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Title: Mindful or mind full?: educators' perceptions of mindfulness in education

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Example citation: Stone, J. R. A. (2014) Mindful or mind full?: educators' perceptions of mindfulness in education. Paper presented to: *The Potential of Mindfulness in Schools: Working with Schools and Services Towards Evidence-based Practice*, University of Leeds, 03 April 2014.

Version: Presented version

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/6625/>



Mindful or mind full?:

educators' perceptions of mindfulness in education

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Phase one

- Creation and implementation of the *Mindfulness in Schools Questionnaire (MiSQ)*
- 22-item qualitative online questionnaire
- Emailed to state and independent nursery, primary and secondary schools and colleges in Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire
- Focus group follow-up

Phase two

- Conducted eight semi-structured interviews and three focus groups
- Interview participants:
 - Four heads of teacher training programmes at The University of Northampton
 - RE teacher
 - Deputy head (primary)
 - Psychology teacher (secondary)
 - Head of year (secondary)

Focus groups

- Three focus groups
- Ten teacher participants
- Group of two: primary and secondary
- Group of five: secondary
- Group of three: secondary

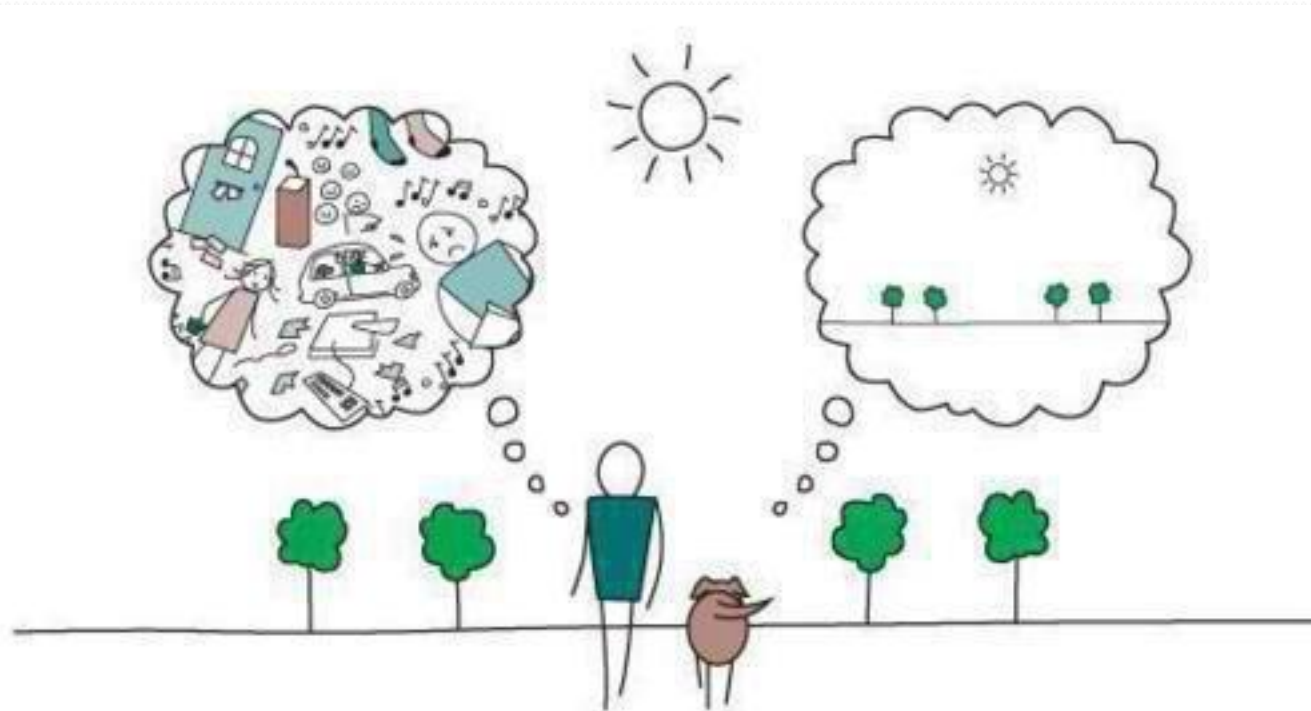
Selected themes

- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- Language of mindfulness
- Marketisation
- Faddism
- Role of the teacher

Understanding mindfulness

“You see I have just realised that’s the enigma, that’s the wrong bit about it. Why would you be mindful? Why do you want your mind to be full? That’s the problem. The word is wrong. It’s contradictory isn’t it? If you are full then you should be empty.”

(Head of teacher training programme)



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Umbrella term

“I think it’s an umbrella term...because I don’t think it’s a term that schools would use particularly but I think there’s a lot of things that I’ve done that could come under that umbrella.”

(Head of teacher training programme)



Language of teaching

“If you mention to, I don’t know, a group of adolescent boys that they’re going to be empathetic and calm and experiencing inner joy, it might not be in tune with their way of thinking. As much as if you say, “We’re going to develop your inner strength and resilience to help you be able to understand where other people are coming from”.”

(Deputy head, primary school)

Marketisation

“I can see it working in some kinds of educational establishments more than others but as with a lot of psychology the biggest problem is that it can’t market itself. It doesn’t know how to sell it. Unless it gets that right, it won’t have a future in education. Selling is by benefit.”

(Psychology teacher,
secondary school)



Time saver

“Often, it’s a failure to recognise that actually this can save time and can put you in a calmer place and solve a lot of the issues. But trying to convince somebody can be difficult, unless they actually experience it. It’s a chicken and egg situation in terms of how to get them to taste and see first you know.”

(Deputy head, primary school)



Faddism

“My problem is we get all these new initiatives as teachers and some of the ones you think yeah actually that is going to make a difference to the kids in my classroom that’s great and then within two years that kind of Every Child Matters obviously doesn’t matter anymore...and then we get something else but that one’s never evaluated. I’m never told what the benefits have been and then I’m on a new one.”

(Psychology teacher, secondary school)

Role of the teacher

“I’m a bit of a hypocrite really because I do think it would be really – I think it sounds fantastic to teach and to get the kids to do. I don’t know why but no, it’s not probably something I’d do. I don’t have a good explanation as to why...and even though I’ve had the most incredibly stressful week now and could probably do with something like this, there’s something that would stop me doing it.”

(Head of year, secondary school)

Modelling mindfulness

- Teachers and parents can model mindfulness in school and at home.
- An implicit or indirect approach to mindfulness allows the teacher to embody mindfulness attitudes and behaviours throughout the school day (Meiklejohn et al, 2012)
- Teachers having their own mindfulness practice would produce a wider and more sustainable benefit to education system (Meiklejohn et al, 2012)

Summary

- Five things that need to happen to bring mindfulness into education in the long term (Jennings, 2013)
- **Recognise current education system**
- Build strong evidence base
- Research focus on developmentally appropriate practices for children
- **Integrate mindfulness into existing curriculum**
- **Engage teachers and parents**

Thank you for your attention

