice, and what outcomes they experience and observe in relation to stress, student-teacher relationships, and classroom climate. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have a demonstrated commitment to implementing mindfulness into their practice, and have had a minimum of five years experience as a teacher. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Angela MacDonald.

You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Yacoub
Phone Number: 
Email: 

Course Instructor’s Name: Angela MacDonald  
Contact Info: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Consent Form
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty. I have read the letter provided to me by Sarah Yacoub and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ____________________________________________

Name: (printed) ____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn how teachers implement mindfulness into their teaching practice, and what outcomes they experience and observe in relation to stress, student-teacher relationships, and classroom climate. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on the implementation of mindfulness-based practices into your own teaching pedagogy. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background information
1) How many years have you been practicing as an elementary teacher in Ontario?
2) What is your current position?
   a. What grades and subject areas do you teach?
   b. Which have you taught previously?
   c. Do you fulfill any other roles in the school? (e.g. coach, advisor, leader of mindfulness club)
3) Can you tell me more about your school? (e.g. size, demographics, program priorities)
   a. Does your school run any special programming related to mindfulness? (e.g. mindfulness moments, whole school approaches, school clubs)
4) What experiences contributed to developing your interest in mindfulness?
   a. Personal experiences? (e.g. do you practice in your own time? Family / friends)
   b. Educational experiences? (e.g. university course work, teachers college, additional qualifications, professional development)
      i. Did mindfulness play a role in your undergraduate or teacher education studies? How?
   c. Professional experience? (e.g. experience in schools, teaching experience; experience of stress and burnout symptoms)
      i. When did you begin experiencing symptoms of stress/burnout in your teaching career?
      ii. What symptoms did you experience?
      iii. How were you feeling at that time?
      iv. How does mindfulness practices support you as you experience stress symptoms throughout your practice? What practices did you do? What outcomes did you experience?
5) How long have you been implementing mindfulness into your teaching pedagogy
Teachers Perspectives/Beliefs

1) What does the word mindfulness mean to you?
2) What practices, in your view, cultivate mindfulness?
3) From your perspective, what are some of the benefits of mindfulness practice for teaching and learning?
   a. What do you think that the benefits of mindfulness practices are for your teaching practice, specifically?
   b. What do you think that the benefits of mindfulness practices are for your students’ learning?
   c. And what about for your relationship with students?
   d. And the classroom climate?
4) In your experience, is mindfulness commonly practiced in schools?
5) Why do you think it is not more commonly practiced? What do you think are some of the key barriers that get in the way of the implementation of mindfulness in schools?
6) How do you think these barriers could be addressed?
7) We have talked a bit about your experience with stress and burnout. How prevalent do you think stress and burnout is for teachers? What have you observed in your experience?
   a. In your view, what are some of the principal causes of stress and burnout in teachers?
8) In your view, how can mindfulness-based practices support teachers through the experience of stress and burnout?

Teacher practices

1) When and how do you practice mindfulness?
2) How do you integrate mindfulness-based practices into your teaching?
   a. What practices do you implement and why?
   b. When do you implement these practices? (e.g. same time each day, in response to particular events)
   c. What are your goals when you implement these practices?
   d. How do your students typically respond to these practices? What outcomes do you observe from them?
3) Have you observed any outcomes of these practices in terms of your relationships with students? If yes, please elaborate. Do you have any examples that you can share?
4) Have you observed any outcomes in terms of the overall classroom climate, and how students related to one another? If yes, what have you observed? Do you have any examples that you can share?
5) In what ways, if any, do you connect your implementation of mindfulness practices to the curriculum? Which curriculum?
   a. Do you have any examples of how you have implemented mindfulness practices in ways that align with the curriculum? What subject areas were you teach, and how did mindfulness practices figure into the lesson design?
6) What range of resources do you use when implementing mindfulness practices into your teaching? (e.g. books, tapes, websites, videos, music, yoga mats, bell, straps, outdoors, access to quiet rooms)
   a. How did you become aware of these resources?

**Supports and Challenges**

1) What range of factors support your implementation of mindfulness practices? (e.g. leadership, supportive colleagues, supportive parents, donations of resources, allocation of funds, student demographics etc.)

2) What challenges have you faced when implementing mindfulness practice into your teaching?
   a. How have you responded to these challenges?

3) How could the education system further support you in meeting these challenges?

**Next Steps**

1) How, if at all, would you like to develop your implementation of mindfulness practices in your teaching?

2) What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers who are committed to implementing mindfulness into their own teaching practice?

3) What advice, if any, do you have for them about how they can navigate the stresses that accompany teaching?

Thank you kindly for your participation in this research study.