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Towards fidelity, integrity *and* authenticity: A critical reflection of an Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme.

by

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Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work. No part of it has been published or submitted for any other degree at the University of Warwick or any other institution.

Abstract

Despite a burgeoning evidence-base (Black 2018), there exists a number of issues and debates in the developing field of mindfulness that impact upon its pedagogy. These create an "unstable ground" (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010, p3) for teachers of mindfulness, such as myself. According to McCown (2017; 2014), tensions often arise from the disconnects between drives to create a standardised, structured account of mindfulness for teaching, training and research (fidelity) and efforts to authentically express the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness in its teaching (integrity). In this study I utilised a critical realist approach to evaluate the outcome-effectiveness *and* pedagogical properties of an established and popular Academic-Oriented Mindfulness Programme (AO-MBP) course offered to adult learners at a leading UK university. Heeding the calls in the field to develop new methodological approaches (e.g. Grossman, 2011; Brown et al., 2011), I employed a 'convergent parallel phase' mixed-methods design that analysed data collected from multiple sources. The analytical process of retroduction produced four overarching tendencies for the course. These were 1) that the pedagogic approach was effective in balancing the demands of the course; 2) that the learners of the course experienced significant growth in mindfulness and associated benefits; 3) that the course was effective as an HE-based academic-oriented course, and; 4) that there were possible pedagogic developments that would move the course towards greater fidelity, integrity and authenticity. Causal mechanisms that underpinned the expression of these tendencies were theorised and included factors concerning the teacher, the course, the learners and the wider field of mindfulness. A guidance framework for the design, development, implementation and evaluation of AO-MBPs was produced from the findings. Applications are discussed alongside the wider implications for the cultivating of genuinely transformational mindfulness-based programmes.

Glossary

Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme (AO-MBP)

A taught programme at or offered by an academic institution that seeks to integrate the teaching and practise of mindfulness with the wider academic study of it as a distinct subject and field.

Authenticity

The genuine embodiment and expression of claimed characteristics. In this thesis the term is used to refer to the degree to which the pedagogical approach of a mindfulness course is a genuine reflection of the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes of mindfulness itself.

Discourse

According to Foucault (1981), discourse refers to ways of constituting knowledge thorough language and practices. This knowledge supports and sustains the power structures and relationships of discourses through what (and who) is included and excluded.

Disorientating Dilemma

According to Mezirow (1991), a disorientating dilemma occurs when there is disequilibrium between a person's understandings, beliefs and values and their current experiences. This disequilibrium can often be a strong driver for change.

Fidelity

Being faithful to a chosen method, procedure or moral code. In this thesis it refers to conformity to a single, exact and standardised account of mindfulness (McCown, 2014). One of the main drivers of the movement towards greater fidelity is that it aids attempts to establish a rigorous evidence-base for the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions and programmes.

Fundamental Elements of Mindfulness

This term is used in this thesis to refer to the generally accepted approach, philosophy, attitudes and practices of mindfulness.

Integrity

The firm and consistent adherence to a set of values, codes, procedures, etc. This thesis argues that a mindfulness course may have high levels of integrity in relation to the adherence to a standardised programme model but low levels of authenticity in relation to the expression of the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes of mindfulness itself.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness refers to a state of awareness that is centred upon the present-moment experience and is accompanied by a sense of non-judgement, non-agenda, acceptance, gentle curiosity and non-attachment as moment passes to moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; 2011). As a distinct field it refers to the empirical study, theorisation, commentary and debates relating to attempts to cultivate the mindful state via structured approaches.

Mindfulness-Based Intervention (MBI)

A structured course in which the philosophy, approach, practices and attitudes of mindfulness are taught in the context of a particular client group or clinical issue.

Mindfulness-Based Programme (MBP)

A term used to refer to a structured approach to the cultivation of mindfulness in the 'family' interventions, courses and programmes (Crane et al., 2016).

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

The MBSR programme was first taught in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn. It has been the most influential programme model in the field of mindfulness.

Mindfulness pedagogy

This refers to the embedding of the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes of mindfulness into an education setting or programme.

Pedagogic properties

In this study, this term is used to refer to the specific and identifiable teaching and learning features of a course that illuminate the pedagogical approach employed. According to Alexander (2001), these features include such things as curriculum components, spoken discourse, visual representations, learner tasks and activities, social interactions and assessments, amongst others.

Pedagogy

Based upon Alexander (2001), for this study the term pedagogy is used to refer to the teaching and learning philosophy and approach as expressed through the curriculum and experiences of a course or learning experience.

Personal epistemology

This refers to the views and beliefs that a person holds about the nature of knowledge and knowing (Sandoval, 2005; Hofer and Pintrich, 1997). Following Elby (2009), I adopt the extended definition of the term that includes views and beliefs about the nature of learning.

The pedagogy of mindfulness

The philosophical and practical approach taken in the teaching and learning of mindfulness as a distinct subject.

List of Abbreviations

ACT = Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

AO-MBP = Academic-oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme

AT = Active Treatment

BPD = Borderline Personality Disorder

CA = Conversation Analysis

CBT = Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy

DBT = Dialectal Behaviour Therapy

EOCE = End of Course Evaluation

ESM = Experience Sampling Method

FE = Further Education

FFMQ = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire

FG-MBI/P = First-generation Mindfulness-Based Intervention/Programme

FHEQ = Further and Higher Education Qualification

FMI = Frieburg Inventory Scale

HE = Higher Education

HEI = Higher Education Institution

HRV = Heart Rate Variability

LL = Lifelong Learning

MAPPG = Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group

MAAS = Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale

MBCT = Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

MB-EAT = Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training

MBI = Mindfulness-Based Intervention

MBI-TAC = Mindfulness-Based Intervention Teacher Assessment Criteria

MBP = Mindfulness-Based Programme

MBSR = Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

MBT = Mindfulness-Based Therapy

NHS = National Health Service

NICE= National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

PBL = Project-Based Learning

PGCE (FAHE) = Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (Further, Adult and Higher Education)

PQ-M = Practice Quality-Mindfulness

QTS = Qualified Teacher Status

RCT = Randomised Controlled Trial

SG-MBI/P = Second-generation Mindfulness-Based Intervention/Programme

TAU = Treatment as Usual

TP = Transpersonal Psychology

WL = Wait List

Underlying every programme of education there is a philosophy, whether it is explicit or implicit, considered or rarely thought about, consistent or inconsistent.

- Jarvis (2010, p. 244)

The very idea of teaching mindfulness as a professional creates a conundrum. Questions of why, and who, and how arise immediately to send us into a spiral of alternating definitions and possible doubts. The terrain of our cultural moment is unstable ground on which those of us who choose to do this work must stand.

- McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010, p3)

|Chapter 1: Introduction

"The unstable ground of mindfulness"

1.1 Transformation and teaching

When cultivated appropriately and authentically by an individual, the approach and practise of mindfulness has the potential to stimulate and support a genuinely transformative personal journey. By appropriately I am referring to a structured learning process (e.g. a self-directed or taught course) developed from ancient wisdom traditions and contemplative practices (particularly, but not exclusively, from Buddhism). In the modern form of mindfulness these have been complemented with Western approaches and scientific understandings. The result of this process is a mindfulness that retains its transformative perspective but is accessible to a wide range of people and application areas (Hyland, 2015).

The degree to which the structured learning process genuinely contains and expresses the fundamental elements of mindfulness (including its generally accepted approach, philosophy, attitudes and practices) determines its level of authenticity. Thus, the authentic mindfulness taught course would be one in which these fundamental elements are embodied and expressed in its pedagogical approach and properties.

Whilst the transformative power of a such a course can be assessed via measures of the learner's personal journeys, the degree of authenticity can be evaluated through an analysis of its pedagogical properties, practices and learner experiences. In this study I consider these as structures and events that contain 'potentialities' (Psillos, 2007) for causal mechanisms to produce emerging transformative growth and learner experiences. In adopting a critical realist philosophical stance (Fletcher, 2017; Bhaskar, 2008; Archer, 1998) as a framework for the research I was able to study these aspects empirically and to a great deal of depth. This framework was also able to hold the multiple and complex facets at play in the field of mindfulness and in its teaching.

Although the alignment of the fundamental elements of mindfulness and its pedagogy may seem natural and mutually supportive, in this thesis I argue that there are many tensions within and between them that have impacts at the macro level (the field of

mindfulness) and at the micro level (in its teaching and learning). I claim that there are often tensions at the intersection between the drive to create a standardised structured account of mindfulness for teaching and research, and the efforts to authentically express the organic, emergent and personal-focused elements of mindfulness in its teaching. Whereas the former is concerned with 'fidelity' to a standardised model of mindfulness, the latter is concerned with 'integrity' and authenticity in relation to the fundamental elements (McCown, 2014; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). The central argument of this thesis is that there are influential taught mindfulness courses in the field that are seeking greater standardisation and fidelity. In teaching mindfulness faithfully to such programme models a course could have high levels of integrity but low levels of authenticity if the programme model itself did not embody and allow for the genuine expression of the approach, philosophy, attitudes and practices of mindfulness. Thus, integrity in relation to the authentic expression of the foundational elements of mindfulness should be the key driver in the development of the pedagogy of mindfulness as the field develops.

Based upon the concept developed by Foucault (1981), McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) contextualise the two drives for fidelity and integrity in a wider discussion of discourses in mindfulness. Whereas fidelity sits within a 'Scientific discourse', integrity does within a 'Pedagogic discourse'. These two discourses are positioned within very different epistemologies and align with very different pedagogical approaches. It is here that the transmission-based pedagogies commonly employed to teach a structured account of a subject conflicts with the constructivist-based pedagogies employed to facilitate personal, responsive and active learning (Crane et al., 2015). The alignment of constructivist-based pedagogies with the philosophical approach of mindfulness has led to a claim that the nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness is indeed constructivist (McCown, 2014). However, by their very nature, it is more difficult to standardise constructivist-based approaches than it is transmission-based ones (Dziubinski, 2015).

With the additional discourses of 'Eastern' and 'Western' approaches to mindfulness also at play (Ie, Ngnoumen and Langer, 2014; Djikic, 2014), the complexity of the developing field begins to become apparent. When working inside this complexity,

whether as a teacher, researcher or both, the tensions that often emerge create an "unstable ground" (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010, p3) on which to tread. How a teacher of mindfulness navigates these tensions to produce an appropriate, authentic and transformative learning experience at the micro level is the focus of this research. In doing this, I hope that the findings might serve to shape the growth of the field at the macro level too.

From many years of practising, teaching and coaching mindfulness, I recognise the difficultly in defining precisely what it is and what it entails. As such, it is of no surprise to me that there is little agreement in the field. However, there does appear to be a certain degree of unity across the discourses in relation to the foundational elements that I have introduced here. In essence, mindfulness is a state of being where one's body, mind and emotions are fully engaged with present-moment awareness (Brown and Ryan, 2003), which is accompanied with attitudinal qualities such as non-judgement, acceptance, non-attachment and gentle curiosity (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Cullen and Brito Pons, 2015). In describing mindfulness, Baer et al. (2006, p322-323) state that:

> In mindfulness practice, the focus of a person's attention is opened to admit whatever enters experience, while at the same time, a stance of kindly curiosity allows the person to investigate whatever appears, without falling prey to automatic judgments or reactivity.

In this state the person's thoughts, feelings and responses are more appropriate to the present experience and are not influenced by issues concerning the past or the future. As such, it allows for greater clarity, resilience, appropriateness, vividness and authenticity to be both experienced and expressed by the person.

According to Nyanaponika (1962), mindfulness is the master key for *knowing* the mind, *shaping* the mind and *freeing* the mind. In this sense it aligns with ontological approaches that concern critical reflection in pursuit of emancipation, such as critical realism. The entry point for this process, whether it be in practising of mindfulness for the first time or as part of an on-going journey, is always the present moment, whatever

that may be (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). It is in this and each present moment that suffering can be reduced and wellbeing increased (Germer, Siegel and Fulton, 2005). As such, mindfulness transcends cognitive-, affective- and behavioural-based interventions or techniques to be a holistic way of being that has profound implications for living out everyday lives (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Mindfulness can be experienced as a temporary state in any moment but is cultivated as a more stable trait by the continued practice of mindfulness meditations and an array of associated practices, techniques and enquiry activities (Brown and Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Garland et al, 2010; Friese and Hofmann, 2016). The cultivating of mindfulness in a structured manner has been associated with benefits in an impressive array of areas, including in health and wellbeing (e.g. Khoury et al., 2013a), personal (e.g. Carson and Langer, 2006), personality (e.g. Travis, Arenander and DuBois, 2004), educational (e.g. Shapiro et al., 2011) and spiritual (e.g. Chiesa and Serretti, 2009) aspects of a person.

During the learning of mindfulness, the capacity for mindful awareness is further supported by an element of psychoeducation, in which the philosophical, theoretical and scientific underpinnings of mindfulness are taught and explored (MAPPG, 2015). Whilst most early mindfulness courses were clinical in nature (and termed interventions), there now exists an array of taught courses in the family of Mindfulness-based Programmes (MBPs) that are offered to adults in Higher Education (HE) settings. These programmes have an educational rather than clinical orientation (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). It is from this orientation, coupled with the increase in the academic empirical study of mindfulness (Black, 2018; 2013), that I locate mindfulness to a large degree within the HE setting and, correspondingly, within the fields of adult education and lifelong learning (LL).

As a long-time mindfulness practitioner, teacher and coach I have experienced the transformative potential of mindfulness in myself and in many students and clients. For some, this transformation was more clinical or pragmatic in nature, in that they came to mindfulness with an issue that was obstructing their normal functioning and found a

path that moved them beyond the impedance. For others, the journey involved growth that was much more personal or spiritual in nature. For many, myself included, the journey was a multi-facet one, in which growth occurred simultaneously in many 'streams of development' (Wilber, 2000). Indeed, in his reflections of leading the development of the modern form of mindfulness since the 1970's Jon Kabat-Zinn reports the oft heard expression that mindfulness isn't just about stress (or any other single facet) but rather a person's whole life (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). For me this spanned all aspects of my life, including my work practice.

As a reflective practitioner, I have constantly engaged in reviewing my teaching of mindfulness with the aim of improving the learner experience and the opportunity for individual transformation or growth. This process, however, did not occur in isolation from the development of mindfulness as a distinct field. Over time, it became increasingly apparent that issues and debates arising in the wider field were impacting upon the way that mindfulness was being taught by me (and anecdotally by others). It was from these experiences and reflections, coupled with my many years' experience working as a general educator and educational consultant, that I came to the perspective that mindfulness was experiencing somewhat of a 'disorientating dilemma' (Mezirow, 1991) due to the disconnect between the approach, philosophy, attitudes, practices and pedagogy of mindfulness and attempts to standardise the teaching and learning of it.

From my experiences of practising and teaching mindfulness, it became apparent that considerable attention has been given to mindfulness in relation to contemplative pedagogy. Here there has been much discussion about bringing the practices, processes and philosophy of mindfulness into the education arena (O'Donnel, 2015; Ergas, 2015; Bright and Pokorny, 2013; Zajonc, 2013; Kuyken et al., 2013; Hyland, 2012). Surprisingly, less attention has been given to the pedagogical aspects of teaching mindfulness as a distinct subject (Crane, 2015; McCown et al., 2010). Related to this I had often heard the expression that mindfulness was 'running before it had learned how to walk' at various conferences and workshops I have attended. Interestingly, this doesn't appear to have been by accident, as Kabat Zinn (2011) recalls how, in the early development of

mindfulness, there was an "intentional ignoring and glossing over of potentially important historical, philosophical, and cultural nuances" (p290) and that various foundational elements, such as the definition and operationalisation of the term mindfulness itself, "could be worked out later by scholars and researchers" (*ibid*). Whilst I understood the urgency to bring the benefits of mindfulness to a wider audience and to demonstrate its clinical rigour, I also acknowledge the concern that was being expressed by colleagues.

Upon reflection, I felt that the 'work it out later' approach of mindfulness was a natural part of the evolution of a developing field (as a form of pre-paradigmatic angst) and that those working within the field (particularly teachers of mindfulness) were best placed to examine and shape it going forward. To do this effectively, I felt that an approach that attempted to bridge the various discourses would be necessary. Such an approach needed to recognise the uniqueness of each teacher, individual learner, learner group and learning context in MBPs. It needed to acknowledge the importance of contributing to the outcome evidence-base of mindfulness whilst also valuing the lived-out experiences of those involved. Further, it needed to investigate the causal mechanisms at play in the course that led to the emergence of outcomes and experiences. Thus, it was from a critical realist framework that I set out to analyse the outcome effectiveness, experiences *and* pedagogical components of an established and popular adult mindfulness course that I had taught for many years.

1.2 The journey of modern mindfulness

Whilst I often use the word 'journey' in my teaching of mindfulness, and indeed here in relation to my own experiences, I also recognise that the field of mindfulness itself has an interesting and developing history. Since Jon Kabat-Zinn's pioneering work at the University of Massachusetts in the late 1970's and early 1980's, mindfulness itself has been on a transformative journey.

Kabat-Zinn's work initiated the development of a more modern, secular and scientific mindfulness that provided more universal concepts and practices to the Western world (Shapiro et al., 2006). These concepts and practices of modern mindfulness are of course based upon Buddhist, Chinese and Hindu philosophies and traditions (see McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010 chapter 2 for an excellent summary of the history of mindfulness and/or Sujato, 2012 and De Silva, 2014 for a consideration of mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective). Of these, mindfulness is mostly associated with Buddhism (although this itself is contested – see Sharf, 2014) and it is often claimed that mindfulness is the heart of the teachings of Buddha (Grossman and Van Dam, 2011). Certainly, mindfulness is often translated from the Pali term 'Sati', meaning to remember or to bring to mind and has a focus upon present-moment and moment-to-moment awareness accompanied by gentle positive qualities (*ibid*).

The meditative practices of mindfulness are themselves based upon the practices of 'Samatha', in which the mind is calmed and unified, and 'Vipassanā', in which insight and understandings are engendered (Grossman and Van Dam, 2011). The purpose of Samatha is to alleviate desire and the purpose of Vipassanā is to eliminate ignorance (Nyanaponika, 1962). Both desire and ignorance serve to bring about and reinforce dharma (suffering). It is in the universality of human suffering that modern mindfulness is presented as a "universal dharma framework" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p296) decoupled from any "religious or dogmatic content" (MAPPG, 2015, p14).

It is in the roots of mindfulness that I identify the basis of many issues, debates and tensions in the field. For example, despite the decoupling of mindfulness from its religious roots, Kabat-Zinn (2011) links mindfulness to Soto and Rinzai approaches of Zen Buddhism. He states that his foundational and most influential Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme (MBSR) is based upon the concepts of and growth towards non-dual awareness, non-doing, non-striving, not-knowing, non-attachment and an investigation of the internal structures and process that may prevent a person from achieving experiences with such qualities. Although these concepts are rooted in Buddhism, they remain present in a secular manner in the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness (Cullen and Brito Pons, 2015).

Despite sharing concerns about the field, I also recognise the impressive nature of its development. Since 1979 it has been subject to a distinct growth in research and application. This is evident in the increasing number of mindfulness courses available (Davis and Hayes, 2012) and empirical studies undertook (Black, 2018; 2013) in the past two decades. Most of these courses and studies have focussed upon Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) courses, which themselves follow the model of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR programme but are tailored towards specific clinical or other contexts (Cullen, 2011). According to Kabat-Zinn, MBIs such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP), and Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) are "continually expanding contributions to the alleviation of suffering" (p284). Recent developments in the field have seen a distinction between first-generation (FG) and second-generation (SG) MBIs. In the former the secular nature of modern mindfulness is explicitly upheld whereas in the latter the moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness are explicitly explored, usually from a Buddhist perspective (Shonin et al, 2015, Crane et al., 2015). Even with this distinction, the development of mindfulness has centred on the MBSR programme model with specific variants being developed and taught by a variety of teachers, myself included. Such variants now sit within the wider family of MBPs (Crane, 2016).

1.3 Growing pains

As the field developed in the past two decades, a number of important issues and debates have arisen. As the dominant model in modern mindfulness, the MBSR and its derivative programmes have been subject to a range of criticisms from differing perspectives within the field. Some claim that the decoupling of it from its spiritual and ethical roots has diluted its transformative potential (e.g. Gethin, 2013; O'Donnell, 2015; Hyland, 2015). Others, such as Ellen Langer, argue for a more secular and psychologised mindfulness and have developed programmes along these lines (Langer, 1989; 1997). Thus, it appears that there exists a spectrum of mindfulness that spans secular and

spiritual approaches (Ie, Ngnoumen and Langer, 2014). The MBSR sits somewhat mid-way between a secular, Western position and a traditional, Eastern position (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In doing so it "appeals to the universality of mindfulness notions whilst at the same time paying homage to what might be considered its natural home" (Hyland, 2015, p178).

One of the most challenging aspects of the teaching of mindfulness is to position and shape the course in response to each unique group of learners (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). On occasions, in my own teaching, this has led to more time and activities being devoted to the philosophical and ethical components of mindfulness. On others it has led to a greater focus upon psychological, biological and scientific components. Whilst the MBSR programme model has a somewhat rigid curriculum structure (and attempts to standardise it further will be discussed in chapter 3), it does have a certain degree of flexibility. In doing so, provides the opportunity for practitioners to implement pedagogic changes and to study the effects of such changes. It is here that the teacher of mindfulness has the opportunity to contribute to the development of the pedagogy of mindfulness. However, how to proceed within a landscape fraught with the tensions alluded to here (and to be developed throughout this thesis) is a path that has been acknowledged to be difficult to tread (Crane et al., 2015). To aid in this process, I found it particularly useful to base the research within the critical realist framework and borrow from the concept of discourses in mindfulness proposed by Donald McCown and colleagues (*ibid*).

1.4 Discourses in mindfulness

Many commentators in the field have discussed the two perspectives of East and West in relation to the spectrum of mindfulness. In essence, Eastern approaches tend to be based upon a journey (within a variety of belief systems) in which meditation is the primary vehicle. In contrast, Western approaches tend to be based upon psychological mechanisms that are influenced by present-centred awareness (Djikic, 2014). Hyland

(2014) adds another useful distinction in that Eastern mindfulness is more concerned with contemplation and Western mindfulness more with reflection. These perspectives manifest themselves as two distinct discourses that, despite the MBSR being presented as a mid-way approach (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, Djikic, 2014), often conflict with each other.

A discourse, as proposed by Foucault (1981), is a body of knowledge from which expressions emerge that not only describe the knowledge but also serve to reinforce it through categorisation and sense-making (Hardy and Philips, 2004, cited in Armstrong, 2013). Through this process, a discourse governs what can be discussed, the manner in which it can be discussed, who can discuss it, where it can be discussed and what the boundaries of the discussion are (Hall, 1997). Therefore, it carries a large degree of power and when this is exerted by the authorities and gatekeepers of the discourse, it can lead to coercion and surveillance in relation to its prescribed norms (Armstrong, 2013). In relation to mindfulness, the different discourses contain differing norms and these are expressed in its practices and methods (both in terms of teaching and research) as is predicted by the concept of discourses (Lazaroiu, 2013).

In applying this concept to mindfulness further, McCown (2014) suggests that there are two other distinct discourses in the field – the Scientific and the Pedagogic. The Scientific has dominated the development of the field and is concerned with quantitative methodology, outcome-effectiveness, the mechanisms of mindfulness and defining mindfulness by exclusion. It is from this discourse that the drive for fidelity emerges in which a standardised method of teaching mindfulness is essential for the control, replication and generalisation of research findings. Such findings are crucial for the demonstration of the rigour of mindfulness and played a significant role in the growth of mindfulness in the clinical arena (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). This discourse is also the focus of much of the criticism within the field, which has resulted in a number of contemporary tensions, issues and debates that have been alluded to. Many of these criticisms have themselves emerged from the Pedagogic discourse, which is concerned with the authentic expression of the philosophy and practices of mindfulness through its pedagogy. In doing this, it is concerned with integrity to the fundamental elements of mindfulness and seeks richness and responsiveness through inclusion. Whilst these

discourses exist on different planes, they are intrinsically linked in mindfulness teaching and research (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010; McCown, 2014). This in itself is due to the evidence-based nature of mindfulness that is integral to the Scientific discourse.

Whilst the drive for increased scientific fidelity has played a major role in the increased acceptability and popularity of mindfulness in the West, I share concerns that this has been at the expense of pedagogic integrity and authenticity (O'Donnell, 2015; Hyland, 2015). Each MBP exists within the discourses and they are shaped by them. MBIs tend to sit more within the Scientific discourse, but FG-MBI and SG-MBI courses would lean further towards the Western and Eastern discourses respectively. Other MBPs embody different aspects of the discourses accordingly. This is the case for the course being studied in this research.

1.5 An Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme approach

For this research, I classify the course being studied as an Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme (AO-MBP). The concept of an AO-MBP and the specific features of the course being studied will be detailed further in chapter 3. To introduce the concept here, it is an open-access, accredited and assessed MBSR-based course offered to staff, students and adult members of the local community at a leading higher education institution. It's academic-orientation involves having the dual aims of teaching the standard mindfulness approach, practices and techniques whilst also considering the theoretical, empirical and field-related aspects of mindfulness to a deeper degree than the standard MBSR model and many clinical MBIs.

In selecting the AO-MBP term I was particularly concerned with expressing the dual aim nature of such courses whilst also remaining faithful to the established conventions and trends in the naming of MBPs in the field. Despite being more concise, I decided that

the term Academic Mindfulness Programme (AMP) was not adequate as it would better refer to a mindfulness course that is purely academic in content at the exclusion of any practise. I also deemed the term Mindfulness-Based Academic Programme (MBAP) insufficient as it could refer to an academic programme that employed mindfulness pedagogy but didn't necessarily study mindfulness as a distinct subject. It did have the benefit of aligning with naming conventions of the field, however. After much consideration, the term Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme was selected.

I feel that the term AO-MBP adequately conveys the dual aims of such courses in that it is a practise-centred MBP (based upon the MBSR programme model) but with an additional educational and academic-orientation. The term it also maintains a connection to the origins of modern mindfulness (e.g. the educational-orientation of the MBSR programme discussed by Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and contemporary conventions in the field (e.g. the consideration of the family of MBPs discussed in the next paragraph).

From my general reflections of the AO-MBP course being studied, learners have enrolled on it for a variety of reasons and with a range of intentions. Whilst some of these were clinical in nature, a large number were not (including personal development, life-change or spiritual reasons). Thus, they spanned a spectrum of intentions and outcomes only recently acknowledged in the MBP family (Crane, 2016, see figures 1.1 and 1.2) and reported by others who have developed academic-oriented mindfulness courses in HE (e.g. Lee, 2012). In my experience of teaching the course, this variety has been an immeasurable positive aspect in that it has led to the uniqueness and richness of each learner and learner-group. It has also been an aspect that has led to varying degrees of pedagogic instability when attempting to provide an effective learning experience for such a diverse range of intentions and outcomes.

Figure 1.1
The spectrum of aims in mindfulness according to Crane (2016).

Clinical tool	------------------	Mental training tool	------------------	Self-help tool
Concerned with clinical and medical issues		Concerned with cognitive processes and skills		Concerned with personal development

Figure 1.2
The spectrum of intentions and outcomes in mindfulness according to Crane (2016).

Self-regulation	-------------	Self-exploration	-----------	Self-liberation
To navigate or better control a clinical issue		To experience, understand and better relate to Self		To explore and connect with experiences that transcend the Self

In recent years I have become increasingly aware that this course does not exist in isolation in regard to these matters. An increasing number of MBPs are being offered that are more academically-oriented and share the dual aims of the course being studied here. Many of these are non-referred, non-clinical and include an assessment component. Such courses can be found at undergraduate and post-graduate level and range from course lasting less than the standard 8 weeks to MSc level teacher-training courses offered over several years (Lee, 2012; Crane et al., 2010). An increasing range of continuous professional development courses concerning mindfulness are also being offered that could constitute being an AO-MBP. In a related development, the growing interest in mindfulness pedagogy has led to many attempts to embed mindfulness into the curriculum of a wide range of HE programmes (de Bruin, Bögels and Meppelink, 2015; Ramsburg and Youmans, 2014; Lee, 2012).

1.6 Rationale

From my analysis of the complex field of mindfulness there are several salient avenues of investigation in the search to uncover the causal mechanisms at play in the course being studied.

Such investigation requires data from a variety of sources (as suggested by Crane et al., 2015) that combined quantitative and qualitative components (as suggested by Grossman, 2011). To achieve this, the study needs to be based in a philosophical stance that allowes the research to span *across* the discourses as well as *within* each discourse to allow for a greater depth of understanding and theorisation. From within the critical realist framework selected to allow this, the rational for the varying avenues of investigation can be formulated.

Firstly, I hold the position that each uniquely blended mindfulness course, whether it be a strict MBI or some other variation in the MBP family, needs to demonstrate its effectiveness. It needs to show that learners make significant growth in mindfulness. This is particularly important for any newly developed MBPs and, as is the case in this study, any AO-MBP that seeks to combine the learning of mindfulness practices (and its associated transformative journey) with an exploration of the academic field. As outcome-effectiveness research has dominated the field, there is a range of existing and developing quantitative approaches and measurement instruments available (although this too is a heavily debated area – see Grossman 2011). This study is designed to contribute to the evidence-base for the effectiveness of mindfulness generally but also to show the viability of a new form of MBP.

Secondly, in addition to its outcome-effectiveness an AO-MBP must also be able to demonstrate its effectiveness as an academic subject within the HE environment. A consideration of aspects such as viability, pedagogy, learner satisfaction, learning outcomes and skills development can make valuable contributions here. In this area there is an existing body of knowledge and a range of evaluation being applied to HE

courses (Praslova, 2010). This study seeks to contribute here whilst also considering a unique programme of study in which established findings, concepts and methods can be applied and evaluated.

Thirdly, my perspective is that the pedagogy of each MBP also needs to be articulated, accounted for and researched. It is here that I recognise the possibility of bridging the divide between the drives for fidelity and integrity in the search for greater authenticity. In doing this, deeper understandings of the causal mechanisms at play, and their manifestations in growth, pedagogy and experiences, can emerge. I concur with Jarvis (2010) that underpinning every course is a philosophical approach and with McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) that this is under-researched and under-theorised in mindfulness. This study, therefore, represents an attempt to contribute here and develop pathways and methods for doing so.

Of key consideration for the pedagogy of each MBP is whether it is effective in balancing the competing demands of teaching mindfulness (Crane et al., 2015; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). These demands have been set out in this chapter and will be further discussed throughout this thesis. For the AO-MBP these demands become magnified as it attempts to facilitate growth and learning across the many spectrums and perspectives of mindfulness. Further demands also manifest themselves from the AO-MBP attempting to critically evaluate the issues and debates in the field of mindfulness and to be effective as a HE-based course. The analysis of pedagogical properties and experiences provide data to assess the effectiveness of an AO-MBP in balancing these demands.

Fourthly, the study of the pedagogical properties and the experiences of learners of mindfulness in MBPs can yield pedagogic developments available for future implementation and study. Whilst some research has focussed upon learner experiences (Crane at al., 2015; van Aalderen et al., 2012), I find it surprising that the experiences of the teachers and learners of MBPs has not featured to a larger degree in research. For me, whilst being a valuable in their own right, these experiences also have the potential to further illuminate the causal mechanisms underpinning the

effectiveness and pedagogical properties of an MBP. Regarding this, the utilisation of qualitative methods in the study of pedagogic properties (e.g. van Aalderen, 2012; Allen et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2007) provides a developing base from which to collect and analyse data from both the learners and the teacher of mindfulness course being studied.

Finally, from my analysis it is clear that there exists little guidance concerning the design, implementation, development and evaluation of MBPs generally. Although there are the MBSR (Santorelli et al., 2017) and MBCT (Williams and Penman, 2011) curriculum guides and other materials (e.g. McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010; Dunkley and Stanton, 2014) it will be argued in this thesis that these relate better to clinically-oriented MBPs rather than academic-oriented MBPs. As the benefits of offering distinct mindfulness courses and of mindfulness pedagogy (the bringing of mindfulness philosophy and techniques to other curriculum area) in HE settings become increasingly apparent, an emerging and developing framework for guiding such programmes, courses and initiatives would make an extremely valuable contribution to their development.

1.7 Research aims, questions and objectives

The overall aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness and analyse the pedagogy and experiences of the AO-MBP course being studied. In doing this, the underpinning experiences, structures and events are to be illuminated from within the critical realist framework. This framework will then allow for the tendencies of the course to be identified and the causal mechanisms that underpin them to be theorised.

The depth of study and the level of illumination offered by the critical realist framework allows the research to have a clear and unique outcome – to provide constructive suggestions for the development of the pedagogy of mindfulness. This is to be achieved through the production of a guidance framework for AO-MBPs.   This framework will

then be applied directly to the development of the course being studied and be available to support the development of AO-MBPs by others. Through this process, it is envisaged that there will be the potential for applications and implications for other forms of MBPs and the wider field of mindfulness to emerge.

Table 1.1
The research questions and objectives for the study.

Research Questions	Objectives
1) What is the effectiveness of the course as a mindfulness intervention?	a. To assess the effectiveness of the course as a mindfulness intervention
2) What is the effectiveness of the course as a HE-based academic course?	b. To assess the effectiveness of the course as a HE-based academic-oriented course
3) How effective is the pedagogical approach of the course?	c. To analyse the pedagogic properties of the course d. To assess the effectiveness of the nature of the pedagogy in balancing the competing demands of the course
4) What are the possible pedagogic developments for the course?	e. To uncover potential pedagogic developments for the course
5) Based upon the finding from research questions 1 to 4, what recommendations and guidance can be provided for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of academic-oriented mindfulness-based courses?	f. To produce a guidance framework for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of academic-oriented mindfulness-based courses

With the aim and outcome established, five research questions with resultant objectives are presented for the study (see table 1.1). These questions correspond to the numbered points discussed in the rationale sub-section above. Whilst they are presented separately here, I designed them in a holistic manner whereby they would be recursive in that answers from one question would be used to also inform the answers to other questions. In doing this, they are purposed with investigating inter- and intra-discourse phenomena. For example, the investigation of research question 1 sits

primarily within the scientific discourse due to its focus upon outcome-effectiveness. However, findings from research questions 2 and 3 may also further illuminate the underpinnings of any effectiveness found but sit within the pedagogic discourse.

1.8 The style and structure of the thesis

With the research environment introduced, this thesis will continue to articulate the journey of the study using the academic-reflective presentation style. This style was adopted as I feel that it allows me to be authentic to the spectrum- and perspective-spanning nature of the study. It enables me to discuss the topics from an academic perspective whilst also embedding researcher reflexivity directly into the discussion. This is important as it allows me to articulate my own perspective on the complex and multi-faceted issues discussed in context as they arise. As such, it allows for the study to be framed as a critical reflection of the course being studied.

A mixture of tenses will be used in presenting this research as a critical reflective analysis of the course being studied.   Throughout the thesis, any personal experiences, situations, opinions or decisions that occurred prior to the writing of this thesis will use the past tense. Following the guidance of Swales and Feak (2004), certain chapters will, in the main, use particular tenses. This will be the present tense for the introduction, literature review and context chapters (although the context chapter also contains much past-tense presented reflection).   The past tense will be used to present details regarding theory, methodology and the methods of data collection and analysis selected for this study.   The results chapter will also be presented in the past tense, with the discussion chapter reverting to the present tense once more.   The evaluations, applications, implication and conclusions will contain a mixture of tenses as I consider the study in relation to its wider context and possible future directions.

Whilst utilising the academic-reflective style, the thesis will adhere to the structure of an empirical study. To frame this structure, it is presented in 10 chapters. Building upon the introduction provided here, chapter 2 presents a review of the literature concerning the broad range of areas at play in this research. The aim of this chapter is to provide sufficient contextualised information to frame the research and its findings, applications and implications. The areas covered include evidence for the outcome-effectiveness of mindfulness, developments in the study and measurement of it, attempts to standardise its teaching, literature concerning its pedagogy and discussions concerning the various issues and debates in the field.

Chapter 3 shares the aim of chapter 2 but provides contextualised information regarding myself, the AO-MBP approach, the course being studied and the perspectives of the study. The origins of the course are examined leading to the articulation of the features of the AO-MBP approach. Perceived pedagogical concerns and opportunities are also discussed in a critical reflection of my teaching of the course. Approaches to the evaluation of HE courses are also discussed before the main perspectives of the study are summarised.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide an outline and evaluation of the theoretical and methodological positions adopted and applied in the study. In the former, scientific paradigms are discussed. This proceeds to an articulation and justification of the selection of the critical realist approach. In the latter, the multi-faceted methodological environment of the study is presented in a discussion of mixed-methods, teacher-practitioner, pedagogical and bricoleur research. The ethical and evaluation frameworks adopted for the study are also articulated.

Building upon the two previous chapters, chapter 6 proceeds to a detailed discussion of the methods employed. The aim of this chapter is to provide sufficient information to support the replication, contextualisation, generalisation and relatability of the study in relation to its quantitative and qualitative facets. The mixed-methods design employed is carefully explained along with the course evaluation approach. Detailed information is provided for the participants and procedure concerning the different methods of data

collection. Both the quantitative and qualitative phases for data collection and analysis are then detailed.

The results and findings of the study are presented in chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 adopts the approach of considering the patterns of events that emerged from across the data sources. These patterns of events themselves emerged from the analysis of individual data sources and evidence from these is provided throughout. They are discussed in 5 sub-sections. The first concerns data regarding the growth and benefits experienced by the learners of the course being studied. Then, data regarding other aspects of the course is presented for areas including effectiveness, satisfaction, balance and impact. Data concerning learner perception is then discussed in relation to reasons for enrolment, expectations and pedagogical preferences. Causes for concern that emerged from the data are then considered before additional results that arose from the teacher reflection and self-assessment elements of the study.

Chapter 8 presents the findings in terms of the tendencies found in the course being studied. Four tendencies are discussed in relation to the first 4 research questions. The generative mechanisms that underpin the expression of these tendencies in the course are then theorised and examined. These are categorised into factors relating the teacher, the course, the learners and the wider field of mindfulness.

Chapter 9 concerns the final research question and presents a guidance framework for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of AO-MBPs. Emerging from the results and findings, this framework is discussed in a detailed manner and includes 3 examples of AO-MBPs to demonstrate its application.

Chapter 10 provides an evaluation of the study before proceeding to consider its applications and implications. The evaluations are based upon the framework adopted in the study and include discussions regarding the uniqueness and contribution of the research. Applications areas include to the course being studied, the development of AO-MBPs and the wider HE environment. Implications for the wider field of

mindfulness, mindfulness research and myself are also discussed. This is followed by a summary and concluding remarks.

A full list of the references cited in the thesis is then presented, followed finally by the appendices. Due to the complex, multi-faceted and mixed-methods nature of the study, there was a large number of possible inclusions in the appendix section. As such, I decided not to include resources that were referenced in the thesis, such as a copy of the FFMQ, as these could be readily sourced by the reader if needed. Resources that are unique to this study, such as the learner survey and the course evaluation form, are included.   In chapters 7 and 8 the findings from the study are based and presented on patterns of events that emerged from across the individual data collection methods. To allow for thorough scrutiny of these findings in accordance with the evaluation framework adopted (see section 5.5.3), examples of the thematic analysis of individual data sources are also presented.

|Chapter 2: Literature review

"Mapping the territory"

In a continuation of the academic-reflective style of the thesis, this chapter is presented as a critical reflection of literature deemed relevant for this study. I decided to approach it in this manner as it allows for my own perspective regarding the selected aspects of the field of mindfulness to be further developed. This process is extended in the following chapter through the contextualisation of myself, the course being studied and the AO-MBP approach. Taken together, the aim of these two chapters is to provide sufficient information regarding the field of mindfulness as it relates to the context of this study.

The selected literature is presented in manner that flows from a consideration of aspects of the field that align more with the Scientific discourse towards a consideration of aspects of pedagogy. To begin with, the evidence-base for mindfulness is discussed. This includes benefits for clinical and non-clinical areas. The literature selected are deemed relevant as they provide a summary of the benefits for areas related to this study and for the learners of AO-MBPs. Following this, literature concerning the study and measurement of mindfulness is discussed. This begins with a consideration of quantitative instruments that are situated with the Scientific discourse before also considering qualitative and mixed-methods research.

Remaining within the Scientific discourse, literature concerning the attempts to standardise mindfulness for increased fidelity is then reviewed. The literature featured here concerns the MBSR programme model. This was selected as the MBSR is the most influential and applied programme model for mindfulness and because the course being studied is itself based upon it. This programme model has also been the focus of many of the criticisms and debates in the field of mindfulness and a discussion of these contemporary issues will follow. These contemporary issues feature in many recent publications concerning mindfulness and were selected for this reason, and as they are included in the curriculum of the course being studied and contribute to its academic-orientation. Many of these issues emerge from and/or concern the Pedagogic discourse in mindfulness and a discussion of the pedagogy of mindfulness concludes the literature review. Here, literature concerning constructivism, transformative learning and contemplative pedagogy are presented due to their relevance to the study.

2.1 The evidence-base for mindfulness

At many mindfulness conferences I have heard leaders in the field of mindfulness extoll the necessity of providing the empirical basis for the benefits of mindfulness when presenting it to new or wary audiences. In his reflections upon the development of the MBSR, Kabat-Zinn (2011) muses upon his own experiences as he attempted to increase the awareness and application of mindfulness in the 1980s. In a testament to his success here, by 1985 the Journal of Behavioral Medicine had published the report of a study into the benefits of the MBSR for the self-regulation of chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth and Burney, 1985).

As the number of publications increased from the year 2000, it was evident that the majority of published articles concerned the benefits of various MBIs designed for specific contexts and populations (Black, 2013; 2018). Grossman et al. (2004) conclude that the growing evidence-base supported the hypothesis that mindfulness had a positive influence upon mental and physical health. The power of such evidence is best seen with MBCT, which has been included in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines since 2004 and is currently recommended by the NHS (MAPPG, 2015).

2.1.1 Benefits for stress, anxiety and depression

In a comprehensive meta-analysis covering 12,145 diverse participants from 209 studies, Khoury et al. (2013a) conclude that Mindfulness-based Therapies (MBTs) are especially effective for stress, anxiety and depression. Results also indicate that MBIs are at least as effective as Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and pharmacological treatments. Where growth in mindfulness is directly measured, result show an increase following the MBI, as would be expected. Importantly for this thesis, the authors state that there is a strong correlation between gains in mindfulness and the clinical outcomes reported.

In another systematic review and meta-analysis of MBIs in healthcare, Gotink et al. (2015) report that MBSR and MBCT significantly improve depressive symptoms (N=2814), anxiety (N=2525), stress (N=1570), quality of life (N=511) and physical functioning (N=1015). Various measures of mindfulness and health or wellbeing were used in the studies reviewed but all were standardised. Inclusion criteria for the analysis also included a control comparison, either in the form of a wait-list (WL), Treatment as Usual (TAU) or Active Treatment (AT) group. These two features add rigour to the findings that growth in mindfulness produced the improvements in the health and wellbeing areas reported.

In terms of depression specifically, Lenz, Hall and Smith (2015) report that MBCT is effective from a meta-analysis of 31 studies (N=2352). A large effect size is reported for MBCT compared to WT or no intervention controls. Compared to alternative treatment controls, MBCT yielded a moderate effect size. The authors therefore conclude that mindfulness interventions (in the form of MBCT here) led to significant reductions in the reporting of depressive symptoms and that this occurred during the intervention and was evident beyond it too.

Taken together, the findings from meta-analysis studies presented here support the argument advocated for in this thesis, being that growth in mindfulness has a causal relationship with improvements in stress, anxiety and depression.

2.1.2 Other clinical benefits

Veehoff et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis upon mindfulness interventions (MBSR/MBCT/Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) for chronic pain. Twenty-five randomised controlled trials were included covering 1285 patients. Medium and large effect sized were found for related anxiety and pain-interference. Although ACT was found to be most successful, the authors conclude that MBIs provide effective alternatives to other treatment methods currently employed. Interestingly, again the effect of the MBIs were also reported to remain following the programme.

A meta-analysis of ACT specifically revealed that it "is more effective than treatment as usual or placebo" and that it "may be as effective in treating anxiety disorders, depression, addiction, and somatic health problems as established psychological interventions" (A-Tjaka et al., 2015, p30). This conclusion emerged from the analysis of 39 randomised controlled studies covering 1821 participants. An interesting addition of this study was that ACT was found effective compared to a psychological placebo condition, although it is not clear how this was defined or operationalised in the study.

Alongside ACT, another second generation MBI to receive empirical attention is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). From an analysis of 5 RCTs (N = 247) concerning DBT with sufferers of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), it was concluded that DBT was effective for 'self-destructive behaviour' and 'improving patient compliance' (Panos et al., 2013).

As is evident in the latter study mentioned above, mindfulness interventions have also been applied to other psychological problems. Khoury et al. (2013b) report a meta-analysis on MBIs for psychosis or schizophrenia. A wide range of MBIs were included in the search criteria and yielded 13 studies covering 468 participants. Results suggest that MBIs are moderately effective in treating the negative symptoms of schizophrenia but less so for the positive symptoms. Interestingly, levels of mindfulness, acceptance and compassion were strong moderating factors, suggesting once more that increases in mindfulness (and the attitudinal qualities that underpin it) are associated with the clinical benefits found.

Problems arising from work-induced stress have also been studied. In this area Hülsheger et al. (2012) used a mixed-methods approach to study diary entries (N=219) of employees before employing an experimental field study (N=64) to investigate emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. Findings indicate that mindfulness is effective in reducing burnout and promoting job satisfaction. Interestingly, the mindfulness practices introduced to the intervention condition of the field experiment

is self-directed in nature (based upon MBSR/MBCT practices and home-assignments) yet still had a significant impact.

In a related follow-up study that is also relevant to the learners on the mindfulness course being studied, Hülsheger et al. (2014) studied the impact of mindfulness upon sleep quality, detachment from work and recovery during the work week. From the analysis diary entries, they conclude that increased mindfulness is related to improved sleep quality and detachment from work in the evenings. Further, this detachment remained high during the working week and suggests a mediating influence upon recovery.

Another salient area for learners of the course being studied related to weight management and eating. Concerning this, the philosophy and practices of mindfulness eating are explored in week 9 of the course being studied. In this area, a recent review by Carrière et al. (2017) analysed 19 studies covering 1160 participants suffering from obesity. MBSR, MBCT and Mindfulness-based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) programmes were included in the review. From the studies selected, the authors conclude that:

> *MBIs are moderately to largely effective in reducing weight loss and improving obesity-related eating behaviours. Although average weight loss was modest at post-treatment (3.3% of initial body weight), continued decreases in weight at follow-up (3.5%) is encouraging and highlights the potential of using mindfulness training to support weight loss and its maintenance. (p12)*

2.1.3 Other benefits: General wellbeing, spirituality and the Self

As has been discussed previously (section 1.5), many learners enrol on the course being studied for reasons that are non-clinical or concern personal or spiritual development motivations. Researchers have also been interested in the impact of mindfulness on non-clinical, personal and/or spiritual dimensions. Chiesa and Serretti (2009) studied the effects of the MBSR upon healthy individuals in terms of stress, spirituality, rumination,

empathy and self-compassion. Mindfulness was found to be effective for each of these dimensions, although the authors note that the active ingredients of the MBSR in relation to the varied aspects of these dimensions cannot be ascertained from their study. It can, however, be concluded that healthy people who are learning about and practicing mindfulness gain benefits in many areas of their lives.

These findings are supported by a more recent meta-analysis by Khoury et al. (2015), who reviewed 28 studies concerning healthy individuals (N=2668). Focussing upon MBSR programmes once more, results show significant effects for stress, anxiety, depression, distress, burnout and quality of life. Interestingly, and in-line with previous findings presented here, the effects were maintained at an average of 19 weeks following the completion of the programme. Once more though, the most effective components of the MBSR for the individual dimensions (and their component features) remain undiscovered and provide a crucial area for future research. The positive impact of mindfulness upon healthy individuals, however, does seem well established and strengthens the argument for MBPs that span the spectrums of intentions and outcomes proposed by Crane (2016).

In a discussion of mindfulness and the Self, Carson and Langer (2006) conclude that the cultivation of mindfulness is related to greater self-acceptance. This seems to be the product of a change of perception and a shift in attention away from internal or external judgements (or perceptions or judgements) towards the novel distinctions of moment-to-moment experience. This allows the person to live authentically in the moment, with their cognitive, affective and behavioural responses being more appropriate to the immediate environment. This authenticity then allows the person to greater accept themselves and each moment, thus reducing ego defences that protect a fragile self-esteem. From this state, the person has a clearer perception of themselves and their current experience, thus allowing the appropriateness of their responses to be further increased.

In the course being studied here, this process of the constant refreshing of perception (Kasamatsu and Hirai, 1973) is a central theme and features specifically in the

'detachment' or 'non-attachment' practices of sitting meditation. In my experience, it is the core element of the transformative process of mindfulness. It is also one of the most difficult components of mindfulness meditation, however, as the ego defence mechanisms and habitual responses of the mind are very resistant to change. With consistent practice a person can journey towards a "deeper understanding of the changing nature of one's bodily and mental states so as to free our mind from the habits and tendencies that bind us to suffering" (Dreyfus, 2011, p43).

From another study that explored the relationship between mindfulness and facets of the Self, Birnie, Speca and Carlson (2009) examined the impact of the MBSR on self-compassion, empathy, mood disturbance and spirituality. In this study, the MAAS was used as a measure of mindfulness and a range of standardised instruments were employed to measure the other facets. From the data analysed, significant findings were reported for increases in mindfulness itself, self-compassion and spirituality. Significant reductions were also found for symptoms of mood disturbance. In terms of empathy, significant increases in 'perspective taking' (being able to see other perspectives in a given situation) were accompanied by significant decreases in personal distress. Overall, the authors conclude that:

> *individuals high in self-compassion also tended to have high levels of spirituality and*
> *mindfulness and exhibit low levels of stress symptoms and mood disturbance. (p365)*

With the benefits of mindfulness in relation to issues concerning the Self being established, and along with the findings that low ego-involvement is a feature of Flow experiences, the field of positive psychology has also incorporated mindfulness into its models and techniques. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), the state of Flow is described by the several specific properties of experience. These are:

1. A high degree of concentration on the present moment
2. The loss of self-consciousness (or ego)
3. The merging of action and awareness
4. Having a clear goal, in which there is immediate feedback and reward
5. A sense of control over the situation

6. A transformed perception of time.

When considering these properties, the relationship with mindfulness becomes clear. In my experience of teaching mindfulness, learners have often reported such properties of experience following a guided meditation (particularly the Body Scan and detachment practices). The most commonly reported property was the alteration of the perception of time and I often used this to reinforce the practice and experience by referring it to it as a marker of the mindful state. There remains some debate as to whether mindfulness produces the flow state or whether it acts as a primer to move from the active mind (mindfulness) to the transcendental flow mind (*ibid*), but the association is one that I felt warranted inclusion in the curriculum of the course.

Baer et al. (2006) provide a useful summary of the variables that have been shown to be correlated with mindfulness. Both the variables and mindfulness were measured using existing specific standardised instruments. From this an increase in mindfulness is associated with an increase in certain variables and decreases in others (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Selected variables found to correlate with increases in mindfulness by Baer et al. (2006).

Increases	Decreases
Meditative experience	Psychological symptoms
Openness to experience	Neuroticism
Emotional intelligence	Thought suppression
Self-compassion	Difficulties in emotional regulation
	Alexithymia
	Dissociation
	Experiential avoidance
	Absent-mindedness

It is evident to me that the improvements in the areas listed above could support the personal journey of a person across the full spectrum of orientations and intentions described by Crane (2016) and inherent in the course being studied.

2.2 The study and measurement of mindfulness

As a consequence of the influence of the Western and Scientific discourses upon the direction of travel for the field of mindfulness, the study and measurement of mindfulness has developed in a mostly quantitative direction. Despite this, there has been a growing call for an increase in more diverse methods (e.g. Crane et al., 2015; van Aalderen, 2012; Grossman, 2011, Brown et al., 2011). Further, as mindfulness is itself a multi-faceted construct and experience, multiple and varied data sources may be required alongside other methods to triangulate emerging findings (Crane at al., 2015).

2.2.1 Quantitative instruments

An important aspect for the Scientific discourse has been the development of quantitative measurement instruments for mindfulness. This is crucial for attempts to demonstrate the empirically-based outcome-effectiveness of mindfulness in the many interventions and programmes developed (Bergomi et al., 2013).

Despite the weight given to the outcome-studies that have utilised quantitative instruments in the field, their limitations are well known and discussed (Grossman, 2011). Many in the field agree that it is an ongoing challenge to develop instruments that accurately measure mindfulness (Park et al., 2013). From the perspective of the Scientific discourse, Medvedev et al. (2017) recognise the importance of this development by stating that:

> *precise mindfulness instruments with robust psychometric properties are required for accurate assessment of psychological and cognitive changes in individuals undergoing MBIs (p1)*

Although this statement may be valid, it again demonstrates the disconnect between the fundamental elements of mindfulness and the development of the field from within the dominant Scientific discourse. The pursuit of a quantitative, snap-shot

measurement of a person is contradictory to the personal, experiential, qualitative and multi-faceted nature of a persons' continual journey with mindfulness. According to Hyland (2015), this pursuit "means that contemporary MBIs are quite some way from the Buddhist home of mindfulness and also the original secular therapeutic aims" (p182). From my perspective, there are aspects of the assessment of psychological, cognitive and other characteristics pre- and post-course that are in direct contrast to the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness that learners are being invited to cultivate, such as non-judgement and non-agenda. However, I also recognise the importance of such measurements for both the study of mindfulness and in supporting personal journeys for learners who value such measurements.

Even with the challenge of measuring mindfulness accurately (or consistently) highlighted by Park et al. (2013), there is no shortage of instruments available. Bergomi et al. (2013) provide a useful review of the 8 most empirically utilised instruments in the field (see table 2.2) and conclude that "together they provide an interesting palette" (p20) from which to select from. However, they also note that each instrument is unique and offers its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

Table 2.2
The mindfulness measurement instruments reviewed by Bergomi et al. (2013).

Instrument	Created by
Frieburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI)	Buchheld et al. (2001)
Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS)	Lau et al. (2006)
Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS)	Cardaciotto at al. (2008)
Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R)	Hayes and Feldman (2004)
Southampton Mindfulness Questionnaire (SMQ)	Chadwick et al. (2008)
Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Scale (KIMS)	Baer, Smith and Allen (2004)
Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS)	Brown and Ryan (2003)
Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)	Baer et al. (2006)

For the course being studied I invite the learners of the course being studied to complete the FFMQ. This instrument was developed by Ruth Baer and colleagues and is a 39-item scale that attempts to bring together the validated aspects of mindfulness measured by

5 other instruments discussed here (the KIMS, the FMI, the MAAS, the CAMS and the SMQ). Sophisticated factor analysis of these existing instruments led to the conclusion that there are 5 main facets of mindfulness measured (Baer et al. 2006). These facets are 'observe', 'describe', 'act with awareness', 'non-judge' and 'non-react'. These will be described further in chapter 6.

As Bergomi et al. (2013) state, the inclusion of the 5 facets results in the FFMQ being the most comprehensive of the instruments. Medvedev et al. (2017) also claim that it is "the most widely used multidimensional measure of mindfulness" (p2) and there are numerous published studies that have utilised it (Hanley, Mehling and Garland, 2017; Ramler et al., 2016; de Bruin, Bögels and Meppelink, 2015; Hindman et al., 2015).

Standardisation and validation studies have found good internal consistency between the facets of the FFMQ (Park et al., 2013 report Cronbach's alphas of between 0.67 and 0.93) and strong correlation have been found with a range of other wellbeing and clinical scales (Baer et al., 2006). However, critics have highlighted the empirical rather than theoretical basis of its development and validation (Bergomi et al., 2013). Whilst this may be the case, it remains the instrument of choice for the course being studied.

2.2.2 Qualitative methods

Despite the dominance of the Scientific discourse and the associated focus upon developing quantitative measurement instruments, qualitative methods have been employed in the study of mindfulness (e.g. Allen et al., 2009; Finucane and Mercer, 2006; Mason and Hargreaves, 2001; Smith, Graham and Senthinathan, 2007). These studies have employed a range of data collection methods, such as interviews, observations and video or audio recordings. The data from these methods has also been subject to a range of analysis techniques, including Thematic Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Grounded Theory and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (e.g. Perridge et al., 2017).

Despite qualitative studies providing valuable insights into the underpinning journey and experiences of mindfulness (and in contributing to the development of alternative methods in the study of mindfulness), many in the field recognise that there remains a significant lack of qualitative studies in the field, even by those working within the Scientific discourse (e.g. Grossman, 2011; Brown et al., 2011). This absence remains both a surprise and concern for me as an advocate and teacher of mindfulness. The experiential and emergent nature of the teaching, learning and journey of mindfulness seems ideally suited to qualitative methods of study that are designed to measure such aspects. The findings from such studies are vital to the development of integrity in the pedagogic discourse in mindfulness but, of course, it is also vital to the understanding and improvement of mindfulness in relation to its outcome-effectiveness. Thus, I hold the perspective that more qualitative studies and the development of qualitative methods are a necessity for the field going forward. Further, the importance of the holistic study of mindfulness across the discourses is a central argument of this thesis. Therefore, I consider that a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is best suited to this task. Other attempts to employ such mixed-methods approaches in the literature will now be discussed.

2.2.3 Mixed Methods research

Unfortunately, relatively few studies mixed-methods studies have been published concerning mindfulness. Where they have, such as those to be discussed here, they have employed a 'sequential phase design', whereby the first phase consisted of quantitative data collection, analysis and findings and the second of qualitative data collection, analysis and findings.

Using the sequential phase design approach, Sibinga et al. (2011) investigated a 9-week MBSR programme for HIV infected or at-risk urban youth. Significant reduction in hostility, general discomfort and emotional discomfort were found and were supported by qualitative findings that included reported increases in interpersonal relationships, health, stress and school achievement (where appropriate).

In a study of the impact of mindfulness on practicing psychotherapists, Keane (2014) reported that the improvements found in the survey aspect of the study were further illuminated by qualitative reports. The overall findings were that the personal mindfulness of the psychotherapist led to increased attention, self-awareness, self-care and empathy. Keane concluded by claiming that these increases would have a positive influence on therapeutic relating in psychotherapists.

Finucane and Mercer (2005) found significant reductions in depression and anxiety between pre-course and post-course measures for a primary care group. From semi-structured interviews conducted three months after the standard 8-week MBCT intervention, more than half of the participants were continuing with some form of mindfulness practice. In addition, they also found that the participants commented on the importance of the group dynamic to the effectiveness of the course and that most believed that the course was too short and that some form of follow-up course would be beneficial.

2.3 Standardisation and fidelity

With the influence of the Western and Scientific discourses leading the direction of travel for mindfulness there have been many developments that have attempted to create a more standardised version of mindfulness in the drive to increase fidelity. In doing so, these developments inherently concern issues of pedagogy in the wide definition of the term used in this thesis.

2.3.1 The MBSR Standards of Practice

By the mid to late 1990s there was a growing interest in mindfulness in the clinical and healthcare fields, particularly in using the MBSR as a prototype programme. In response to this, Kabat-Zinn (1996) attempted to articulate the framework of this prototype. Whilst acknowledging a degree of flexibility and the influence of local factors, he states "there are key principles and aspects of MBSR which are universally important to consider and to embody within any context of teaching" (p1). These principles are:

a) Making the experience a challenge or adventure rather than a chore
b) An emphasis on the importance of regular disciplined practice
c) The lifestyle changes that may be required to undertake the regular practice
d) An emphasis on the value of present-moment experience
e) An educational rather than a therapeutic orientation.

In setting out these key universal principles of the MBSR, Kabat-Zinn laid the foundations for future attempts to standardise mindfulness in its modern format. In the MBSR Standards of Practice document (Santorelli, 2014) these original principles are further built upon to produce what I consider to be a (too) rigid framework.

One aspect covered in this framework involves the structure and methods used in an MBSR programme. Here, essential components include a pre-course orientation session, 8 classes of 2.5 to 3.5 hours in duration, an all-day silent retreat, formal and informal practices, home assignments and practice, individual and group discussions, and post-course measures. Key characteristic of an MBSR programme are given and include those principles articulated by Kabat-Zinn (2006) plus participants being referred (or self-referred), a group format, differentiated learning approaches and activities, and an emphasis on lifelong learning and development. Although I accept the importance of each of these components and principles, I feel that the framing of them as essential act as a restrictive and judgemental feature that is at odds with the fundamental elements of mindfulness. As such, the application of them would increase fidelity and integrity to the MBSR programme model, but would reduce authenticity to the

emergent, present-moment, personal journeying, constructivist nature of mindfulness itself.

The Standards of Practice document (Santorelli, 2014) also contains other essential features that I find difficult to understand and accept. A significant example is that it states that all mindfulness teachers should meet the required qualifications and adhere to the recommended guidelines for MBSR teachers as developed by the Oasis Institute for Mindfulness-Based Professional Education and Training. These guidelines provide training routes and qualifications for mindfulness teaching but are limited to the MBSR-based approach to mindfulness and do not adequately account for other approaches to mindfulness or for prior experience of teaching and practising mindfulness. For me personally, this produces much anxiety as I am concerned that my teaching and courses do not conform to these requirements.

The document does contain many features that I feel are extremely useful and I have incorporated most of them into the course being studied here. These include the formal and informal practices, the mixture of didactic presentations, class dialogue and inquiry, and attempts to support the continuation of the mindfulness approach and practices beyond the course. However, I feel that aspects such as the all-day silent retreat, the learner contract and the inclusion of Hatha Yoga in the curriculum model are restrictive features, both for the teacher and for potential learners. Thus, they may prevent people who may benefit from mindfulness engaging with it. Indeed, when discussing this as part of the course being studied here, most learners have indicated that they would not like to participate in these two activities. For those that would, I invite them to do so as part of their journey and provided additional information, resources and support if needed.

The fear of not complying with the attempts to standardise mindfulness has been discussed at many mindfulness events and conferences that I have attended. It was particularly fuelled by a leading institution in the UK informing conference delegates that we should only advertise ourselves and our courses as 'mindfulness-based' if we gained qualifications in and adhere to the standardised frameworks being developed. If

not, we would have to call ourselves and our courses 'mindfulness-informed'. Once again, Foucault's (1981) notion of discourse is relevant here, with the term mindfulness-based obviously being used by gatekeepers to denote a higher value than mindfulness-informed. By doing this, pressure to conform to the standardised frameworks is increased. Again, this may provide for greater fidelity and one could show high levels of integrity to the frameworks through such conformity. The issue becomes whether the frameworks, or indeed the drive and process of creating of frameworks, is an authentic expression of the fundamental elements of mindfulness. It is developments such as this that increase my anxiety about the attempts to standardise mindfulness and highlight once more the tensions between the drives for fidelity, integrity and authenticity.

2.3.2 The MBI-TAC

A further source of anxiety in this area is the development of the Bangor, Exeter and Oxford Mindfulness-Based Interventions Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI-TAC) by Crane et al. (2012). This document includes the sub-heading "for assessing the competence and adherence of mindfulness-based class-based teaching". Although it is contextualised in the MBSR and MBCT programmes, from my perspective it represents a further step in the direction of a restrictive, exclusive standardised approach to the broader teaching of mindfulness. Prior to teaching the course being studied, I had much experience with competency-based performance and assessment in education. From this I did recognise the benefits of standardisation, accreditation and ongoing assessment or supervision for teachers. However, the approach taken by this document adds to my anxieties about the field, my teaching and the course being studied.

Whilst many of the pedagogical properties or domains that feature in it (see table 2.3) are suitable and well-grounded in theory, I feel that the clinical, quantitative and judgemental nature of the tool is at odds with the fundamental elements of mindfulness itself. This is further magnified by the restrictive guidance notes given for each domain and the levels of competency labels used, which includes 6 judgements ranging from

'incompetent', 'beginner', 'advanced beginner', 'competent', 'proficient' and 'advanced'. The irony of being judged using a scale such as this for the embodiment or teaching of 'non-judgemental awareness' is not lost on me personally, although I fear it may be by those gatekeepers leading the drive for such a restrictive standardisation of mindfulness.

Table 2.3
The 6 pedagogical domains for assessment in the MBT-TAC by Crane et al. (2012).

Domain	Focus
1	Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum
2	Relational skills
3	Embodiment of mindfulness
4	Guiding mindfulness practices
5	Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching
6	Holding the group learning environment

2.3.3 MBP guidelines

In 2016, a group of leading figures in the field of mindfulness, including Jon Kabat-Zinn and Saki Santorelli, published an article that attempted to further define and standardise mindfulness (Crane et al., 2016). Rather than contextualising this to MBSR, MBCT or clinical MBI's specifically, the term Mindfulness-Based Programme (MBP) is used and the aim of the article is to provide a framework that "addresses the essential characteristics of the program and of teacher" (p1). In doing this, my previous anxieties about the attempts to standardise mindfulness eventually broadening its scope to try to incorporate all types and approaches of mindfulness courses seem to have been confirmed. It is suggested in this article that all MBPs must conform to the framework produced. I assume from this that any that do not fully do this, such as the course being studied, will not be considered an MBP. The framework proposed discusses what are termed the 'warp' aspect of MBPs, or essential components, and the 'weft' aspects, or flexible components (see table 2.4).

Table 2.4
The warp (essential) and weft (flexible) components of MBPs according to Crane et al. (2016).

Warp	Weft
MBP	
1. Is informed by theories and practices that draw from a confluence of contemplative traditions, science, and the major disciplines of medicine, psychology and education	1. The core curriculum elements are integrated with adapted curriculum elements, and tailored to specific contexts and populations
2. Is underpinned by a model of human experience which addresses the causes of human distress and the pathways to relieving it	2. Variations in program structure, length, and delivery are formatted to fit the population and context
3. Develops a new relationship with experience characterized by present moment focus, decentering and an approach orientation	
4. Supports the development of greater attentional, emotional and behavioural regulation, as well as positive qualities such as compassion, wisdom, equanimity	
5. Engages the participant in a sustained intensive training in mindfulness meditation practice, in an experiential inquiry-based learning process and in exercises to develop insight and understanding	
MBP Teacher	
1. Has particular competencies which enable the effective delivery of the MBP	1. Has knowledge, experience and professional training related to the specialist populations that the MBP will be delivered to
2. Has the capacity to embody the qualities and attitudes of mindfulness within the process of teaching	2. Has knowledge of relevant underlying processes which underpin the teaching for particular contexts or populations
3. Has engaged in appropriate training and commits to ongoing good practice	
4. Is part of a participatory learning process with their students, learners or clients	

Once again, despite holding the perspective that this demonstrates a restrictive and non-authentic approach, there are features here that I fully concur with and include in my teaching and courses.

I am particularly pleased that the curriculum elements and programme structure are considered flexible components. However, there is still mention of core curriculum elements and it is unclear as to what would constitute a programme that would be regarded as being outside of the MBP family. That attention, present-moment awareness, formal and informal practices, and the scientific basis of mindfulness are considered essential seem appropriate. I am also pleased with the focus upon ensuring that MBP titles and descriptions are accurate to what is delivered and the pedagogy by which it is delivered.

The teacher components also seem rational and contains a good level of pedagogic flexibility. However, in their description of what constitutes appropriate training, the authors again advocate for the narrow training programmes currently available and refer to assessment via the MBI-TAC as the culmination of the training journey. Thus, despite the increased flexibility offered in this framework, it remains committed to restrictive and non-authentic approaches at standardisation. Further, the framework then suggests that teachers of mindfulness register with a national database (e.g. UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Training Organisations, 2011) and commit to a code of conduct but that this should only be possible once a minimal level of practice has been demonstrated via the MBI-TAC.

The framework also stresses the importance of on-going supervision of mindfulness teachers, which I understand and agree are important for clinical-oriented mindfulness programmes. For other types of programmes, such as AO-MBPs, I feel that the same level of supervision is not needed and the inclusion of this as an essential component is adding another restricting factor that need not exist.

2.3.4 Standardising the mindfulness technique

The concerns that I have about the direction of standardisation in mindfulness led by the Western and Scientific discourses was further supported by an attempt to develop "a standardised mindfulness technique" by Isbel and Summers (2017, p83). This technique is purposed to be "free of additional components … in order to allow accurate cross-study comparisons of the cognitive processes of mindfulness" (*ibid*). Whilst I am very interested in the cognitive components of mindfulness, it does concern me that this technique is presented with a structured schedule, implementation instructions and solely quantitative methods of measurement. As such, I view it as a further attempt to define mindfulness by restriction rather than inclusion.

Despite the authors stating that the technique is not designed for therapeutic interventions or as a representation of the wider spectrum of mindfulness, the dominance of the Western and Scientific discourses may result in this (or other standardised techniques that conform to and strengthen the discourse) becoming the accepted technique at the expense of others. Indeed, this was certainly the case regarding the MBSR. One of the features of this technique that supports this claim is that it has been designed for use with Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) studies, which is considered the "gold standard" for mindfulness research (MAPPG, 2015, p29). Thus, as RCTs require a controlled environment, a standardised mindfulness technique would need to be employed. Further, to enable this the inherently organic, emergent and unique features of a mindfulness course (blend of approach, teacher, learner, group and environment) outlined by McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) would also be controlled and standardised. As predicted by the theory of discourse (Foucault, 1981; Hall, 1997; Lazaroiu, 2013), it was once again the leaders and gatekeepers in mindfulness that proposed developments in this direction.

2.3.5 The MBSR Authorized Curriculum Guide

The most important development towards the standardisation of the teaching and learning of mindfulness is evident in Santorelli et al.'s (2017) expansion of the MBSR Standards of Practice document to produce the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Authorized Curriculum Guide. I feel that this was yet another representation of the drive for fidelity whereby, as Crane et al. (2016, p5) state, "adherence to program form is supported by protocols for each MBP". For Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the co-authors of this document, it is a far removal from his previously stated position discussed by O'Donnell (2015, p195) that:

> The embodied, living, and vital presence of the mindfulness teacher as practitioner, and the sensitivity of the meditator and teacher to the complexity and richness of first-person experience ought not … be supplanted by a 'customary manualised approach to the delivery of psychological interventions'.

Once again, I recognise the need for and advocated for such curriculum guidance for the offering of specified MBPs such as MBSR, MBCT, etc. Alongside the important elements I have highlighted in the Standards of Practice document that have been carried forward to this guide, I am also pleased to read here that the authors are prepared to alter the curriculum guide as evidence suggests going forward. I also agree that a course should only be called MBSR if the MBSR curriculum model is followed. How much fidelity a course needs to have to call itself an MBSR-based mindfulness course remains a crucial debate and one that this thesis is concerned with and has concerns about.

There are also concerns that I have regarding the direction of travel and authenticity that this document contains. The key issue here feeds into my wider concerns about the influence of the Western and Scientific discourses and the authority of clinically-oriented programmes led by the MBSR. This concern can be best seen in the following section of the document found in page 42.

While it may be tempting to consider the addition of variations, options, and otherwise worthwhile and even evidence-based interventional elements or modalities, it is highly recommended that the teacher stay the course, as outlined here.

I feel that this statement was a representation of the direction of travel for the wider field of mindfulness. Although flexibility, diversity and experimentation are encouraged they are simultaneously discouraged in an illustration of the tensions between the drives for fidelity and for integrity and authenticity.

Regarding this document, the authors state that it is not to be mistaken as a "formulaic or operational manual in *any* sense" (p42, emphasis added) yet clearly is. From my perspective it is the *authorized* operational manual that must be followed even when this is in direct contradiction to the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness. For example, Yoga and a one-day silent retreat are again included in the curriculum. However, situations whereby a course and teacher are being authentic to the pedagogy of mindfulness and that this results in the group not wanting to (or not being able to) participate in these curriculum elements would be discouraged. I fear that such a course, of which the course being studied is an example, will not be considered an MBP.

Whilst experiencing the fear and anxiety produced by the attempts to standardise and professionalise mindfulness, I would often consider how pedagogical developments would be possible in an environment in which:

integrity needs to be protected, especially in the face of the inevitable impulse on the part of the teacher to improve the curriculum

This quote, by McCown, Reibel and Micozz (2010, pxiv), highlights to me the paradoxical and hypocritical nature of such attempts that have had significant implications for the field, teachers of mindfulness and the training of teachers of mindfulness.

2.3.6 Hope and contradictions

Whilst the drive for standardisation remains dominant in the field, an article by Crane (2016) provides me with some hope that the gatekeepers of the field may have been acknowledging the concerns and criticism highlighted here. In this article, Crane discusses the many meanings and flavours of mindfulness, and the tensions between the discourses. She discusses the need for greater integrity and, most crucially, the flexibility required to accommodate the varieties of mindfulness.

In what remains an attempt to provide a standardised framework for mindfulness, she presents a spectrum model of MBPs. In this model an MBP may have a clinical, mental or personal orientation (see figures 1.1). This is an important acknowledgement, particularly for academic-oriented MBPs such as the one being studied here, as it recognises the role and value non-clinical MBPs. Despite this, the framework presents these as distinct programmes and, as such, still represents a pre-defined framework that directs an MBP, its pedagogy and the experience of learners.

In my experience, and this may be greater for academic-oriented MBPs, individual learners vary in how they engage with and experience the course within this spectrum. Consequently, the course being studied has learners from each these and is very holistic in nature. Crane does consider the varying intentions and outcomes of individual learners and presents another spectrum model ranging from 'self-regulation' to 'self-exploration' to 'self-liberation' (see figure 1.2).

Again, I find much hope in this model as the personal development and spiritual or transcendental aspects of mindfulness are acknowledged. These are aspects that I have always included in the course being studied here within the aim of introducing the full spectrum of mindfulness to the learners. Regarding this, though, I have often found (particularly working with individual clients) that growth with mindfulness is very organic and two or more of these may develop simultaneously regardless of the intention of the learner. After presenting and discussing these models, Crane then goes

on to discuss what she sees as the next steps for mindfulness as it searches for greater fidelity and integrity. These include:

1. Continued development of definitions, theoretical and philosophical frameworks
2. Working sensitively with religious (and spiritual) mindfulness
3. Develop structures for governance and collaboration
4. Continue to develop teacher training, assessment and supervision models
5. Work towards a consensus on the ethical frameworks for MBPs
6. Create greater access to training.

Once again, I find myself concurring with these steps, but the anxieties explained in this section that I, and others in the field, feel concerning the manner in which these (and other developmental steps) may be taken remain. In response to this anxiety, I often lean into the phrase that we can be "flexible with the form but faithful to the philosophy" when teaching mindfulness (Dobkin and Hassed, 2016, p44). In his 4 F's model of mindfulness, Hassed claims that philosophy and form are often confused in terms of fidelity in the teaching of mindfulness. This review of the literature concerning attempts to standardise mindfulness in the drive for fidelity demonstrate this and shows how the two discourses have significant overlapping features and influences (McCown, 2014). Despite the increased flexibility in present attempts discussed here, the dominance of the Scientific discourse and the drive for fidelity still prevails.

2.4 Contemporary issues in mindfulness

I argue throughout this thesis that the growth of the developing field of mindfulness features many differing and often competing perspectives and approaches. When presenting these for critical analysis in the course being studied, I refer to the 'issues and debates' in mindfulness that emerge from and between them. Many of these have already featured in this thesis in terms of their impact upon the pedagogy of mindfulness. As such, I argue that they contribute to the "unstable ground" of teaching mindfulness that McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010, p3) identify. A discussion of such

issues and debates is common in the literature concerning mindfulness (Hyland 2015, Ergas, 2018). Whilst I categorise them distinctly to assist their discussion here, it is apparent to me that there are many overlapping features between them.

2.4.1 Secularisation and standardisation

According to Hyland (2015, p178), many forms of contemporary mindfulness are "unequivocally secular in all senses of the term" in that they "seek to re-interpret the original spiritual roots of mindfulness in adapting them to therapeutic and developmental purposes". The attempts to standardise and professionalise mindfulness in a secular context have been discussed previously in this chapter and I have commented upon specific aspects of them during this discussion. I view these as causes of concern for two main reasons.

Firstly, I regard them as originating from and reinforcing the dominant Scientific and Western discourses. It seems obvious to me that the attempts aimed to increase the fidelity of mindfulness programmes through exclusion by defining what can and cannot be classed as an MBP or a mindfulness teacher. Those leading this drive are themselves the acknowledged experts in the field, including Kabat-Zinn himself. As such they are the gatekeepers who exert power in the field. As Hall (1997) and Armstrong (2013) highlight in their discussions of discourse, I feel that this power manifests itself in prescribed norms (e.g. the authorised curriculum) in which people need to be coerced to follow (teacher training) and their conformity evaluated (teacher assessment). A course such as the one being studied here, and a teacher such as myself who has not followed a now recognised training programme to teach mindfulness, may well find themselves excluded for not conforming fully to the norms. This is a fear and a pressure that has grown over the years of teaching the course being studied.

Secondly, this reinforcement of the Scientific and Western discourses has led to a response from those who view mindfulness through a more Eastern and/or critical perspective.   O'Donnell (2015) argues that the drive for secularisation and

standardisation has actually impoverished the richness of mindfulness. Gethin (2013) agrees and claims that mindfulness currently portrays a minimalist account of the transformational process. According to Van Dam et al. (2009, p1), "mindfulness is in danger of instrumentalising what is essentially a rich and organic transformative practice". Although beyond the scope of this thesis, a consideration of this issue from the perspective of Max Weber's Theory of Rationalization (Whimster and Lash, 2014) would be of great interest.

Whilst I concur with these views, it is the solution suggested that concern me greatly. Although contested (e.g. Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths, 2015), the solution suggested has been to pursue the return of mindfulness to its Buddhist roots. Evidence for this can be seen in the development of SG-MBIs that have been criticised for overly basing mindfulness in Buddhist concepts (Baer, 2015).

This issue again highlights somewhat of an identity crisis and disorienting dilemma for mindfulness. In developing the MBSR-model Kabat-Zinn, an experienced meditator from the Vipassanā and Zen Buddhist traditions himself, referred to concepts such as the universal Dharma. Here the underlying mechanisms that cultivate self-development can be the focus in their own value and need not be tied to a wider belief system, ethical framework or lifestyle (McCown Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). Kabat-Zinn is not alone in this focus, with even the Dalai Lama advocating that there is no difference between Buddha Dharma and universal Dharma (Cullen, 2011). Indeed, much of the focus in the field has been on the underlying universal mechanisms of present-centred awareness, bare attention and sustained introspection (Harris, 2014) as the drivers of the benefits of practising mindfulness.

Despite the stripping away of the beliefs, ethics and lifestyle components and the focus upon the underlying mechanisms, there are still some who claim that secular mindfulness represents 'Buddhism through the back door' (Mardula and Larkin, 2013) or 'stealth Buddhism' (Brown, 2014). However, the claim that these underlying mechanisms themselves represent traditional Buddhism is questioned by Sharf (2014), who claims that such mechanisms do not feature heavily in either of the Theravāda or

Zen traditions (which are often discussed as being the roots of modern mindfulness), but rather in classical Indian Buddhist notions of nirodhasāmapatti (a form of non-dual consciousness in which the object and the person perceiving the object cease to be distinct).

From another perspective, some argue that the increased focus upon the underlying mechanisms of mindfulness has reduced it to the domain of psychology, or, more specifically, cognitive and biological psychology (Stanley, 2012). Regardless of this issue, with the focus upon universal Dharma and underlying mechanisms, mindfulness may well be much more humanist than it is Buddhist (Hyland, 2015). Although, in yet another reflection of its identity crisis and dilemma, McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) claim that the MBSR model, and associated MBIs, are in fact deeply rooted in a universal expression of the Buddha Dharma.

From my perspective and journey with mindfulness this drive to return mindfulness to its wider Buddhist base is a source of concern and disappointment. It is another example of the drive to develop the field by restriction. Unfortunately, even though the MBSR programme model is positioned as a middle-ground approach, Kabat-Zinn himself claims that it is "virtually essential and indispensable for teachers of MBSR and other mindfulness-based interventions" to have "strong personal grounding in the Buddha Dharma and its teachings" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p299). As a result, I have constantly asked myself where this leaves non Buddhist-based mindfulness teachers and courses as the field develops? Where does it leave courses that acknowledged and invited a personal exploration of the full spectrum of mindfulness? Is there be a place for AO-MBPs?

These questions have often resulted in me questioning my own role and the approach of the course being studied. There have been times when I felt that I should simply teach the MBSR curriculum as is from its Buddhist-base. At others I wondered whether I should pursue the then developing mindfulness training qualifications. However, neither of these are an authentic expression of my being, my journey and, as I argue in this thesis, of mindfulness itself or the nature of its pedagogy. I feel that a return to Buddhist-based mindfulness (even through the standard MBSR) would be equally as

restrictive as I have argued the dominance of the secular and scientific approaches is. As a consequence, I feel that such a return would be devasting to my personal and professional relationship with mindfulness. I fear that it would also alienate the many current and possible travellers on the mindfulness path who did not subscribe to the Buddhist-based approach. Many of whom have attended the course being studied here.

The personal journey of the learner of mindfulness is central to the pedagogy of the course being studied. Here there is a fundamental synthesis and synergy between the philosophies and epistemologies of mindfulness and the constructivist nature of its pedagogy (McWilliams, 2010). As such, rather than conforming to the pressures in the field to move my teaching and the course either further towards a secular, scientific position or towards a Buddhist-based position, I have decided to continue forging a pathway that seeks to be grounded in both mindfulness and constructivism in the support of personal journeying. To be authentic to both of these requires a pathway that allows those working within mindfulness to be "flexible with the form but faithful to the philosophy", as Dobkin and Hassed (2016, p44) have suggested. I argue here that in being faithful to the philosophies of mindfulness and constructivism naturally leads to a flexibility of form.

2.4.2 Ethics, morals and spirituality in mindfulness

The debate regarding secularisation and standardisation in mindfulness seems to act as a container for many issues and I have presented it as such in the course being studied. This is certainly the case when considering the role of ethics, morals and spirituality. With the decoupling of mindfulness from Buddhist philosophy and beliefs (O'Donnell, 2015), mindfulness has struggled to address the role of ethics, morals and spirituality in its teaching. This struggle forms a key component for those who claim that modern mindfulness suffers from being a reductionist version of itself (e.g. Gethin, 2013) in that it has diluted the significance of these dimensions in the process of secularisation and rationalisation.

From the secular perspective, there has been a motivation to avoid imposing external ethical and moral frameworks on learners (Monteiro, 2016) and this value-neutrality has certainly made it more acceptable and accessible to Western populations. As such, in FG-MBIs (e.g. MBSR and MBCT) issues of ethics and moral are implicitly taught and individually constructed. It is this approach that I adopt for my own teaching as I feel that it represents an authentic expression of both mindfulness and the constructivist nature of its pedagogy. However, not everyone in the field concurs.

In response to criticisms that the removal of explicit teachings concerning ethics, morals and spirituality have led to a reductionist approach, SG-MBIs (e.g. Meditation Awareness Training [MAT]) were created that, according to Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths (2015, p1491):

explicitly teach a greater range of meditative and/or spiritual practices (i.e. in addition to mindfulness) and tend to be more overtly spiritual in nature.

These SG-MBIs were critiqued by Baer (2015) for their teaching of Buddhist tenets and terminology, which has contributed to the before-mentioned fear that mindfulness represents 'Buddhism through the back door' or 'stealth Buddhism' (Brown, 2014; Mardula and Larkin, 2013). In the case of some SG-MBIs, mindfulness can be viewed as Buddhism through the front door. However, in countering the critiques of Baer (2015), Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths (2015) argue that, although concepts such as the noble eightfold path and five ethical precepts of Buddhism are often explicitly referenced, the majority of empirically studied SG-MBIs were actually more secular in nature. Further, they argue strongly against the distinction and competition between FG-MBIs and SG-MBIs, claiming that there is only one mindfulness but many forms of teaching it, echoing the previously mentioned view that I subscribe to (Dobkin and Hassed, 2016). Indeed, they state that the varied forms of courses and interventions in the wider family of MBPs represents strength for the field. Certainly, I concur with this statement and that the full spectrum of mindfulness needs to be acknowledged, accepted and cultivated for mindfulness to develop in an authentic manner.

In terms of the pedagogy of mindfulness, the competition and tension arising from the questions regarding how to teach ethics, morals and spirituality is a difficult one. Upon reflection I have to admit that I have not made many advancements in this area but do recognise the potential to do so from a constructivist perspective. I also recognise that a value-free approach may be most appropriate for AO-MBPs. Interestingly, the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness that is often *not* advocated by those from the secular perspective actually aligns with secular attempts to teach ethics, morals and spirituality. Here, the learner is directing their own construction of their ethical, moral and spiritual framework from which to operate. For some, this may be based upon a pre-existing religious or non-religious framework. For others it may not.

On the course being studied I have had a range of learners with various religious and non-religious beliefs. I have always presented mindfulness as a vehicle by which to travel with them driving the direction of their journey. Ethics, morals and spirituality feature implicitly in a value-neutral manner. Thus, the pedagogical approach for the course would align more with FG-MBIs but represents an expression of the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness in a manner that spans the discourses. However, Monteiro (2015) makes a strong case for the perspective that ethics, morals and spirituality are neither implicit nor value-free, even in secular-based courses. She agrees with Grossman (2015) that ethics and morals are embodied in every MBP. This is evident in the curriculum, the person of the teacher and the persons(s) of the learner(s). In discussing this further, she leans into the Buddhist concept of the 'Noble Person', who transcends their own ego in the service of others. Here the teacher of mindfulness embodies this and is leading learners on this process too. In this sense mindfulness "…becomes a moral psychology" (p221) for the inner and outer world.

Although I concur with the central theme of Monteiro's (2015) argument, that ethics, morals and spirituality are embodied in every MBP (to whatever degree they are), I disagree with her view that mindfulness necessarily needs to lean back into Buddhist tenets regarding these. This seems to be part of the wider movement toward Buddhist-based mindfulness and represents another restricting factor. Once again, my fear here is that it may lead to the non-engagement in mindfulness by many people who may

actually benefit from it. In what is seemingly an advocacy of a constructivist approach here, Monteiro (p220) does state that:

If we trust in the capacity of participants in MBIs to take cognitive and experiential responsibility for their well-being, then we also trust in their capacity for insight in how their ethics and values guide them.

Whilst this is certainly a position that I also hold, Monteiro then states that "it cannot be left to chance through an implicit process" (p220) and leans once more into the Buddhist concept of the Noble Person. In her own argument, Monteiro highlights the difficulties surrounding issues of ethics, morals, spirituality and religion in mindfulness. Possible developments in these areas was something that I am particularly interested in from this research. One aspect of Monteiro's argument that I fully concur with is that MBPs (including AO-MBPs) should be transparent in terms of their approach and values in these areas so that potential learners are fully informed before engaging with the intervention or course.

2.4.3 Social action and democracy in mindfulness

I teach mindfulness as an approach whereby internal changes express themselves externally in line with a learner's personal journey. Such an approach is consistent with the MBSR model (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). With its preliminary focus upon the inner condition of the human being, however, mindfulness has often been criticised for being apolitical and lacking a social action and democratic dimension (e.g. O'Donnell, 2015). Some commentators go as far as to claim that mindfulness is a self-centred form of navel gazing that is devoid from any social or political activism (Comstock, 2015). Interestingly, I have often been asked early in the course being studied whether mindfulness will make them more passive and detached. My reply, from my own journey, my understanding of mindfulness and through working with many clients over long periods of time was that this is certainly not the case.

Mindfulness shares many criticisms with constructivism and transformative learning (Hyde and LaPrad, 2015, Mezirow, 2006) and the relationship between these would be an interesting area of exploration that has yet to receive empirical attention. Despite such criticisms, Hyde and LaPrad (2015, p1) argue strongly that mindfulness and democracy are both process-oriented rather than ends-oriented and understanding injustice involves cognitive, emotional, relational, embodied and spiritual domains. They claim that "mindfulness is a criterion for empowerment and the praxis of human solidarity for the betterment of our democracy" (p5), and:

Mindfulness is a complimentary and, perhaps, necessary component of democracy. Both require the same dispositions and actions. Both are self-directed, internally assessed, and always unfinished. (p10)

Comstock (2015) supports the position of Hyde and LaPrad and claims that mindfulness is an asset to democratic governance. Interestingly, the UK parliament is a leading advocate for making mindfulness available to politicians through the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG). The main driving force here is that mindfulness may aid decision making (by bringing ego defenses, habits and differing perspectives into awareness in the decision-making moment) and there is growing evidence in this area (Pless, Sabatella and Maak, 2017). On the course being studied I constantly refer to the importance of present-moment awareness in detaching from habitual responses leading to the possibility of choosing a different one if required.

2.4.4 The commodification of mindfulness

One of the biggest issues within the field of mindfulness concerns its commodification in Western societies. In the course being studied this concern has often been expressed by learners many weeks before it appeared in the curriculum. From a lay perspective, there is a heightened awareness and criticism of this commodification, with Shumpeter (2013, p1) stating that the biggest problem with mindfulness is that it is "becoming part of the self-help movement – and hence part of the disease it is supposed to cure". From within the academic field there is also concern (O'Donnell, 2015). Sharf (2014) discusses

the reduction process of Buddhism to meditation and of meditation to mindfulness, culminating in modern mindfulness that is touted as a panacea for the ills of modern urban life and a "practice that leads to an emotionally fulfilling and rewarding life" (p. 3). Safran (2014) uses the term 'McMindfulness' to describe the branding and commodification of mindfulness. In using this term, they argue that mindfulness is marketed as a fast-working, off-the-shelf approach that requires little effort or engagement with to consume. In seeking to attract more consumers, it may actually be cultivating the very ego-driven characteristics that, in an authentic expression of itself, it aims to transcend. Purser and Loy (2013) further articulate this critique by stating that:

> *Rather than applying mindfulness as a means to awaken individuals and organisations*
> *from the unwholesome roots of greed, ill will and delusion, it is usually being fashioned*
> *into a banal, therapeutic, self-help technique that can actually reinforce those roots (p. 1)*

The dangers of the McMindfulness approach can be seen in the use of mindfulness in corporate and even military environments. Purser (2014) argues that the benefits of mindfulness practice, such as increased resilience, emotional clarity, cognitive effectiveness, etc., are sought in order to increase performance in military contexts but are estranged from, and at odds with, the ethical and moral groundings of traditional mindfulness (such as the 'do no harm' mantra).

Whilst the secular branding of mindfulness has made it (and the benefits of it) more attractive, accessible and applicable for the secular world, it may also be responsible for some negative consequences and processes in other ways. For example, there has been an increase in anecdotal accounts by students of mindfulness courses reporting negative effects, including headaches, troubling memories, increased anxiety and panic attacks (e.g. Booth, 2014;). Indeed, such negative effects have received empirical attention (Monteiro, Musten and Compson, 2014).

From my perspective and understanding of such negative experiences, I feel that a lack of depth in engagement may well be contributing to such reports. As the first

developments with mindfulness concern an increase in awareness, if the learner never learns how to use that awareness positively then they may be left only with a greater awareness of their own negative issues. Although there is no current research in this area, from my experience this could occur for a number of reasons. These include expectations that have emerged from increased commodification, the short nature of the MBSR-based courses (8-weeks), poor teaching, an underlying clinical problem or a lack of attendance or engagement with the course and/or practices. Further, it may simply be that this aspect of the journey did not manifest itself to that person at that time. This suggests that it is imperative that the field offers continual guidance beyond a standard-length MBP. It is my view that such barriers to the mindful journey deserve more empirical attention going forward.

In what I consider to be another expression of the dominance of the Western and Scientific discourses, O'Donnell (2015) gives an in-depth discussion on the commodification of the spheres of psychic and affective experience, with attention being of particular worth to 'capitalist spirituality'. The effect of the targeting of these spheres for commercial use and gain has resulted in a situation where people experience continued and increasing demands for their attention and emotional responses. Rather than highlighting the negative effect of this demand, which would be a more authentic expression, it seems that mindfulness is touted as a method to increase our capacity to deal with this demand whilst maintaining, and even increasing, performance. Thus, the journey of mindfulness has been reduced from a critical cyclical consideration of the inner and outer conditions of the person to the inner only. In this sense, mindfulness has become individualised and psychologised to serve capitalist society through a focus upon wellbeing as factor that impacts upon performance (Stanley, 2012). The drive for fidelity from the Scientific discourse seeks to provide a standardised and efficient means to this end. Indeed, scientific management is a key component of the rationalisation and McDonaldization process (Ritzer, 2013). For some though, there is an inherent disconnect between the 'being' focus of spiritual mindfulness and the 'having' and 'doing' focuses of neoliberal corporatised society (Segal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002).

2.4.5 The opportunities and dangers of professionalisation

Attempts to standardise mindfulness have been accompanied by attempt to further professionalise it. This is evident to me in the Standards of Practice document (Santorelli, 2014), the MBI-TAC (Crane et al., 2012), teacher training pathways and emerging qualification routes. At the beginning of the writing of this thesis there were many divergent training pathways and qualification routes available. Even between the 3 leading universities for mindfulness in the UK (Oxford, Bangor and Exeter) there was much variety. As there is no governing body for mindfulness, and so no agreed upon training pathway or qualification structure, it is a very confusing landscape. This is an area in which I welcome greater standardisation, but again advocate for a more flexible approach that would be more of an authentic expression of the fundamental elements of mindfulness.

As it pursues greater professionalisation the field would be wise to lean into its educational-orientation and consider the journeys of adult education and coaching in this context. According to Jarvis (2010), there was a clear distinction between adult education as a semi-professional field and as a fully professional field. When semi-professional, Jarvis described the field as having the following characteristics:

1. No firm theoretical base
2. Less specialisation
3. No monopoly of skills or competence
4. Led by non-professionals
5. General rules that guide practice
6. A service ethic.

One could argue that traditional mindfulness and the early development of modern mindfulness share many of these features and is/was semi-professional in nature. However, using the widely accepted model of professionalisation proposed by Wilensky (1964), it seems that mindfulness is following adult education on the path to becoming professionalised. Wilensky describes this path using the following characteristics:

1. The occupation becomes full-time
2. It forms a professional association
4. It establishes links to universities
5. It establishes training programmes

3. It publishes its own code of ethics and practice

6. It seeks to develop an area of exclusive competence.

It seems to me that mindfulness is developing these characteristics and, apart from forming a professional association, has achieved them. Whilst increased professionalism is certainly a component of the drive for fidelity, it is also at risk of diverging away from the authentic expression of the philosophy of mindfulness.

Potential dangers concerning power, training, qualifications and specialist knowledge in professionalisation have long been discussed in the Lifelong Learning (LL) sector (Becker, 1970). Wilensky's (1964) views here align with Foucault's notions of discourse. For Wilensky, increased professionalisation creates gatekeepers whose position is maintained and strengthened through the control of training, the regulation of standards and the admission (or not) of individuals into the profession.

In mindfulness, as in LL, teachers are often "dual professionals" (Robinson and Rennie, 2014, p506) in that they may also be a specialist in another field too. In mindfulness this is evident to me in the fact that many mindfulness teachers were existing clinicians, therapists, counsellors, teachers, etc. Indeed, my own journey was an example of this. How a teacher of mindfulness navigates the dual responsibilities and follows the guidelines, programme models, frameworks, etc. of each has been difficult for the FE/HE/LL fields and represents something that mindfulness needs to be aware of going forward.

From leaning into adult education, I also find that there are arguments that increased standardisation and professionalisation eventually leads to de-professionalisation in that the teaching and learning processes become so formulated that the personal skills, expertise and being of the teacher become less and less important (Beck, 2008; Seddon and Brown, 1997; Hoyle, 1995). Concerning this, Hyland (2014b, p5) states that in the post-school sector there has been:

…the rise of undifferentiated skill-talk, an obsession with prescriptive learning outcomes and the dominance of competency-based education and training. All these trends have resulted in the radical deskilling of countless occupations (including teaching), the downgrading of vocational studies and the rise of a perversely utilitarian and one-sidedly economistic conception of the educational enterprise in general.

Based upon these perspectives, it can be claimed that deprofessionalisation is a genuine danger in mindfulness with the increasing attempts to standardise, manualise and monitor its teaching. Indeed, the increased bureaucratisation and focus upon abstract performance criteria in mindfulness again suggests an analysis from the perspective of Weber's Theory of Rationalization (Whimster and Lash, 2014) could yield some interesting and useful illuminations. Braverman's (1974) concept of the degradation of work and its subsequent developments (Previtali and Fagiani, 2015) would also be useful perspectives to consider.

Another field that seems further down the pathway of professionalisation than mindfulness is that of coaching. Here, the drive for professionalisation is the same as is claimed by the gatekeepers of mindfulness – to ensure the quality of provision. Whilst I share this view, the direction of travel in both fields demonstrates a move away from the authentic expression of themselves.

Despite being further along the pathway to professionalisation, Lane, Stetler and Stout-Rostron (2014) describe coaching as an "emerging profession" (p377) that does not fulfil all of the characteristics proposed by Bennet (2006). A key characteristic that has yet to be met is the forming of a unified professional association. Rather, in a manner that is shared by mindfulness, a range of differing definitions, approaches and (in the language adopted for this thesis) discourses led to a wide variety of competing association to be formed. Each of these has its own training pathways, codes of ethics, standards of practice and professional memberships. This has left the field with a fracture identity and has led to confusion amongst the people that could benefit from coaching.

In discussing the problems of the emerging profession of Coaching, Lane, Stetler and Stout-Rostron (2014) themselves lean into the experience of another field – Psychotherapy. This field has also travelled down the path of professionalisation and has met the same difficulties. In doing so it highlights a key issue that I feel is extremely important for mindfulness to consider. This was that the market and/or state would favour and support approaches that were "short-term, cost-effective interventions" that represent "evidence-based practice" (p382). Of course, with the critiques of the dominance of the Western and Scientific discourses, 'McMindfulness' and the commodification of mindfulness, it seems plausible to suggest that mindfulness is particularly vulnerable and has already developed along these lines.

I find further synergies between the journeys of coaching and mindfulness from Hawkins (2008). In a discussion of coaching he argues that it was in danger for a number of reasons. Firstly, the increase in the popularity of coaching resulted in a greater supply of professionals than there was demand. As a consequence, the gatekeepers moved to protect their status and restricted differing and innovative developments. Secondly, accreditation standards became too formulaic and monitoring systems too authoritarian. Finally, the field became very insular and self-serving. These again represent dangers along the pathway to professionalisation that mindfulness has already moved towards or is particularly sensitive to.

From the perspective developed throughout this thesis, it is the direction of travel and the flavour of the attempts at standardisation and professionalisation that concern me. This is because they appear to be moving mindfulness further away from an authentic expression of its own fundamental elements. Due to this, mindfulness could well be heading along the same pathway and to the same difficulties as experienced by the other fields mentioned here. However, with a greater consideration of the journeys of these fields and by leaning into its fundamental elements and educational-orientation, mindfulness could develop in a manner that is authentic to itself. To conclude though, it needs to be careful to avoid becoming limited by what Langlands (2005, p6) highlighted concerning LL when he stated that it was characterised by:

professional accountability shaped by third party regulation, market forces and a tough regime of standards, performance monitoring and mandatory continuing professional development.

2.5 Pedagogy

With the attempts to standardise mindfulness have come increasing discussion about the nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness. In exploring these I concur with Jarvis (2010, p244) that:

underlying every programme of education there is a philosophy, whether it is explicit or implicit, considered or rarely thought about, consistent or inconsistent.

In terms of mindfulness, McCown et al. (2010, p29) claim that "mindfulness pedagogy has been but barely visible: under-researched, under-theorized, and under-taught". Therefore, a deeper analysis of the underpinnings of the pedagogy of mindfulness is central to the development of the course being studied. I agree with McLeod (2003) that any programme of study should be constructed upon the theoretical bases in which it is grounded. I feel that such an analysis has a vital role to play in the development of any educational course, as expressed by Aspin and Chapman (2012, p3) when they state that:

attention to the philosophical questions that are part and parcel of thinking about lifelong learning is not only a crucial and indispensable element of the framework within which lifelong learning programmes and activities are conceived and articulated, but also that the conclusions that are reached as a result of philosophical enquiries have practical implications for developing programmes, curricula and activities of a lifelong learning character.

Although McCown (2017; 2014) acknowledges the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness, it is not a universally held view. Those who are grounded in the Scientific discourse often hold a more traditional pedagogic perspective, in which the teacher

holds a superior position from which knowledge is transmitted to the learner(s) (McCown, 2017). This stems from the positivistic ontological position that static and universal knowledge can be transferred from teacher to learner as objective fact (Jovanović, 2011; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). This contrasts with the interdependence nature of social constructivism, which expresses itself in the pedagogy of mindfulness as a co-journeying relationship between all involved. According to Howard and Brady (2015), constructivist pedagogy is a direct challenge to the tradition transmission-based pedagogy and the two are distinct from each other in theory and practice. This distinction certainly became apparent to me as I was teaching the course being studied in the context of attempts to increase the standardisation and professionalisation of mindfulness. As the constructivist approach is inherent in my personal epistemology, my prior teaching experience and my motivations for the course being studied, I lean into the literature concerning it and other recognised influences upon the pedagogy of mindfulness.

2.5.1 Constructivism

As a philosophical and epistemological approach, constructivism has inevitably been directed towards pedagogy. According to Yilmaz (2008), constructivist pedagogy can be traced back to philosophers such as Kant and has been informed by leading learning theorists such as Jon Dewey (1938), William James, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (2009; 1978), amongst notable others. Yilmaz (*ibid*) summarises the basic assumptions and principles of the constructivist view of learning as:

1. Learning is an active process
2. Learning is an adaptive activity
3. Learning is situated in the context in which it occurs
4. Knowledge is not innate, passive or absorbed
5. Knowledge has both a personal and relational dimension
6. All knowledge is socially constructed
7. Learning is a process of making meaning
8. Experience and prior understanding play a role in learning.

Fosnot (1996) applies the basic assumptions and principles to educational practice and suggests that:

1. Learning is not the result of development; learning is development
2. Disequilibrium facilitates learning
3. Reflective abstraction is the driving force of learning
4. Dialogue within a community engenders further thinking
5. Learning proceeds towards developing structures.

In the classic text on constructivist pedagogy, Brooks and Brooks (1999) propose five pillars on which a constructivist classroom would be based. These are 1) posing problems of emerging relevance to learners; 2) structuring learning around primary concepts; 3) seeking and valuing students' points of view; 4) adapting curricula to address students' suppositions; and 5) assessing student learning in the context of teaching. Interestingly, upon analysis, these pillars remain very teacher-centric. Yet, as Lawler (2014) reminds us, learners will often learn based upon their own expectations, habits and experiences regardless of the approach of the teacher.

In my experience of teaching and consultancy learner-based factors bring particular challenges and pressures for the constructivism-oriented teacher and learning environment. These can have the effect of limiting the application of constructivist pedagogy (Yilmaz, 2008), despite its popularity, development and power (Alt, 2015). One reason for this may be that it offers a theory of learning rather than teaching and, consequently, the various perspectives and orientations have yielded an ever-increasing selection of models and practices (Richardson, 2003). Examples of these include experiential learning, Project-Based Learning (the model that I used in my consultancy work) and discovery learning amongst many others (McLeod, 2003). I found it extremely interesting to read that, as a result of this, a criticism of constructivism as a pedagogic approach is that instructional principles and practices are difficult to standardise or replicate clearly (Tenenbaum et al., 2001; Alt, 2015). In addition, adopting a constructivist pedagogy requires the teacher to examine his or her own personal values, beliefs and practice (Yilmaz, 2008). Further, it requires the adaptation of one's role and

the relinquishment of elements of status and power, all of which may act as barriers to the application of authentic constructivist pedagogy.

In addition to the issues highlighted above, there have been recent discussions questioning the appropriateness of constructivism in education altogether. For example, Dziubiniski (2015) argues that direct instruction has been unfairly overlooked in favour of constructivism and uses teacher-training courses to highlight flaws of the latter. In sum, these flaws concern the degree to which learners have prior skills and subject-specific knowledge to engage in constructivist-inspired activities, the precedent whereby learners are given power to question and direct their curriculum and instructional design, the danger of education becoming 'edutainment' (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2000) and the assumption that constructivist pedagogy leads to higher student achievement.

That constructivism is itself a contested pedagogical approach means that any mindfulness course that seeks to express it authentically faces many opportunities, barriers and challenges. In chapter 3 I discuss my own experiences here in reflections of teaching the course being studied.

2.5.2 Transformative Learning

I argue in this thesis (section 1.1) that the transformative nature of mindfulness underpins its power and benefits. As such, pedagogical approaches that concern transformation are particularly salient in my development of the course being studied. As the most utilised approach, Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory (see table 2.5) is an acknowledged influence upon the pedagogy of mindfulness (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010).

Transformative Learning, according to Mezirow (2006), is a process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (including habits of mind and emotional

responses). O'Sullivan, Morrell and O'Conner (2002, p11) state that transformative learning:

involves experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premise of thought, feeling and action. It is a shift in consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our being in the world.

Table 2.5
The Phases of Transformative Learning according to Mezirow (2006).

Phases of Transformative Learning	
1	A disorienting dilemma
2	Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame
3	A critical assessment of assumptions
4	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationship and action
6	Planning a course of action
7	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8	Provisional trying of new roles
9	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10	A reintegration on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

With such a view, it does not surprising me that Transformative Learning and mindfulness have been associated in the literature of both. Mezirow acknowledges the role that mindfulness can play in transformative learning by drawing upon Bennet-Goleman's (2001, p53) view that:

Mindfulness allows one to separate specific experience from the overlay of mental and emotional reaction to it. In that space there is room to examine whether we harboured distorted assumptions, ungrounded beliefs, or warped perceptions. We can see the ways our thoughts and feelings define us as they come and go – we can see our habitual lenses themselves.

Similarly, Hyde and LaPrad (2015) suggest that mindfulness is an integral component of transformative learning because it allows the critical self-reflection needed to challenge

long-held mental scripts (Hyde and LaPrad, 2015). From a psychotherapeutic perspective, DelMonte (2012) discusses how our personal constructs (or habits of mind) act as a template through we perceive inner and outer stimuli and how we have habitual responses to this perception. Mindfulness seems to act on both of these components through filtering and clarifying perception and through a grounding in the present-moment that allows the habitual responses to be 'checked' and altered if necessary. According to DelMonte (2012, p317):

mindfulness ostensibly fosters reality testing while temporarily holding one's habitual prejudices (pre-judgements) in abeyance – in so far as this is possible.

According to Djikic (2014), the disorienting dilemma or dysregulation experienced by novice practitioners of mindfulness places them in a position whereby they retreat back to mindlessness or begin a growth journey of new opportunities. Over the years of teaching the course being studied and from the literature reviewed here, I feel that the field of mindfulness is itself faced with such a choice. Here though the choice is between retreating into the well-trodden pathways of Western-Scientific standardisation and professionalisation or to forge new directions that offer more authentic expressions of mindfulness in its teaching. In developing the AO-MBP approach, I attempt to pursue the latter pathway.

2.5.3 Contemplative pedagogy

Whereas this research focusses upon the teaching of mindfulness as a distinct subject, I feel that the discussion of mindfulness in relation to contemplative pedagogy can contribute to the answering of research question 2 concerning the effectiveness of the course being studied as an academic course. In summarising the various definitions of contemplative pedagogy, Ergas (2018) suggests that they share a focus upon:

    a) Having a variety of origins (across cultures and time)

    b) Cultivating a range of desired virtues or capacities

    c) Involving a practice or series of practices for this cultivation

Whilst there remains much debate concerning the nature, effectiveness and appropriateness of this 'contemplative turn' (the incorporation of contemplative practices in the curriculum), there has been a growing interest and application of it (Barbezat and Bush, 2014). Such growth and application seem to be in response to growing discontent about the influence of neoliberal ideology and practices on education in many Western societies (FitzSimmons, 2015). The academic capitalisation of learners, staff and ideas has led to the commodification and commercialisation of education and, in particular, higher education. In relation to Finnish students, FitzSimmons (*ibid*, p212) claims that this influence has resulted a situation whereby:

> *No longer can they critically digest new ideas and put such ideas into reflective learning. Rather, Finnish students are now pressured to finish their learning as quickly as possible so that the university can receive the necessary operating funding from the state.*

Although I feel that the situation is much more nuanced than this (as FitzSimmons proceeds to discuss), I certainly subscribe to the call for a pedagogical shift that addressed the issues highlighted. In advocating for the pedagogical shift to be based upon contemplative practices, Zajonc (2013) argues that it can "serve several educational goals" (p84) and discusses the supporting work of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (www.acmhe.edu). Several contemplative practices are reviewed including 'mindfulness', 'concentration', 'open awareness' and 'sustaining contradictions'. Of these, mindfulness is claimed to be the most widely used.

Alongside contemplative elements, there is also a recognition of the role that mindfulness could play in addressing the claims that education has failed to consider the 'affective domain' concerning the feelings, beliefs and attitudes of learners (Hyland, 2015; 2014b). Hyland (2015) argues that the potential of mindfulness to foster resilience and emotional wellbeing justifies its application in educational settings. Exactly how mindfulness and/or other contemplative practices are embedded into other programmes is an ongoing area of investigation. According to Ergas (2018), they can be framed and embedded within the subject-matter of such programmes to both supplement and support learning.

Interestingly, the wider attempt to bring contemplative practices into education shares many features, issues and debates with mindfulness itself. This is no surprise to me as mindfulness has emerged as the leading and preferred intervention in many discussions of contemplative pedagogy in recent years. The dual motivations from original wisdom traditions and secular-scientific approaches are again evident and often conflicting, with the latter being the dominant discourse (Ergas, 2014; Hyland, 2014). Just as with mindfulness, this dominance has led some to claim that this dominance has led to a reductionist, diluted approach that is devoid from any ethical and moral foundation (Ergas, 2015). Despite such debates, contemplative practices that have been included in the curriculum (led by mindfulness) have been linked to a diverse range of benefits for learners.

Shapiro, Brown and Austin (2011) report benefits of mindfulness for 'cognitive and academic performance', 'mental health and psychological wellbeing' and 'development of the whole person' in student populations. With the issues concerning student mental health now well established (Auerbach et al., 2018), along with the growing research of the importance of resilience for positive mental health (Lightsey, 2006), it seems that mindfulness offers an approach that could support students in terms of their mental health and wellbeing, their whole person growth and their academic performance.

To support this further, in a study of 141 university students, Keye and Pidgeon (2013) used standardised instruments to measure mindfulness, academic self-efficacy and resilience. Regression analysis showed that increases in mindfulness and academic self-efficacy were related to increases in resilience. Interestingly, mindfulness accounted for 44% of the variation for resilience and academic self-efficacy for 16%. Therefore, mindfulness seems to be the key driver for improved resilience for this student sample.

An adapted MBSR intervention was also found to be effective for first-year students by Ramler et al. (2016). Here the data suggests that mindfulness helped the learners to adjust to university life and to reduce stress levels. Whilst this study only involved 30 students in the intervention group, a study by de Bruin, Meppelink and Bögels (2015) involved 104 students from 16 different countries. A low intensity, 7-week

academically-oriented course (that included learning about mindfulness alongside the practice of it) resulted in significant benefits at the post-course measure.

These studies suggest that curriculum-embedded contemplative interventions can have profound and transformational benefits to the HE learner (Ergas, 2015). They also suggest that mindfulness is an effective approach to apply. As such, it seems logical to me to argue that courses that teach mindfulness as a distinct subject would also cultivate such benefits.

In the context of this study, some of these benefits fall within the clinical realm, such as the 'mental health and psychological wellbeing' aspects studied by Sahpiro, Brown and Austin (2009). As such, this data was important for answering research question 1. Any data concerning non-clinical areas can be used in part to answer research question 2. It is hoped that the uniqueness of the AO-MBP can be that it could support growth in both clinical and academic areas of HE learners. If supported, such a finding will have implications not only for teaching mindfulness as a distinct subject, but also for the further application of mindfulness within a much wider range of subject and programme areas in HE.

Whilst much of the development of contemplative pedagogy has been bottom-up in nature (Ergas, 2018), the before-mentioned field of Transpersonal Psychology (TP) has attempted a top-down, institution-wide approach at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP). According to Buckler (2013, p1284), the field of Transpersonal Psychology aims to:

> *positively transform humanity (individually and collectively) through examining what contributes to human transcendence, wholeness and transformation.*

Accordingly, Transpersonal Education seeks to integrate the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains to facilitate inter-, intra- and trans-personal development. Braud (2006) claims that this approach can feature in the content of an educational programme, but it is most authentic when it features in the content *and* ethos of a

programme or institution. Mindfulness, with its ego-transcendent and spiritual pathways, features strongly in the models and programmes of transpersonal education at the ITP. Buckler (2013) suggests that there are 7 generic and 5 specific principles of transpersonal education (figure 2.1). In addition, he offers 8 transpersonal practices that could feature in a transpersonal pedagogy (figure 2.2). In most of these, the role of mindfulness is inherent.

In the literature concerning TP there is an important distinction for the field of mindfulness and for the pedagogy of mindfulness. This distinction is between 'transformation' and 'translation'. According to one of the leading figures in the field, Ken Wilber, transformation is characterised by a vertical transcending of the self, whereas translation by a horizontal re-perception of self and world (Wilber, 1998). With the criticisms of the 8-week model of mindfulness being too short for genuine transformation (Finucane and Mercer (2005) maybe the learners are experiencing translation and it is this that is being experienced and measured by the instruments employed. This is an interesting area that deserves further empirical attention.

Figure 2.1
Seven generic (outer ring) and five specific (inner ring) properties of transpersonal education (Bucker, 2013).

71
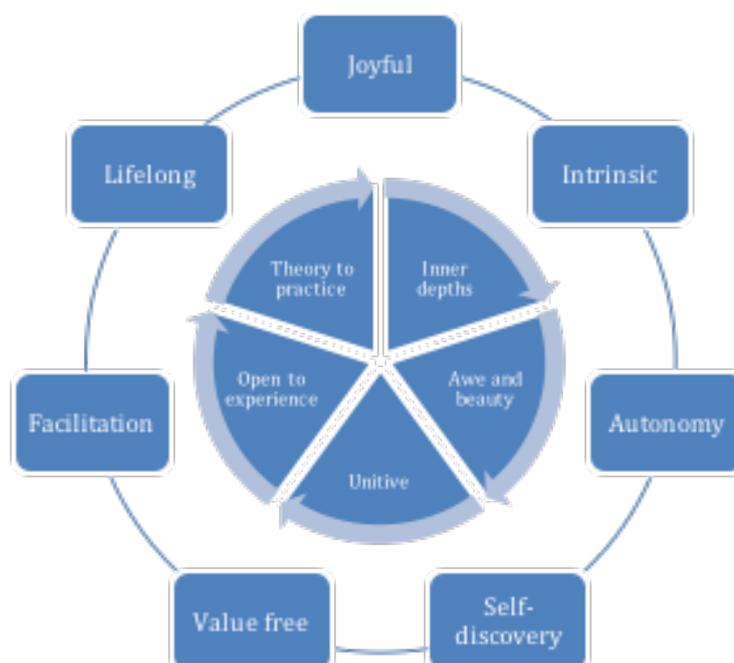
White (1997) claims that even brief exposures of transpersonal education can be sufficient to have meaningful consequences, although individual factors mediate any growth experienced. As mindfulness is a central feature of transpersonal pedagogy, it may be the case that the exposure of mindfulness on an MBP also has impacts in the areas suggested. As such, I feel that the concepts and approaches of TP can provide another frame of reference to consider the effectiveness of the course being studied as an academic course.

Figure 2.2
Eight transpersonal practices according to Buckler (2013).
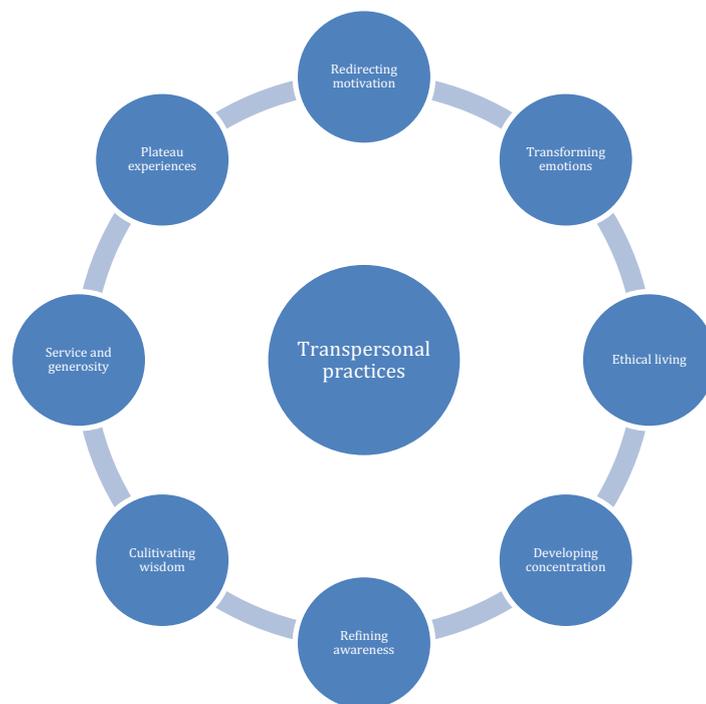
2.5.4 Researching the pedagogy of mindfulness

The dominance of the scientific discourse has led to the greater focus of research being upon outcome-effectiveness rather than pedagogical components. In a statement illustrating the paradoxical nature of this situation, Crane et al. (2015, p. 1113) claim that:

There is a significant imbalance between the large and rapidly expanding outcome evidence base for MB approaches and the surprisingly small empirical literature on the pedagogy by which these effects are arguably created.

Using the Conversational Analysis (CA) technique, Crane et al. (2015) studied aspects of the co-construction of knowledge and inquiry techniques by the teacher. From this they conclude that:

co-construction is therefore highly specific to the conditions of the moment. The teacher's skill in being able to dance with the emergence of each moment while steering the learning process is of paramount importance. (p. 1112)

And that:

There is an interesting tension between directional leadership and participatory co-construction that is at play in the teaching process. (p. 1113)

Group aspects and learner empowerment have also been studied. van Aalderen et al. (2012) interviewed both mindfulness teachers and learners about their experiences. Focus groups and observations were also used to elicit further data. Results showed that four convergent themes emerged concerning effective pedagogical components. These were 'embodiment' (of the teacher), 'empowerment' (by the teacher), 'non-reactivity' (of the teacher) and 'peer support' (by the learners). While the attempts at triangulation in this study increase its rigour, the authors do state that the differences in pedagogical practices of the teachers studied represent a significant confounding variable. To further illuminate this, I feel that an account of the course and teacher's pedagogic approaches and experiences could be useful in this study and in all studies concerning MBPs.

The impact that out-of-class practice or 'home-practice' has upon the effectiveness of mindfulness has also been a focus of study. Home-practice has been described as one of the most essential components of mindfulness (Vettesse et al., 2009) and is included

in the MBI curriculum guidelines (Lloyd et al., 2017). For MBSR, the recommended home-practice is 45 minutes of formal practice and 15 minutes of informal practice per day for 6 days per week (Santorelli et al., 2017). For MBCT it is the same for formal practice but there is not a prescribed amount of informal practice (Segal et al., 2013).

Whilst there is agreement amongst teachers and practitioners of mindfulness concerning the importance of home-practice, there has been mixed results concerning its significance in relation to growth as demonstrated by outcome measures. In their review of 24 studies, Vittesse et al. (2009) found a positive relationship between home-practice and outcome efficacy in 8 studies, mixed findings in 5 studies and no impact in 11 studies. Parsons et al. (2017) reviewed 28 studies of MBSR and MBCT and found a small but significant impact. In their own systematic review, Lloyd et al. (2017) found considerable variation in how home-practice was presented, what resources were used and how home-practice was measured amongst MBPs. In terms of the latter, some studies utilised qualitative methods (such as practice diary logs) but in most cases a self-report questionnaire was used. In terms of the time spent on home-practice, results ranged from 16.9 minutes for 2.48 days to 44 minutes for 6 days per week. In comparison to the home-practice guidelines they ranged from 14.87% to 88.14%. In 4 studies, there was a significant positive relationship between time spent on home-practice and clinical outcomes but in 3 studies no effect was found. Some studies demonstrate a link between home-practice and relapse prevention but in others this effect was not found. Interestingly, it is reported that home-practice that consisted of one practice for 3 days per week produced significant reductions in anxiety compared to one practice for 2 days per week or less.

2.6 Chapter summary

There now exists a large body of scholarly evidence and commentary concerning the developing field of mindfulness. Literature concerning the benefits, study and measurements of mindfulness have been discussed, as have attempts to create greater

fidelity in the field and to illuminate the pedagogical nature of MBPs. The varying perspectives, approaches and discourses evident in the literature has created a contested and often competing environment. From this environment there has emerged a number of issues and debates in mindfulness that have had a direct impact upon the pedagogy of MBPs.

To illustrate the impact of the issues and debates and to provide the context for the current study, the following chapter will discuss the journey of myself and of course being studied within the environment of mindfulness. The features of the HE-based AO-MBP will be further outlined and the specific features of the course being studied articulated. Other relevant areas that are associated with the HE-basis of the course being studied will also be discussed. Finally, the perspective of this study will be summarised as a foundation for the journeying through the remainder of the thesis.

|Chapter 3: Contextualising the study

"Retracing steps"

Whereas in the previous chapter relevant literature was reviewed via a critical reflection from my experiences and perspective, in this chapter I contextualise myself, the course being studied and the AO-MBP approach and connect to relevant literature where appropriate.

I the first 3 sections I outline the journey of myself and discuss the course being studied and the AO-MBP approach. I feel that this is important at this stage of the thesis in order to contextualise the study, the course being studied and myself as teacher, practitioner and researcher. Such contextualisation is deemed to be important in research as it allows for thick descriptions of the phenomenon being studied (Shenton, 2004). Further, the discussion of my personal journey allows for the scrutiny of my own beliefs and assumptions in relation to their impact upon the study. This is extremely important for social research from the critical realist stance as there is an assumption that observations of the objects of study are based upon the flawed perceptions of the individuals involved (Fletcher, 2017; Bhaskar, 2008). These individual perceptions are contextually constructed (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) and their grounding deserve careful consideration.

In section 3.4 I discuss the evaluation of academic courses at the HE level with a consideration of how to assess the quality of AO-MBPs and wider MBPs. With this, information concerning the differing aspects of the study will have been presented and in section 3.5 I proceed to summarise the perspectives of the study from the complex and multi-faceted environment that it inhabits.

3.1 The journey of the teacher

Using the concept of 'personal epistemology' (Elby, 2009; Sandoval, 2005; Hofer and Pintrich, 1997), many educational researchers have argued that learners move from a view that knowledge is a static and direct reflection of reality to a view that it is much more active and contextualised (Kitchener and King, 1989; Scommer-Aikins, 2004). Such

a move brings developments to a persons' views of reality itself (ontology), how we can understand reality (epistemology), how we can measure it (methodology) and how we can teach and learn about it (pedagogy).

This process was certainly evident in my own learning journey and it brought me to a position whereby the context of the person and the ever-present prospect of growth and transformation (whatever may be the goal and however it may manifest itself) were of paramount importance to my personal being and professional practice. Upon wider reflection, the person-centred focus of my teaching of mindfulness was not unique to this endeavour alone. I recognise that I had always been person-centred and that this had been a driving force in my choice of qualifications, career and my pedagogical approach as a teacher.

After an increasing interest in the mind during adolescence I decided to study Psychology. It quickly became clear that my interests and talents were well suited to this field. I found it extremely rewarding to use the knowledge and skills developed from my courses to help other people in need. After a debilitating and long-term illness in my late teens/early 20's, I developed a form of post-viral anxiety for which I engaged in several sessions of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as part of my recovery. Whilst these sessions did provide me with some understanding of the issues and some fairly effective practical techniques, I felt that the experience had brought me to a position whereby I needed deeper understandings and techniques to combat what I later recognised as an existential crisis.

This illness emerged during the second year of my BSc (Hons.) Psychology degree programme and, although it was a crisis experience, helped to reshape my beliefs of myself and reality towards the position described previously in this section. In this sense I was experiencing my own disorienting dilemma and, as is outlined in the model of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2006), engaged in deep critical self-reflection to emerge with a new perspective (although I would later recognise it as a reconnection with a perspective that was closer to my authentic self that had been subdued and supressed in childhood and adolescence). As part of this reshaping, I found myself

drawn towards branches and topics of psychology that were more aligned with my perspective, such as counselling, educational and sport psychology (I had worked as a qualified football coach during this time). I was also interested in emerging qualitative methodologies in the field whilst also acknowledging and enjoying the traditional quantitative approaches that have dominated the field (Jovanović, 2011).

After graduating from the undergraduate programme, I embarked upon a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education course in Further, Adult and Higher Education (PGCE FAHE). During this course I became aware of different pedagogical approaches, particularly relating to adult learning. The approach of constructivism aligned with my own developing personal epistemology and underpinned my pedagogical approach as I moved into a career of teaching Psychology at further and higher education.

During my career I was required to complete a Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) award in order to progress into management positions. This essentially involved the reproduction of the PGCE course but with a focus upon compulsory education. Interestingly, the pedagogical approaches advocated on this course moved away from constructivism and back towards a more transmission-based approach in which knowledge was viewed and taught more as static facts rather than contextualised knowledge. Despite this being challenging to me, from my practical experience of teaching and the acceptance of the journey of personal epistemologies as outlined by researchers (Kitchener and King, 1989; Scommer-Aikins, 2004), I understood that the constructivist approach was often subject to a large dose of pragmatism in the classroom.

Although I had a developing full-time career and had just welcomed the birth of my daughter, several years after achieving the QTS award I felt an irresistible draw towards a deeper understanding of the mind, body, emotions and spirit. As such, I undertook an MSc programme in Transpersonal Psychology (TP), a branch of psychology that concerns itself with the full span of human experience and potential. It was on this course that I first became aware of the distinct approach and field of mindfulness. It was here that I found a synergy between my personal epistemology, pedagogical approach,

psychological understandings and growing spiritual yearnings. As such, I chose to specialise in mindfulness and personal growth journeys in the final year of this course.

Reflecting back upon the course now I recognise that the MSc course was approaching mindfulness from a more Eastern discourse but did lean into Western, scientific perspectives when appropriate. In taking this approach the MBSR was taught and analysed as the standard model of mindfulness. It was here that I learned about the contemplative and Buddhist roots of mindfulness and, although I had always been dismissive and sceptical about religion, at this time of my life it appealed to my spiritual yearnings. I again saw synergies between my experience and psychological understandings in such concepts as the four enobling truths (figure 3.1), the three marks of existence and the two arrows of suffering (Batchelor, 2004, Cullen and Brito-Pons, 2015).

Figure 3.1
The four enobling truths.
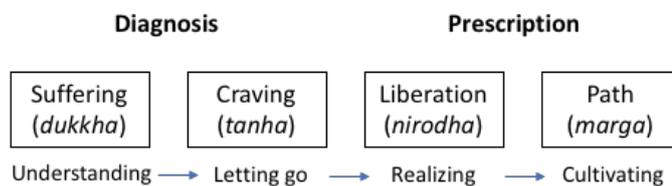
Although a full exploration of this synergy is not the focus of this thesis, in essence I recognised the central role of the mind in suffering and its navigation and/or transcendence. From the enobling truths, the role of the mind in this journey is highlighted. Understanding requires an awareness and perception of the suffering (and its sources) that is clear and vivid. Letting go of the craving that fuels suffering requires attention, gentleness and perseverance. Such qualities allow new possibilities of responses to emerge that reduce suffering. When such a new possibility is realised by the person through an awareness of the experience, it can be extremely liberating. The new possibilities can then be reinforced and cultivated over time.

During the MSc course I also became aware of the Western perspective of Ellen Langer (1989) from her work into the experience of 'mindlessness' and its relationship to mindfulness (see figure 3.2).   Langer advocates a more cognitive approach to mindfulness that shares many of the components of Eastern approaches but isn't based in meditative practice. One of the main distinctions between the two is that for the Western approach the focus of attention is upon external stimuli, whereas for Eastern approaches it begins within oneself. As such, the Western approach is often aligned with what Williams (2010) refers to as the 'doing' mode, whereas the Eastern approaches with the 'being' mode.

Figure 3.2
A spectrum of mindlessness and mindfulness, based upon Langer (1989).

Mindlessness   <--->   Mindfulness

   (Autopilot)   (Present-moment awareness)
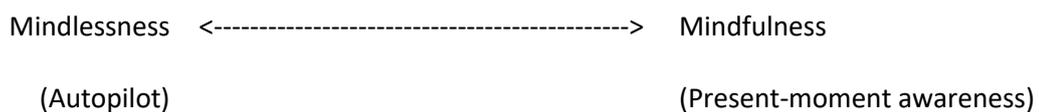
Although the Western, psychologised approaches of mindfulness sat better with my experience, understandings and beliefs prior to this stage of my journey, I now felt drawn more to the internal, contemplative journey of being. As such, I continued to engage with the foundational practices of MBSR-based mindfulness during the course (and subsequently) but was open to and interested in how these might facilitate growth across the full spectrum of mindfulness.

In specialising in mindfulness as part of the course I quickly became aware that most others involved in the course (included the teachers) were either Buddhists themselves or advocated for mindfulness to return to its Buddhist roots. This advocation appears to be gaining in strength in the field currently (e.g. O'Donnell, 2015; Hyland, 2015; Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths, 2015). For me though the journey took a very different and unexpected pathway. As I was engaging in deep mindfulness practice and attempting to bring the attitudinal qualities to my everyday experiences, I felt an irresistible draw towards the Christian faith. Such a connection between mindfulness and Christianity has a history, particularly in relation to monasticism. McCown, Reibel

and Micozzi (2010) discuss this in relation to the Zen boom of the 1960's. Here they discuss collaborations between D.T. Suzuki's Zen, Thomas Merton's Trappist and Eric Fromm's psychoanalytic approaches. In this I found much synergy with my own journey, being influenced firstly by psychology, then by mindfulness and most recently by Christianity.

After completing the MSc in Transpersonal Psychology, I longed to express and apply my new perspective and mindfulness techniques more in my career. An opportunity to do this emerged when I took on a role as a consultant to newly established academies in 2009. At this time, it was schools who were deemed to be 'failing' that became academies. As such, they often had wide-ranging and deep-rooted issues. In this role I had the opportunity to work directly with teachers and students supporting curriculum development (adopting a Project-Based Learning approach), personalised learning, and health and wellbeing. This was very enjoyable work and was based within an understanding that we were focussing upon the being of the teachers and students but that this would manifest itself in their doing (e.g. teacher observation grades, examination results, etc.) in due time.

Despite this understanding, as the 2010 general election was announced I was informed that there were members of the board of the academy group that I worked for who were also members of the then Labour government's cabinet. These members wanted to make the academisation policy the flagship of the election campaign for education and, as a result, wished to see results much more quickly than we had originally planned for. To achieve this, I was asked to use my knowledge and skills to produce these results very quickly regardless of the impact upon the being of the teachers or students. Suddenly I found myself in another disorienting dilemma in which I was being asked to do things that were in incongruence with my own being. Whereas before I began my journey of faith based upon mindfulness I may not have had the confidence or courage to do anything but comply, I now recognised that for me to be happy in my work my doing must be an authentic expression of my being (or at least a lot closer than it could have been if I had continued in this role). Therefore, after clarifying with my managers

that my role would indeed involve a greater focus upon short-term results going forwards using whatever means necessary, I decided that I could no longer carry with it.

Leaving such a high profile and rewarding job was not an easy decision and did leave me in a precarious position (both financially and professionally). However, through my growing faith supported by my continued practice of mindfulness (which included many retreats and a pilgrimage in northern Spain) I leaned into and was able to cultivate two of the key attitudinal qualities of mindfulness – patience and trust. After a few months of insecurity, a new possibility emerged.

In the consultancy role for the academy group I was fortunate enough to be mentored by a very experienced educational coach who also shared my personal epistemology and interest in mindfulness (but not my Christian faith!). He was a qualified coach with a wellbeing and biofeedback coaching company called HeartMath based in the USA. In our discussion concerning this I discovered that the HeartMath approach of focussed breathing, clearing the mind and bringing appreciation to the present moment aligned very much with mindfulness. Upon researching the HeartMath technique further I found that it is implicitly based upon mindfulness but has the addition of using biofeedback devices to provide physiological feedback and encouragement to users. The biofeedback devices measure Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and HeartMath and other independent researchers have found empirical evidence for many health and wellbeing benefits of controlling HRV through the techniques such as HeartMath (Huanga et al., 2017). Recent research has also strengthened the understanding of the link between HRV and mindfulness (Carrol and Lustyk, 2018).

Following my departure from the consultancy role I trained and became a certified HeartMath coach and began working privately with clients under the role of 'Wellbeing and Performance Coach'. Here I offered a combination of mindfulness techniques, psychological understandings and biofeedback to support clients towards their goals. This was a role that I was still engaged in at the beginning of the research process. Although this was very enjoyable work that allowed me to express my being in my doing

well, I still yearned to return to teaching in some manner and so also began to teach at the university where I am currently employed.

As part of my current role I have designed, developed, implemented and evaluated many short courses, with the course studied here being one of them. The details of this course and its relationship with the standard MBSR model will be discussed in the following sub-sections. To conclude the discussion here, my teaching of mindfulness and the development of the various courses, workshops allowed me once more to better align my doing with my being. This was enhanced by the nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness being essential constructivist (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010; McCown, 2014). However, I felt that once again I was approaching a disorienting dilemma as I had increasing concerns about the authenticity of the expression of the mindfulness approach and the constructivist nature of its pedagogy in the wider field and, subsequently, in my own teaching of the course being studied.

3.2 The origins of the course being studied

As I articulated in the introduction chapter, I view the course being studied as an Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme as distinct from clinically-oriented programmes. The origins of the course can be traced to a one-day (6-hour) certified workshop on mindfulness that I began to deliver in 2012. This workshop had been previously led by another colleague who could no longer teach it and I was asked to instead. The previous leader did not have any formal qualifications in teaching mindfulness (e.g. MBSR or MBCT-based) and approached it from a very Eastern, philosophical and spiritual perspective. The practices taught though did include those that feature in the MBSR model. As such, I made only minor alterations. The workshop was a success and so I was invited to run it several times during the following academic year.

Although I myself have do not hold a formal qualification in teaching mindfulness as exists today, I did undertake the standard 8-week MBSR course as part of my MSc programme specialism and my training and application of mindfulness-based coaching also aligned with the mid-spectrum perspective that the MBSR advocates. I felt that I also had a depth of personal practice, knowledge and expertise as an educator to develop mindfulness in an academic setting (not a clinical setting). As a result, I re-designed the workshop to align more with the MBSR programme model that would include the standard guided practices and an element of psychoeducation.

One of the key influences upon the amendments to the workshop was the realisation that the learners came to the course for a variety of reasons and with a range of expectations. From surveying the group, these seemed to span from mild clinical reasons (e.g. to better manage stress or anxiety) to personal development reasons (e.g. lifelong learning, Continued Professional Development) to spiritual reasons (religious or non-religious). Such a spectrum of intentions in mindfulness is only recently being formulated in the field (Crane, 2016; Lutz et al., 2015).

Based upon this data, I decided that the workshop course would allow the learners to explore the full spectrum of mindfulness, its history and the evidence-base for its application in all of these areas as they felt necessary for their personal journey. Such an approach required a pedagogy that was rooted in a learner-centred focus that views learning as an active, contextualised and constructed process. As constructivist pedagogy is indeed rooted in such views (Fosnot, 1996; Brooks and Brooks, 1999) and is acknowledged by many to be the at the heart of the nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010), I decided to develop the workshops in this manner.

Based upon this approach the workshop included learner-led personal and group activities, the standard MBSR guided practices, information concerning the history and spectrum of mindfulness and an element of psychoeducation that included findings related to the relevant biological and psychological mechanisms associated with mindfulness. In adopting this approach an interesting phenomenon emerged that

would help me to define and shape the concept of an AO-MBP. As leaners were engaged in the different activities and were self-directing to certain information, they naturally began to compare and critically analyse the differing definitions, perspectives, evidence, methodologies, and other conceptual features. It was at this moment that I realised the power and importance of such a critical analysis of the wider field of mindfulness in this setting and how it was beneficial to the personal journey of the individual learners and the whole group. Suddenly it dawned upon me that an AO-MBP has the potential to allow and encourage such analysis much more than a clinically-oriented MBI. Due to this I began to consider whether an AO-MBP had the potential to promote clinical, personal, spiritual and *academic* growth. This research marks the manifestation of this consideration.

Returning to the development of the AO-MBP course being studies, each workshop delivered was a success in terms of enrolment numbers and learner experiences (as demonstrated by the feedback data). It was also a pleasure to teach. Based upon this success I was invited to propose a 10-week certified mindfulness course as part of a short-course programme. It is this course that is being studied for this research and was first offered in the academic year 2013-14.

In many ways, the new 10-week mindfulness course was an extended version of the workshop course. It remained an open-access, accredited lifelong learning course that combined the practices of mindfulness with a critical exploration of the wider field. The pedagogical approach remained constructivist and with the increase in learner contact time I was able to offer a broader and deeper personal and shared exploration of mindfulness. To do this I decided that two motivations were important to me. One was to ensure that the course remained and even increased its alignment to the direction of the wider field whilst also acknowledging, accepting and developing its uniqueness in being non-clinical and academic-oriented. In this sense I embarked upon a journey towards both fidelity and integrity in teaching mindfulness. The second was that the constructivist nature the pedagogy of the course would be developed even with any additional barriers that may have presented themselves as the course increased in terms

of contact-time, learner-numbers, preparation time and its position and level of scrutiny in the department and the wider HE institution.

In order to pursue the two motivations over the years of teaching the course, I leaned into the rapidly growing literature concerning mindfulness, constructivist pedagogy and wider issues relating to teaching and learning in HE settings.   In many ways this was the beginning of the journey of this research. Through exploring the literature, I began to be aware of the many opportunities of an academic-based approach to mindfulness whilst also recognising the many conflicting issues at play.

As I continued to teach the course over the next several years this awareness grew, and I began to also recognise how the conflicts were manifesting themselves in my experiences as a teacher and in the development of the wider field of mindfulness. It was from this growing recognition that this study began to be formulated.

3.3 The HE-based AO-MBP approach

In developing the course being studied as an AO-MBP I felt that I was leaning into and extending greatly the educational-orientation that Jon Kabat-Zinn originally envisaged for mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2011).   As an educationalist rather than a clinician, I recognised that the pedagogical nature of mindfulness was foundational for the learning experience that underpinned any growth in mindfulness and related clinical and non-clinical facets. I also recognised the important role that an AO-MBP could play in developing the field through a critical analysis of itself, something that is absent from clinical-oriented courses. Thus, the academic aspect of the course was developed to complement the experiential learning of the standard mindfulness philosophy, approach and practices. When put together, these resulted in a course that had the following features that are representative of the AO-MBP approach:

1. A course based in and/or offered in a HE setting or equivalent
2. An open-access course offered to adult learners

3. A constructivist-based pedagogical approach

4. Learning taking place in a group format

5. The formal practices of the MBSR with selected additional practices

6. Home practice that is explained and encouraged

7. Experiential learning that is supported by an element of 'psychoeducation'

8. An assessment component leading to accreditation (or credit award)

9. A focus upon journeying with and learning about the full spectrum of mindfulness

10. A focus upon a critical reflection of one's own journey and a critical analysis of the field

11. Considerable resources being available to support personal journeying.

In containing these features, the AO-MBP approach has the following unique benefits (both the spectrum of aims and the spectrum of intentions appear in Crane, 2016):

1. It is able to span the Eastern-Western, Scientific-Pedagogic discourses

2. It is able to span the 'clinical', 'personal', 'spiritual' spectrum of aims

3. It is able to span the 'self-regulation', 'self-exploration', 'self-liberation' spectrum of intentions

4. It allows learners to experience personal growth and benefits through critical self-reflection

5. It gives learners a more solid foundation to advocate for or use mindfulness with others

6. It encourages development of the field through a critical analysis of itself.

With the AO-MBP approach outlined, I now proceed to explain the specific features of the course being studied.

3.3.1 The features of the course being studied

The course being studied is offered for 10 consecutive weeks on a Tuesday evening from 6 to 8pm. In being an AO-MBP, it has many unique elements as described above. As such, the aims and objectives of the course reflect these elements and the non-clinical, academic-orientation of the course. These are:

1. To understand and consider…

a. what mindfulness is

b. what the different types and purposes of mindfulness are

c. the general trajectory of human wellbeing, personal and/or spiritual development

d. how mindfulness links to other wellbeing, self-development and/or spiritual practices.

2. To consider a range of psychological and biological processes associated with the experience and practice of mindfulness.

3. To engage in a range of mindfulness practices, activities and experiences.

4. To reflect upon the continuing use and implementation of mindfulness in everyday life during the course.

The course is based upon the standard MBSR model and I used the Standards of Practice document (Santorelli, 2014) and subsequent literature to develop it. Despite this, due to its non-clinical orientation, there are several features of the course that differ from the standard MBSR model. The similarities and differences can be seen in table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Features of the course being studied compared to the standard MBSR programme.

The course being studied	Standard MBSR
Low intensity/Non-clinical	High intensity/Clinical
No learner screening	Structured learner screening
No pre-programme orientation	Pre-programme orientation
Non-referred	Referred
No learner contract	Learner contract
Accredited	Non-accredited
Assessed (reflective account)	Non-assessed
10 x 2-hour sessions	8 x 2.5-hour sessions
No full day retreat	Full day retreat
Standard formal and informal practices	Standard formal and informal practices
Home practice	Home practice
Learner pre and post self-assessment	Learner pre and post self-assessment
Group format (max. 25)	Group format (15 – 40)
Experiential, guided practices	Experiential, guided practices

As an AO-MBP the course does not involve the features of referral or learner screening that often feature in clinical-oriented MBIs. In accordance with other open-access and lifelong learning courses in the programme I also decided that a pre-programme orientation and learner contract were not necessary. For the former, the pre-programme information given to the potential learners becomes very important. For the latter, in alignment with the constructivist pedagogy, I decided that issues concerning the conduct of the group are to be managed by the group.

As the course is accredited (10 credits at FHEQ level 4) there is a summative assessment component in the form of a 2000-word essay. To ensure that this assessment activity plays a supporting role in the personal journeys of the learners I chose it to be in the form of a reflective account. The assessment question is therefore:

"What are your reflections on your knowledge and experiences gained during the mindfulness course?"

I chose this title to allow the learners to shape the direction of their accounts, whether it be more academic in focussing upon knowledge or reflective by focussing upon the experiences that have emerged through engaging in the course. As such, the accounts have produced a wide variety of flavours of this and each one was unique in presenting the learner's personal journey with the course. The use reflective accounts in HE is advocated and supported by many who advocate for the constructivist perspective (Luxton-Reilly and Denny, 2010).

The reflective account is to be submitted formally and marked in accordance with the university's marking scheme. This marking scheme inherently contains higher order academic skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. As such, I outline and encouraged such skills throughout the course when considering the practices, psychoeducation information and other experiences.

The standard MBSR programme model (and many MBPs that are based upon it) includes a one-day retreat (Santorelli, 2014; Santorelli et al., 2017). Unfortunately, this is difficult

to include in the course being studied here, but I do acknowledge its value and view it as an important possible feature in AO-MBPs. The barriers I face to its inclusion in the course being studied were numerous. Some are practical in nature, such as finding suitable dates each term for those involved (e.g. a retreat centre, the learners, myself and my department). Others are more administrative (e.g. accommodating the increased work load in organising the retreat) and yet others concern the positioning of the course within the spectrum of mindfulness. Here, with the variety of reasons for enrolling and the range of expectations of the learners, I feel that a Zen Buddhist retreat (as advocated by the MBSR model) would not be suitable and I have found it difficult to find a retreat centre that mirrored the pluralistic approach of the course.

Other MBPs in the field employ a variety of pre and post-course quantitative assessment methods to measure growth in mindfulness itself. For the course being studied I employ the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) developed by Baer et al. (2006). In order to align with the MBSR model and other research in the field, I invite the learners to complete the questionnaire at the beginning of the course (week 1) and again at week 8. No new content (practices, activities or information) are introduced in the final two weeks of the course. I chose the FFMQ as the facets of mindfulness measured emerged from a sophisticated analysis of a range of other leading instruments at the time.

In developing the course, I extensively used the foremost publication on teaching mindfulness by McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010). Here they present five teaching intentions that can be used to underpin the development of a course (table 3.2). These intentions should manifest themselves in the pedagogy of the course through the practices, activities and teacher-led didactic elements (termed Homiletics). They have similarities to the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness taught in the MBSR model (see below) and many are actually measured by the FFMQ instrument.

Table 3.2

The five teaching intentions of the MBSR model according to McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010).

Teaching Intention	Description
Experiencing new possibilities	This represents the invitation of mindfulness to experience different ways of responding in thought, feeling and action.
Discovering embodiment	The process of building the capacity to be aware of present-moment bodily sensations.
Cultivating observation	Here, awareness of internal and external stimuli is enhanced through the various mindfulness practices.
Moving towards acceptance	The acceptance of the present moment, and of ourselves in the present moment, is crucial for new experiences and responses to emerge.
Growing compassion	A non-judgemental attitude is cultivated in the mindfulness practices that can lead to a greater sense of self-compassion initially and usually extends beyond the person in time.

In alignment with the 2014 MBSR Standards of Practice document (Santorelli, 2014), each session includes a mixture of guided practices (formal, informal and additional), discussion activities (class dialogue and inquiry) and teacher-led exposition (didactic presentations). In addition, a range of related personal and group activities are also included. The curriculum structure of these sessions can be seen in table 3.3.

In terms of home practice, I was surprised to find that the MBSR requires a minimum of 42 to 48 hours of home practice over an 8-week course. I feel that this is an unrealistic requirement for the learners of this course but could well be necessary in a clinically-oriented MBP. Instead, in line with the constructivist pedagogical approach of the course and the personal journeying aspect of mindfulness, I advise the learners that regular out-of-class practice is important and that neurological research suggests that a minimum of 20 minutes per day is suggested (Baime, 2011). Beyond this, I invite them to find a level of practice that was suitable for them in their current position of their journey.

Table 3.3
The curriculum structure of the course being studied. NOTE: Mindfulness meditation includes mindful breathing, the body scan and sitting meditation.

Session	Academic content	Practice	Activities
1	Definitions of mindfulness History of mindfulness The spectrum of mindfulness	Mindful breathing Body scan Mindful walking	What is mindfulness to me? Networking activity Group conduct discussion FFMQ
2	Benefits of mindfulness The biology of mindfulness	Mini body scan Affirmations and Mantras Mindfulness meditation	FFMQ review Attitudinal qualities activity
3	The stress response	In-the-moment mindfulness Mindfulness meditation	Hassles and Uplifts scale
4	Habitual responses Attention and Perception	Mindfulness meditation - Navigating thoughts	Doing and being modes Visual illusions activity
5	Emotions Flow	Mindfulness meditation - Pure awareness - Positive motional memories	"Atmosphere" analysis Beginner's mind activity
6	Decision-making Wellbeing, personal and spiritual development	Mindfulness meditation	Mindful planning
7	Expanding awareness	Mindfulness meditation Loving-kindness meditation Transcendence	Issues and debates in mindfulness
8	Reflective practice Mindful eating	Mindfulness meditation Mindful eating	FFMQ and review
9	Mindfulness for everyday living Resources for continuing the journey	Mindfulness meditation	Mindful moments in everyday life activity Continuing the journey
10	Opportunities for continuing the journey	Mindfulness meditation	Continuing the journey Future directions for mindfulness

As can be seen in table 3.3, the course features the standard formal and informal practices outlined in Santorelli (2014). These included mindful breathing, the body scan, sitting meditation (exploring detachment and thoughtless or pure awareness), mindful walking, mindful eating, and the exploration of routines and habits. I also include a

practice from my coaching technique, called 'Positive Emotional Memories' and from my Transpersonal Psychology course called 'Transcendental Mindfulness'. In the former, once the mind, body and emotions had been stilled (to whatever degree they were) by the mindfulness meditation practice, I invite the learners to recall positive emotional memory as vividly as possible and allow the feelings that came with the memory to emerge and grow. Then I direct them to let go of the memory but keep the feeling and try to allow it to soak into the present moment. In the latter I invite the learners to experience a deeper transcendental state using a repeated chime sound before a period of prolonged silence. Both of these are included to allow the learners to explore the different dimensions of mindfulness. Whereas the transcendental technique can be seen as being more spiritual in focus, using the positive emotional memories technique allowes learners to explore personal development and, in particular, the view that mindfulness is not just beneficial to helping a person navigate their problems, but also for leaning into positives.

One major difference between the course being studied and the MBSR curriculum model is that I do not include Hatha Yoga. This is due to a number or reasons. Firstly, although I have practiced Yoga myself, I do not feel competent in teaching this aspect. Despite this, I could bring in a Yoga teacher for this element. However, I hold the strong view that Yoga is not a key component of mindfulness itself and that its inclusion may be restrictive. I always explain to the learners that Yoga is a complimentary activity to mindfulness and that it is usually included in a mindfulness course. When I have asked for opinions about its inclusion there has always been a divide between those who would like to engage with it and those who would not. As such, in accordance with the constructivist pedagogy, I provide resources to the Hatha Yoga activities of the MBSR and invite learners to engage with them if they wish to.

In this thesis I make several references to the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness. Along with the teaching intentions offered by McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010), these underpin and emerge through all of the practices, academic content and activities of the course. They are formally explored in week 2 and are referred to explicitly and implicitly thereafter. They are prominent in the MBSR Standards of Practice (Santorelli, 2014) and

in numerous books and other writings concerning mindfulness (e.g. Cullen and Brito-Pons, 2015). A description of them can be seen in table 3.4.

Table 3.4
The attitudinal qualities of mindfulness.

Attitudinal quality	Description
Non-judgement	Our habitual mind has been trained to make judgements about our internal and external situations and experience. However, these are usually surface judgements and may not be accurate or appropriate. With mindfulness we try to move away from labelling our thoughts, feelings, sensations or behaviours as being good, bad, right, wrong, fair, unfair, etc. to a neutral and more authentic experience of them. From here, if judgements need to be made they will be made with greater clarity and understanding.
Acceptance	Accepting the moment helps to remove the surface, habitual responses that we have regarding the moment and allows us to see it with greater clarity and authenticity. We may not like what we have to accept, but accepting it allows us the presence to choose to make changes and the clarity to see how any changes are to be made.
Non-agenda/non-striving	This refers to us approaching moments without an agenda (to which we judge the moment against). To experience moments as they unfold and to focus of our full attention and awareness on these moments is to be truly mindful.
Patience	Impatience and our desire to direct our development (and thus judge how it is going) are major sources of frustration in those on the journey of mindfulness. Patience with ones-self is a crucial component of cultivating the mindful state.
Trust	Learning to trust ones-self is essential for emotional balance and presence. Here the trust is not in your ability to do something right or good but in honouring your own experience and learning how to listen deeply to your own heart, mind and body.
Letting go/letting be	Often referred to as the pivotal characteristic in the journey of mindfulness, letting be does not mean escaping or denying the present moment, but rather immersing in it fully without being attached to the habitual responses that may come with it.
Gentle curiosity	A non-judgemental, agenda-free interest in our own experience.
Beginner's mind	This refers to the attitude of allowing our awareness to experience the wonder in every, and any, moment as if new, fresh and vivid.

By infusing the course with these attitudinal qualities, the aim is to cultivate growth in mindfulness as a state (and increasingly as a trait). In presenting them I often invite the learners to consider the proportion of our everyday experiences that involve the opposite quality. In doing this I encourage them to view our sessions as 'protected time' in which we could attempt to bring some balance in these areas.

In many ways these attitudinal qualities represent the distinct nature of mindfulness and I teach them as such. Often, I am asked by learners about the difference between mindfulness and a series of related techniques and approaches, including Yoga, relaxation and meditation. My response is to draw upon these attitudinal qualities, whilst also explaining that you can be mindful in all states, regardless of physiological activity or arousal.

When designing the course, I decided to include two extra weeks to the standard 8-week model. This was due to my own experience of the 8-week course, in which I was left wanting to consolidate, contextualise and discuss what we had learned further. Therefore, the final two weeks are devoted to continuing the practices but also in exploring the possibilities ahead for those who wanted to continue with their journey with mindfulness. In doing this, I often present a review of the resources, groups and retreats available. This is achieved in collaboration with the learners and represents adherence to the MBSR Standards of Practice document (Santorelli, 2014). For an AO-MBP this extra time also provides the opportunity for learners to consider some of the issues and debates in the field that may impact upon their journey from a more informed position.

As is evident in the outlining of the course here, there are many areas in which participants can engage in self-directed learning. This is further supported by the development of a Moodle-based Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) resource for the course. This resource contains electronic versions of all course material, including presentation slides and handouts. It also includes further readings that span the spectrums of mindfulness, the benefits of mindfulness and other relevant psychoeducation elements. Further, it also includes a series of video resources and a

bank of recorded guided practices (led by myself) for the learners to engage with beyond the classroom if they so wished.

In designing the course in the manner outlined here, I felt that I was meeting the two motivations of attempting to align with the directions of the wider field and to authentically express the approach of mindfulness in its pedagogy. In doing this, I felt I was moving towards both fidelity, integrity and authenticity within the developing concept of an AO-MBP approach to mindfulness. The features discussed here remained stable in the course for the duration of it up to the data analysis period of this study (11 iterations). I shall now proceed to discuss my reflections from teaching the course over this period and in relation to the wider field of mindfulness.

3.3.2 Perceived pedagogical concerns

During the teaching of the course up to the beginning of this research, I experienced growing anxieties about the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness itself. My experiences as a general teacher and educational consultant have made me aware of the theoretical and practical problems of attempting to employ constructivist pedagogies and, in the context of mindfulness, has led me to an appreciation of the balance required between the competing discourses and approaches. Such difficulties with constructivist approaches have been discussed by others recently (e.g. Dziubinski, 2015).

In what may be a manifestation of such difficulties, Crane et al. (2015) found that mindfulness sessions tend to be highly teacher-led, and I admit that this has often been my experience too. Even when I had planned and prepared for a constructivist-based activity or experience in the classes for the course being studied, it was the dynamic of the group as a collection of individual personal epistemologies, personalities, expectations and moods (amongst many other factors) that drove the nature of the activity.

Due to the difficulties of employing an authentic constructivist pedagogy, I felt that I often fell into a 'trivial constructivist' approach (Lawler, 2014) or even a didactic, transmission-based approach. According to Lawler (2014), trivial constructivism is a dangerous middle-ground position in which constructivist activities are included in a wider teacher-led pedagogical approach. Whilst the course being studied did feature many elements and activities that were designed based upon constructivist principles, the overall structure and curriculum of the course was set by me as the teacher. Further, in attempting to follow the MBSR programme model as closely as possible I was including a structural element that was even further removed from the learners. As such, even though the MBSR programme model and the course being studied claim to be based upon a constructivist pedagogy, a close examination suggests that this was possibly much more a trivial rather than an authentic expression.

Although I do not go as far as Lawler (2014) to claim that trivial constructivism is necessarily a dangerous pedagogy, I have found myself frustrated in relation to this for two main reasons. The first was that constructivism is a central component of my personal epistemology. The second was that, as an expression of the first, I usually spent much time and effort on planning and preparing constructivist-based learning activities and experiences in the hope that the learners would engage in the manner that I had planned for. However, I also wrestle with the realisation that this too is very teacher-centric and could be classed as trivial constructivism. Therefore, I find myself asking the question as to whether a more authentic expression of constructivist pedagogy would draw the level of engagement needed to make it successful or whether the group dynamic would remain the strongest driving force? This question is a key feature of the research being reported here.

From my experience such factors have not been the only elements that may have moved the course away from a constructivist approach. For a small number of the adult learners who have attended the evening course being studied the approach seemed to stifle their levels of engagement. The reason for this may be that, as Dziubinski (2015) discusses, a constructivist approach can be detrimental as it places large demands upon students (e.g. cognitive, social, energy and skill-set). As most of the learners attended

the sessions in addition to other life commitments, it may well have been that the demands of the approach were too much for them at that moment. It may also have been that their own personal epistemologies (Kitchener and King, 1989; Scommer-Aikins, 2004) or experiences predisposed them more to a transmission-based preference for learning. However, I must make clear that from my reflections the vast majority of learners did engage very well with most of activities of the course. In fact, the mixture of teacher-led and learner-led activities has often been reported to me as a strength of the course.

If the course being studied was indeed an example of a trivial constructivist approach and I wish to continue to develop AO-MBPs that were authentic to both mindfulness and constructivism, there is a need to investigate pedagogic developments to address this. Such pedagogic developments could not only be valuable for the course being studied itself or AO-MBPs, but also for the wider development of the pedagogy of mindfulness. How a teacher of mindfulness navigates the emergent and participatory aspects of the constructivist nature of mindfulness with the drive for increased secularism, standardisation and rigour of the scientific discourse is now being recognised as a vitally important question (Crane et al, 2015). This question does, of course, form part of the focus of this research.

3.3.3 Perceived pedagogical possibilities

From my experience of teaching the course and exploring the emerging literature in the field, I recognise that there is scope to explore further components of constructivist pedagogy to increase the authenticity of the course being studied and wider academic-oriented and other MBPs. Such components include the effect of disequilibrium (or crisis), the self-direction of learning, learner participation and the concept of communal constructivism (whereby learners contribute to information and materials made available to other members of the group and the wider learning community – see Holmes et al., 2001). Indeed, learner participation and self-direction appear as important factors in the literature concerning the pedagogy of mindfulness, such as the

already mentioned Standards of Practice (Santorelli, 2014), good practice guidelines (UK Network of Mindfulness Teacher Training Organisations, 2015), the foremost text on the subject (McCown et al., 2010) and the MBI-TAC teacher assessment instrument (Crane et al., 2012a and 2012b). Further, there is scope within the current study to explore the degree to which learner expectations and preferences align with the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness and their experiences of learning within it.

In addition to the benefits that mindfulness pedagogy can offer to transformative learning, I feel that a greater application of the transformative learning process could be beneficial to the pedagogy of mindfulness. One of the key criticisms of mindfulness is that the decoupling of it from its ethical and spiritual roots, in addition to the dominance of the scientific discourse in the field, has diminished its transformative potential (Hyland, 2015; O'Donnell, 2015). Hyland (2015) argues strongly that mindfulness needs to retain a spiritual and transformative dimension if the benefits are to be fully realised. He states that deeper spiritual development is a continual journey in which the present-centred awareness of mindfulness, in addition to having associated benefits of itself, provides the conditions for exposing and transcending those aspects of the human condition that restrict our flourishing. Gethin (2013) agrees and states that secular mindfulness portrays a 'minimalist' account of the transformation process. Exactly how mindfulness supports transformational and, where appropriate, spiritual development in learners is a salient question and it may be the case that a greater application of Mezirow's (2006) theory into the pedagogy of mindfulness may contribute strongly.

A key component of an AO-MBP that requires deeper consideration is assessment. Whilst some clinically oriented MBPs include forms of reflective activities to assist personal growth, the AO-MBP requires an assessment component for accreditation purposes (whether it be as a component of a larger qualification or as a stand-alone qualification). In discussing the role of accreditation, Grassian (2013) claims that rather than being used for learner or faculty development, the main purpose of accreditation is to provide institutions with evidence of its worth and substance. Whilst there may be some validity in this perspective, accreditation itself also provides the learners with recognition of their learning and, more importantly, the assessment activity that leads

to accreditation can be a very useful learning experience. As such, the assessment component of the course being studied is an area that I feel a more authentic constructivist- approach could be applied to.

The use of a reflective activity for assessment is supported by Luxton-Reilly and Denny (2010) who claim that the main goal of higher education is to support learners in becoming 'reflective practitioners' who engage in lifelong learning. However, they take this further by advocating for the role of self-assessment and self-feedback in this process. In their model of 'constructivist evaluation', learners also self-author the assessment question in relation to the learning outcomes of the module or course.

Taking these together, I feel that there may be scope to improve the assessment component of the course studied by allowing learners to devise their own assessment question and the method by which it is to be presented. For a reflection upon the mindfulness journey, this may lead to a variety of creative presentation methods that could include artwork, poetry, blog posts and others in addition to more traditional written accounts. Upon reflection, one learner once included a Haiku in their reflective account that captured his journey well. Of course, adopting this approach would require learners to have the skills to produce the assessment question in relation to the outcomes and for me to have the skills to assess and provide feedback upon a variety of presentation styles.

Finally, another assessment-related area that has received much attention in the literature is assessment feedback. Here, Evans (2013) distinguishes between cognitivist and constructivist feedback. Cognitive feedback is referred to as feedback that is passive, makes judgements against a pre-defined set of standards and is corrective in nature. In contrast, constructivist feedback is active and co-active (in that the teacher also learns from the process), dialogical and facilitates the continuation of the learning process. Despite this contrast, Evans (2013) does acknowledge that these approaches can be mutually beneficial and used to reinforce each other. This is particularly relevant to the course studied here and for the wider development of AO-MBPs as there are elements of both to consider. As an academic course, there will be set standards for the

judgement of quality, such as course/module outcomes and institutional marking schemes. As a personal and shared journey, constructivist feedback plays a vital role in providing support and guidance. How feedback is employed in the course studied and how it can be implemented in the framework for other AO-MBPs is a key question for this research.

The theory of Transformational Teaching by Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) is also particularly relevant to this study. This theory, which itself rests upon many of the same foundations as the pedagogy of mindfulness (such as constructivism and transformative learning), provides several possible specific pedagogic suggestions that relate to the course studied and to the development of AO-MBPs more widely.

In outlining the theory, Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) suggest that in seeking greater participation, self-direction and co-journeying teachers can:

increase students' involvement in, and responsibility for, shaping the course curriculum, course content, and learning experience. (p11)

Whilst agreeing with Dziubiniski (2015) that this level of participation can bring many challenges and that the role of the teacher as expert (in both subject-matter and pedagogy) should not be devalued, I feel that there may be scope within the course studied for learners to explore the content that is most relevant to their interests and personal journey.

In another suggestion, the teacher can also "increase the amount of class time that is devoted to exploring and challenging students' questions, views, and perspectives" (p11). This is a particularly relevant area for my own teaching as I often feel that time constraints restricted the degree to which co-journeying can occur in an authentically socially constructivist manner. This is often due to the need to deliver the content for the session as directed by the course curriculum and schedule. However, one of the key aspects of the pedagogy of mindfulness is that content should emerge from the sharing of experiences in an organic manner (Santorelli, 2014).

In a final suggestion, Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) claim that once the transformational teacher has explained, taught and modelled the relevant skills and their application, learners can begin to "support, encourage, and teach one another" (p11-12). Nearly half of each session on the course being studied involves guided mindfulness practices led by myself. Whilst these were extremely important in embedding the practices at the beginning of the course, I feel that there may be opportunities later in the course for learners to create and lead their own guided practices, both for themselves and for the other members of the group (including me). McCown et al. (2010) gives advice on creating guided mindfulness scripts and Crane et al., (2015) give effective guidance on how to lead a guided session. Based upon these, activities could also be devised and used in the communal constructivist manner, whereby the resulting learner-produced guided mindfulness meditations could be available to other members of the group and the wider learning community.

3.4 The evaluation of academic courses

One of the aims of the research presented here is to begin to develop an approach to the evaluation of AO-MBPs that incorporates the multiplicity of mindfulness itself and the added complexities that emerge from the higher education setting. At a holistic level of consideration, the evaluation of higher education programmes has been discussed in the literature within the broader discussion regarding assessment (Praslova, 2010). The growing importance of assessment in higher education has been noted by many commentators (e.g. Bers, 2008; Marks et al., 2017) as HEIs compete in an ever-changing, often global environment as they seek to cultivate skills and competencies for the benefit of the individual learner and also for societies at large (Toutkoushian, 2005). Whilst assessment has traditionally involved the collection of student-derived data for the purposes of the development (formative) and accreditation (summative) of the individual learner, Marks et al. (2017) highlight the growing trend to use such data in the evaluation of the quality of academic programmes, teaching and the institution at large (e.g. the National Student Survey). Such evaluation provides

valuable information for the many internal (e.g. teachers, faculty, departments, institution) and external (e.g. accrediting bodies, prospective students, parents, workforces, governments) stakeholders that a HEI seeks to satisfy.

Despite the importance of assessment data, it has often been claimed that HEIs struggle in this area due to the sheer variety of requirements, approaches, sources of data and data collection methods (Praslova, 2010). Marks et al. (2017, p218) describe this further in stating that:

> *Institutions of Higher Education … may hastily select and use various indicators and instruments, such as student evaluations of teaching and alumni surveys, or national standardized achievement tests and locally graded student portfolios, without systematic connection between indicators and criteria to be measured, and without proper contextualisation of the overall effort in student or institutional interest.*

Thus, for any teacher, programme area of department that desires to use assessment data as feedback for the evaluation and improvement of academic courses, there is often a lack of institutional provision or guidance that is generic enough to meet the needs of wider stakeholders yet contextualised enough to be useful for this purpose. Due to this, Marks et al. (*ibid*) go on to claim that:

> *there appears to be a need for … institutional plans of assessment that will allow collection of appropriate information to satisfy both external assessment demands and internal need for feedback. (p209)*

For the teacher, programme area and/or department, End of Course Evaluation (EOCE) methods are commonly employed as the primary system to collect student- and faculty-derived data. These often invite quantitative and qualitative responses (Suhirman, Haruna and Tatut, 2014) with there being a continuing trend to replace paper-and-pencil methods with electronic, online methods (Adams and Umbach, 2012). In studying their use, Rathke and Harmon (2011) reported the order of importance and popularity of the goals of EOCEs from both faculty members and academic administrators. Table 3.5

shows the top 6 ranked results with only 'Assessing of student learning outcomes' and 'Evaluation of faculty performance in the context of promotion and tenure procedures' receiving different rankings. This difference is understandable considering that administrators may have less engagement with decisions concerning promotions and tenure. What is clear is that EOCEs are the primary source of data for course feedback, evaluation and development (Marlin and Niss, 1980).

Table 3.5
Goals of EOCEs as ranked by faculty members and academic administrators.

Relevance ranking for faculty members	Goal of EOCE	Relevancy ranking for academic administrators
1	Instructor feedback for teaching improvement	1
2	Evaluation of class quality as a means for course improvement	2
3	Collection of information in support of program/institutional accreditation	3
4	Evaluation of faculty performance in the context of promotion and tenure procedures	5
5	Assessing student learning outcomes	4
6	Collection of information for program review	6

Despite the sheer range of EOCE methods available, concerns about validity prevail and the individual teacher, programme area and/or department are left to navigate their employment within the context of the internal and external demands (Marks et al., 2017).

For the course being studied here, the EOCE consists of a paper-based student survey completed during the final week of the course. The survey includes rating scales and open-ended questions. It is used for all short-course certificate programmes in the

department when the mindfulness course was first offered and, as such, asks generic questions concerning aspects such as academic level, content, teaching methods, learning activities, materials, assessment and marketing. The open-ended questions allow responses that are more contextualised for the course and, taken together, the quantitative and qualitative data gathered provide important information for the evaluation and development of the course.

Despite the complexity of collecting feedback data that meets all of the needs placed upon it, Praslova (2010) claims that the process does not need to be as frustratingly complicated as it often is in HE settings. In adopting a multi-source, multi-purpose approach, she applies the popular framework for the evaluation of organisational training programmes developed by Kirkpatrick (1996). According to Praslova (2010, p219), the adoption of this model:

allows institutions to obtain feedback regarding the effectiveness of their educational efforts that is more specified and differentiated, and thus … more useful for organizational change and adjustment.

Praslova, and others who have since applied this model in HE (e.g. Arthur et al., 2003), claim that it has clear parallels in HE and I agree. The model has four levels (see table 3.6) that seem to cover the range of internal and external needs discussed previously in this section. At the reaction level EOCEs could be used to collect student evaluations, such as is the case in the course being studied here. At the learning level, data could be gathered from local, national or international assessment tasks. Of particular relevance to this study is the suggestion that pre- and post- course data may be extremely valuable to demonstrate 'distance travelled' during the course experience.

The behaviour/transfer level seeks evidence for the demonstration of skills and competencies in subsequence experiences or situations. These are discussed in terms of experiences outside the immediate classroom experience, but I feel that with many courses, and particularly in the case of mindfulness, such evidence of growth may be visible within the course itself and this provides another valuable source of information

for the evaluation and development of the course. For the final level of results, data from alumni destination surveys and concerning post-course achievements are suggested to provide further information regarding the effectiveness of the course or programme.

Table 3.6
The four levels of Kirkpatrick's (1996) training evaluation model as applied to HE.

Level	Description
Reaction	Affective reactions and utility judgements
Learning	Direct measures of learning outcomes
Behaviour/transfer	Evidence of use of knowledge and skills in subsequent experiences or situations
Results	Longitudinal benefits of course/programme

It is clear that the four-level model developed by Kirkpatrick for use in organisational training can be applied to HE as Praslova (2010) suggests. Due to the breadth and depth of information sought by it, it does seem capable of satisfying "both external assessment demands and internal need for feedback" (Marks et al., 2017, p209). Whilst the data has the potential to be sufficiently contextualised (e.g. the learner surveys could contain a mixture of standardised institutional or departmental questions alongside course-specific questions), the question of validity remains (particularly in any self-report methods employed). Further, it can be claimed that the data sought by the model for the levels of behaviour/transfer and results provide correlational findings only and the degree to which the specific characteristics of the course or programme actually impacts upon subsequent behaviours, experiences, achievements and roles is difficult to ascertain with any rigour.

For mindfulness courses in general, and AO-MBPs specifically, the model also holds much promise. It seems to be able to satisfy the competing internal and external demands of HE and may also offer an approach to satisfy both the scientific and pedagogic discourses in mindfulness also. Learner surveys for the reaction level data could be contextualised to include feedback regarding specific pedagogic properties that are important for the teaching of mindfulness. Further, the use of reflective accounts

common in mindfulness courses provides a rich source of information that could also contribute not only to this level but to the other three levels also. The interviewing of learners has already been used in the study of the pedagogy of mindfulness (e.g. van Aalderen et al., 2012) and could be employed to provide feedback and evaluation data for all levels of Kirkpatrick's model too. Case studies of learners of mindfulness are currently underused yet could also provide valuable information here. Longitudinal designs could also be employed to produce data regarding the longer-term levels of behaviour/transfer and results.

In terms of the learning level, in addition to the learner-centred methods discussed, the existing use of pre-and post-course measures in mindfulness courses and studies provide further quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of the course. This may include a standardised measure of mindfulness (such as those discussed in section 2.2.1) and also associated measures, such as those concerning generic or specific clinical or non-clinical aspects that feature in the literature for the evidence-base of mindfulness (section 2.1).

It seems evident to me that many naturally occurring sources of data exist in a mindfulness course that could contribute to the evaluation of it using Kirkpatrick's model. Where such sources are not yet present or are underused, there appears to be much opportunity. Taken together, the rich, multi-source, multi-methods data available seems ideal for providing feedback and evaluation information for mindfulness as an academic course. Further, it also either does already, or has the potential to, provide information for the continuing study of the fidelity and integrity of MBPs. Thus, it can satisfy the needs of both the Scientific and Pedagogic discourses.

Whilst Kirkpatrick's model appears to be an ideal framework, the application of it to mindfulness does highlight three main areas and sources of information that I feel are vital to both the evaluation of mindfulness as an academic course and the study of it as an educationally-oriented intervention.

The first of these is that the perspective of the teacher(s) is not given an explicit role in the model. Although it may be assumed to be implicit as HE teachers engage in reflective practice, a more prominent role in the model may provide additional attention and resources to be devoted to the practice. For mindfulness specifically, the important role of the teacher as the embodiment of the subject matter and co-travelling facilitator has already been well established (Crane et al., 2015; van Aalderen et al., 2012). It would therefore not to be faithful to the philosophy and pedagogy of mindfulness if the perspective of the teacher was omitted. I feel that this is a valid claim for both the evaluation of mindfulness courses and the wider study of it, particularly from the pedagogic discourse. A teacher reflective account would seem to be ideal for this purpose and would have the additional benefit of the teacher engaging in the same activity as the learners, thus adding to the co-journeying aspect of mindfulness courses.

The second area and source of information that (hopefully) naturally occurs in HE and is missing from Kirkpatrick's model is teacher observation feedback. Again, this may be in the form of a generic departmental or programme area process but could be contextualised to include specific pedagogic elements of mindfulness, using available research findings, curriculum guides (e.g. the MBSR authorised guide) or teacher assessment criteria (e.g. the MBI-TAC). For an AO-MBP (that I argue does not need the supervision regime of a clinical MBP) this is particularly important.

The third area and source of data concerns course documentation and resources. These could provide important information regarding the pedagogic approach of the course and there exist a number of established methods of analysis that could be employed here (e.g. document analysis and discourse analysis).

With the addition of the three areas and sources of data discussed above, the use of Kirkpatrick's model in the evaluation of a mindfulness course, and particularly an AO-MBP, is enhanced. Table 3.7 gives an overview of the sources of data that could be used for each level of the model. Although the multi-source, multi-method approach has many benefits, both in terms of course evaluation and the study of mindfulness, it is obviously a very demanding approach in terms of data collection and analysis. As

such, any evaluative- or empirical-focussed employment of the model would be very intensive.

Table 3.7
The four levels of Kirkpatrick's (1996) training evaluation model as applied to MBPs.

Level	Sources of data
Reaction	Learner surveys, accounts, interviews and case studies
	Teacher account(s)
	Teacher observation feedback
Learning	Pre- and post- course mindfulness measure(s)
	Associated pre- and post- course measure(s)
	Learner surveys, accounts, interviews and case studies
Behaviour/transfer	Learner surveys, accounts, interviews and case studies
	Teacher account(s)
Results	Longitudinal post-course measures and learner interviews and case studies

A further drawback is that the problems for the behaviour/transfer and results levels of the original model as applied to HE not only remains here but for mindfulness, with its focus upon being rather than doing, claiming a cause and effect relationship in subsequent behaviour and performance with a satisfactory degree of rigour may be even more difficult. However, the use of longitudinal post-course measures could assist this (to the degree that it may be used to show correlations to other variables, such as performance in a job role, etc.) and there is much scope here to employ and develop both quantitative and qualitative methods to trace the post-course impact of learning mindfulness in a class-based setting. This is an exciting area that deserves more attention from those working within the field. It also offers another area in which the two discourses can complement each other and work toward the improvement of fidelity and integrity in MBPs.

3.5 A summary of the perspective of this study

From my experience and analysis of the field I claim that mindfulness is experiencing its own disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991) and identity crisis. The roots of these lie within the disconnect between the approach, philosophy, attitudes, practices and constructivist nature of its pedagogy and the dominating attempts to standardisation, secularise and professionalise mindfulness within a Western and Scientific discourse. These disconnects have manifested themselves in the issues and debates discussed in the previous chapter. They have also manifested themselves in the development of the pedagogy of mindfulness.   As such, they have impacted upon the experiences of teachers and learners of mindfulness. Due to this situation, the field is travelling in a direction that risks diluting the rich, organic, emergent and transformative nature of the personal journey of mindfulness.

In attempting to convey the complex field of mindfulness I use the concept of discourses in mindfulness (McCown, 2017, 2014; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010) and have articulated their often-competing perspectives. From the development of the AO-MBP approach through the course being studied I recognise that there is a potential pathway on which all discourses could travel and thrive together. Such a pathway cannot emerge from a purely Scientific discourse direction, as it this would require a pedagogical approach that would restrict the philosophy, approach, attitudes and practices of mindfulness being expressed authentically in its teaching and learning. It cannot emerge from a purely Western discourse direction, as this would result in the further secularisation and psychologising of mindfulness to the detriment of religious, ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions. Neither can it emerge from a purely Eastern discourse or Buddhist direction, as I have reported many argue for. This would act as a barrier to prevent many people who could benefit from mindfulness engaging with it and neglect the drive to tackle the universality of dharma itself. Rather, I claim that the only way that such a pathway could emerge is from an approach to mindfulness that is grounded in the constructivist nature of its pedagogy.

The AO-MBP approach is uniquely grounded in the constructivist-based nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness. Due to this, it has the features and benefits discussed earlier in this chapter. It has the ability to frame mindfulness whilst allowing individual learners to explore their personal and shared journeys within it. It has the ability to span the competing discourses and allow learners to explore the spectrums of mindfulness according to their own position and direction within them. It has the potential to support truly transformative journeys for individuals whilst also equipping them with an understanding of the field from which they can understand their journey, inform others about mindfulness or apply it in other contexts. By involving the critical analysis of itself, it has the potential to help develop the field of mindfulness going forward.

To fulfil its potential the AO-MBP approach needs to be further formulated, researched and developed. It needs to demonstrate its outcome effectiveness. Learners of AO-MBPs need to experience growth in mindfulness as a necessity. It also needs to demonstrate its effectiveness as an academic course. This may be in terms of viability, rigour, learner experience and HE related skills development. The pedagogical properties of AO-MBP courses need to be investigated and developments explored. The experiences of the learners and teacher need to be given prominence in both pedagogy and research.

Of course, the areas above have been formulated here as research objectives for this study. From the answering of the research questions from which these objectives were produced, the final objective can also be met. This is to develop a guidance framework for the design, development and evaluation of AO-MBPs. From such a framework the AO-MBP approach can be further developed as it embarks upon its own journey within the wider family of MBPs and the field of mindfulness itself.

3.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided an in-depth account of my personal journey with mindfulness, the course being studied and the AO-MBP approach that has developed from this course. Further discussions concerning mindfulness in HE settings also featured and concerned contemplative pedagogy and approaches to the evaluation of academic courses. Finally, the perspective of this study was summarised to facilitate the continued journeying through this thesis.

I feel that the in-depth contextualisation featured in this chapter was essential in order to frame the divergent and complex perspectives, discourses and approaches at play within the concept of the AO-MBP. It is also an essential component of both the critical realist perspective of the study and of my personal perspective regarding the importance of the contextualisation of mindfulness courses. I feel that such contextualisation has an important role for learners (in that they can be fully aware of the approach of the MBP before enrolling on it) and for the study of mindfulness (to allow for contextually-dependent conclusions to be reported and for an appropriate level of scrutiny to be undertaken). Regarding the latter, the following 2 chapters articulate the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted in this study. The specific methods utilised to collect and analyse the data will then be discussed.

|Chapter 4: Developing a theoretical framework

"Mapping the journey"

The complex environment of the field of mindfulness articulated in this thesis also had an impact upon the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach of the study. At play again here were the tensions between the dominant positivistic nature of mindfulness as an intervention (and the study of it) from the Western and Scientific discourses and the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness. As this study aims to evaluate both of these facets, I needed to situate it firmly in a theoretical stance that allowed me to navigate and lean into the disparate approaches as was necessary to answer the research questions as effectively as possible. Further, I needed an approach that allowed for myself to be an explicit component of the process, taking the roles of researcher, teacher, co-journeyer and research participant. In all of these roles it was also extremely important for me to adopt a theoretical stance that allowed my beliefs, personal epistemology and being to underpin the process.

Interestingly, many attempts to incorporate the fullness of the researcher into the research process borrow from and have much synergy with the mindfulness approach (e.g. 'mindful enquiry' developed by Bentz and Shapiro in 1998 and the 'embodied researcher' concept by Luca, 2009). In the spirit of such attempts, I sought a theoretical foundation that also aligned with the mindfulness approach, practices and processes. As I have outlined in the preceding chapters, such authenticity is foundationally important to me and, from my perspective, aligns with both mindfulness and constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. Therefore, it was crucial that the methods utilised to gather and analyse the data were an authentic expression of the chosen theoretical stance and methodological approach in turn. By articulating the paradigmatic approach in this chapter, I aim to heed the call from many scholars (e.g. Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) to make the theoretical stance explicit in empirical work and to avoid the need to extrapolate it from the methods used (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

4.1 Scientific paradigms

Before articulating and justifying the process and selection of the theoretical position of this research, I will to briefly outline relevant research paradigms and their ontological, epistemological and methodological features. This will provide the context for the many methodological decisions that I had to make for this study.

A scientific paradigm is "a set of linked assumptions about the world" (Deshpande, 1983, p101) that are (mainly) agreed upon by those who work from those assumptions. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), there are four main scientific paradigms, being 'positivism', 'critical theory', 'constructivism' and 'realism'. Each of these paradigms contain the associated elements of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Borrowing from Perry, Reige and Brown (1999) and Healy and Chad (2000), I understand ontology as concerning beliefs about reality, epistemology as beliefs about the relationship between people and reality, and methodology as the techniques employed to uncover reality.

Historically, the dominant paradigm in science has been positivism (Jovanović, 2011) and I argue in this thesis that this is a feature of the current dominant discourses in mindfulness too. From this perspective, reality exists as independent things that are unchanged by human observation. Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe research from this paradigm as a "one-way mirror" (p110) where the researcher remains objective and value-free. Quantitative techniques are thus employed to measure reality and establish cause and effect determinism. As reality is unaffected by observation, findings can be generalised as universal causal laws.

The origins of positivism are often traced to the period of 'Enlightenment', although this was a much more complex and multi-faceted process than the single term implies (Garrat and Li, 2005). In essence, this period was a movement towards a critical examination of previously accepted ideas through the perspective of reason. This movement was evident in relation to Newton's theories of gravitational and electrical

forces, which were often rejected at the time but later became foundational concepts of the paradigm (Guerra, Capitelli and Longo, 2011).   It was Descartes (between 1637 and 1649) who had earlier laid the foundations for the emergence of the paradigm by advocating for a single scientific method (Sorrel, 1987).   Although some argue that Descartes was a keen experimenter himself (Garrat and Li, 2005), it was Locke and the 'empiricists' who shaped the paradigm to view knowledge as being also derived from experience rather than reason alone (*ibid*). A key element of this was the view that the verification of knowledge required the proving of all propositions related to it. It was not until the mid to late 1900's that the futility of the verification seeking approach was fully acknowledged and revised through Popper's falsification approach (Popper, 1991). Here, knowledge that has held up under multiple scientific testing is viewed to have high explanatory power rather than being absolute truth.   Thus, there was now an acceptance of the qualitative and temporary dimension to scientific reasoning (Garrat and Li, 2005).

Whereas positivism occupies a singular ontological position, critical theory, constructivism and realism are aligned with its contrasting position - interpretivism (Healy and Chad, 2000). For such paradigms, the extent to which objective reality exists is questioned and the subjective interpretation of experience given precedence. Research from these paradigms thus employs qualitative methods to measure experience and interpretation of it.   Findings are contextually-dependent and time-bound (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In contrast to positivism, critical theory advocates that reality cannot be understood outside of its social and historical context. The researcher forms part of this social and historical context and so is seen as an intrinsic yet subjective component of the process. Longitudinal, qualitative methods are employed to investigate issues of "social, political, cultural, economic, ethical and gender values" (Healy and Chad, 2000, p2).

It is claimed that the nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness is essentially constructivist (McCown, 2014). As a scientific paradigm constructivism views reality as context-dependent and created by the individual(s) involved. As such, the researcher is a full

participant in the research process and ultimately constructs the research and its findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). As reality does not exist independent of human perception, there are multiple constructed realities. Methods are thus employed to capture different constructed realities and understand the context in which they were created (Healy and Chad, 2000).

Realism agrees with constructivism and critical theory that reality is constructed and contextualised by individuals but also advocates for real 'things' of the world that are independent of construction in the human mind. Whist there are differing positions within this view, they all (to some degree or another) combine the subjective world-view of critical theory and constructivism with the objective world-view of positivism. As human beings we have access to the independent reality only through our flawed perceptual processes from which we construct multiple perceived realties (Stake, 1995). Studying these multiple perceptions allows us to uncover aspects of reality, however imperfect they may be (Healy and Chad, 2000). A variety of methods are thus employed to collect and analyse the variety of perceptions and experiences.

4.2 Paradigm selection

In sum, for this research I required a theoretical approach that facilitated the authentic expression of mindfulness, this research, the participants and myself. Of course, in alignment with the approach to be discussed here, the claim of authenticity and of the dynamics of the features mentioned here represent my personal perspective as outlined in the context chapter. I was aware of and accepted that there were many different perspectives at play and from the outset of the design of the study the inherent biases in my perspective were acknowledged. In doing this, my perspective became part of the research process and a further source of data to scrutinise in the aim of uncovering clearer answers to the research questions. Such an approach added to the complexity of the research, particularly as it represented the ontological antithesis of the dominant Scientific, positivistic discourse in the field.

In discussing possible theoretical approaches available to frame and contain complex dichotomies in research, Shannon-Baker (2016) discusses how the term 'paradigm' has been used with little consistency. In the social sciences Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) report that there are few empirical publications that give a thorough and explicit account of the paradigmatic stance. Despite there being much disagreement concerning the actual definition of the term and even some who argue that paradigms are divisive, restrictive and unhelpful (e.g. Maxwell, 2011), I agree with Shannon-Baker (2016) that paradigms "help frame one's approach to a research problem and offer suggestions for how to address it given certain beliefs about the world" (p321) and that they need not be static or restrictive. Indeed, new approaches have been developed that incorporate and encourage ontological and epistemological flexibility. In discussing these, Shannon-Baker (*ibid*) advocates for four that I felt had the potential to meet the needs of this research. These were 'pragmatism', 'transformative-emancipation', 'dialectics' and 'critical realism'.

Presented as an alternative to positivism, Morgan (2007) proposes that pragmatism is an approach that is focussed upon discovering transferable and shared meanings or outcomes. As such, there is an emphasis upon communication and shared meaning making. It is flexible enough to incorporate an objective or subjective researcher position and to utilise quantitative or qualitative methods. Further, according to Biesta (2010), pragmatism allows for both positivism and constructivism to exist and to consider the meanings from each perspective. Obviously, this approach has much synergy with the required approach I have outlined for this study. Despite this, however, I did not feel that it was sufficiently developed to frame and contain the complexities of this research. Indeed, Morgan (2007) himself refers to it as an 'approach' in acknowledging its lack of ontological depth in that the underlying structures and mechanisms that underpin the shared meanings or outcomes are not the focus of it. Whilst I certainly sought applications to the course being studied from this research, I felt that these would be most effective and relatable to other courses if they were based upon a greater illumination and understanding of the underpinning factors at play.

In a critique of pragmatism, Mertens (2003) argues that the focus upon practical outcomes contains issues of bias and power. As a solution to this, she proposes the transformative-emancipatory perspective that involves the intentional collaboration with those involves and/or impacted negatively by the issues under investigation. This approach has been widely utilised with minority and marginalised groups such as those experiencing AIDs, domestic violence, discrimination and disabilities (Shannon-Baker, 2016). In this perspective, the researcher maintains strong connections with the community involved but does maintain some level of objectivity. Again, there are aspects of this that aligned with the needs of this research, particularly the collaborative element in respect to the co-journeying nature of a mindfulness group. Indeed, one may argue that the mindfulness journey is a transformative-emancipatory one that begins inside of us initially and is expressed into the world. This would certainly fit well with those who argue that mindfulness supports greater freedom and democracy (e.g. Hyde and LaPrad, 2015). However, I decided not to base the study fully within this perspective for three main reasons.

Firstly, it is best used for issues of social justice and with marginalised groups. I felt that the issues being studied, and the learners enrolled did not represent either of these. Secondly, it seemed that this is very much a community-based bottom-up approach and, whilst I certainly acknowledge the potential of such an approach in the study of mindfulness, I felt that this study concerned my journey in navigating the complex, multi-faceted landscape of teaching mindfulness. As a result, it would have required a huge undertaking on behalf of the community to comprehend the complex facets of the research to the degree of sophistication required. Finally, this approach seemed to align more with the critical theory paradigm and, as such, fails to acknowledge independent reality. As such, it did not align with my personal beliefs and epistemology as articulated in section 3.1.

Rather than being a distinct paradigm, the dialectics approach argues for the "respectful dialogue" (Greene and Hall, 2010, p124) between two or more paradigms. Similar to pragmatism, differing perspectives are allowed to exist but here the tensions and disconnects are explored to uncover new understandings. This was certainly a central

focus of this current research, as was a focus upon a reflective stance that is also a feature of this approach. Further, the data (even data spanning both quantitative and qualitative) in this approach is to be used side-by-side to answer the research questions. Whilst containing such relevant features, I deemed this approach not to be well enough developed to offer a framework that would contain the complexities of this research. Previous research employing it has tended to focus upon the business and management fields (e.g. Frels, Frels and Onwuegbuzie, 2011) rather than education.

In another response to the positivism/constructivism dichotomy, critical realism offers a 'stance' within the realist paradigm (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010) that seemed to include the advantageous aspects of the other paradigms discussed here but in a far more comprehensive framework that I deemed capable of framing and containing the complexities of this research. As such, it will be discussed in greater detail in the following sub-section. To conclude Shannon-Baker's (2016) analysis here, though, I summarise its key features and synergy with the current research.

Similar to pragmatism and dialetics, critical realism offers an approach that facilitates divergence. For this study such divergence exists in the discourses, methodology and pedagogy. It allows for quantitative and qualitative methods to be employed and for the data to be used concurrently to answer the research questions. It also accepts that compete objectivity is not possible but that there are ways to account for any biases. The reflective approach of dialetics seemed a logical extension here. In synergy with the mindfulness journey, the constructivist nature of its pedagogy and my personal epistemology, it is a process-oriented approach (rather than the solely outcome-focus of pragmatism) that emphasises relationships. It also focuses upon mental and perceptual processes, which aligns with the process of mindfulness itself. Further, it is also useful for evaluation-based studies, such as the current study. Its acceptance of context-specificity and context-based validity sat well with the uniqueness of each mindfulness class, session and experience, the personal journeying aspect of mindfulness and the constructivist nature of its pedagogy. Based upon these features, I decided that the research would be performed from a critical realist theoretical stance but would borrow appropriate aspects from the other perspectives as needed.

4.3 Critical Realism

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), critical realism rests upon the belief that our perceptions of reality are contextually constructed and I have previously articulated the ways in which my own beliefs and personal epistemology align with this view (section 3.1). Although this belief aligns with a constructivist ontology, what differentiates the realist is the additional belief that the world does exist independent of perception (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010). What makes it critical is that there is a belief that through the scrutiny of perceptions and experiences the researcher may discover greater understandings of reality. Therefore, critical realism aims to uncover the underlying structures of reality by measuring and verifying the many constructed perspectives of them (Shannon-Baker, 2016), whilst acknowledging that any perspective is fallible, being based upon the unreliable processes of perception.

Critical realism doesn't negate the possibility of objectivity but rather seeks to integrate it with the subjectivity of the persons involved and their social environment. In my personal experience and in my experience of teaching mindfulness, our subjective perceptions of our personal and shared realities vary perpetually. The process of mindfulness itself concerns a journey towards a clearer understanding of our inner and outer realities. However, I believe that in all people there is a level of disconnect between actual reality and our subjective perceptions of it and critical realism shares this view. To overcome this cycle of dissonance that the unreliable processes of perception create, realists apply 'retroduction' to move beyond what we perceive as reality to knowledge of reality itself. The process of retroduction involves the critical questioning of perceptions; it involves asking 'Why do I think or feel this this way?' and 'How real is this thought or feeling?' (Bhaskar, 2008). It is here that I find much synergy with the approach of mindfulness itself.

The conceptualisation of the complexities, relationships and multi-faceted nature of the critical realist world-view is termed 'ontic depth' (Olsen, 2009). In holding this view, realists appreciate the roles of real agents and structures in society (Emirbayer and

Mische, 1998). In this research I see such agents and agency in myself, the course participants and the leaders in the field of mindfulness who are acting to shape it. I also see structures in the wider social environment of the course and learners, such as the university and department that the course resides and in the HE sector more widely. Indeed, the concerns about the influence of neoliberalism upon universities of FitzSimmons (2012) discussed in section 2.5.3 suggest that there are sociological and political influences upon the course too. Further structures in wider society and/or the work or family lives of the teacher and learners may also be at play. I have argued here that these and the relations between structure and agency serve to create not only the conditions for which the mindfulness journey seeks to navigate, but also the 'unstable ground' of teaching mindfulness proposed by McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010).

In discussing the possible relations of agents and structures, Archer (1990) helps to clarify the ontological position of critical realism and facilitates a smooth and authentic transition from theory to methodology. Archer begins by rejecting two versions of the relationship. The first involves the conflation of agency where action is regarded as epiphenomenal. The second contrasts this by reducing structures to the mere creation of agency, which therefore renders them dependent and not distinct. As I claimed that both structural and agentic factors were at play and under investigation in the research, neither of these positions were adopted.

Archer then moves to consider Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration, in which structure and agency are given equal explanatory weighting and are "mutually constitutive" (Scott, 2005, p640). Here Archer argues that the two indeed have unique features and that structures proceed agency independently. The relationship between them is that human beings observe themselves and their environment in a critically reflexive manner that can lead to the individual or collective changing of the structures. This is indeed the perspective of mindfulness and my person epistemology. Mindfulness seeks to facilitate the reflexive observational process through its approach and practices in order to become more aware of the structures (be them internal or external) that are producing unhelpful or unwanted responses. With this greater awareness, the person is in a better position to attempt to change those structures.

In Bhaskar's (2000) philosophical musing on transcendental realism, the synergy between critical realism and mindfulness is explicit. In his book 'From East to West' he, like mindfulness, attempts to amalgamate Eastern and Western concepts (Hostettler and Norrie, 2003). The insecurities of the Self and the illusion of dualism are considered as major contributors to the habitual cycle that prevents our growth. Indeed, Bhaskar (2000, p51) also aligns with mindfulness in viewing the breaking of this cycle as being crucial for personal development (Birnie, Speca and Carlson, 2009; Carson and Langer, 2006). Regarding this he states that:

To break free from it is to become what we most truly are; this is our birthright and our task, our bounded duty and our joy: liberation.

Whilst teaching the course being studied, I invite the learners to consider their structures as habits and attempt to open up new possibilities (in accordance with the teaching intentions offered by McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010) by choosing different responses. It is here that the reflexive and mutually influenced relationship between agency and structure, according to the mindfulness approach, is demonstrated. In doing this, mindfulness and critical realism adopt the perspective that both structure and agency need to be contextualised in terms of their mutually dependent and independent properties. For the research here, both needed to be considered in complex and multi-faceted contexts.

In an updated version of his seminal publication, Bhaskar (2008) outlines the critical realist perspective, arguing that there is an ontological difference between the causal laws that positivism seeks and the pattern of events that interpretivism seeks. Whilst real *things* exist independent of human perception or interaction, Bhaskar argues that they are "often out of phase with actual patterns of events" (p2). These real, independently existing things are termed as 'intransitive', whereby the subjective and changing human perception of and interaction with them is termed as 'transitive'.

Figure 4.1

A spectrum of things and experiences in the critical realist perspective.
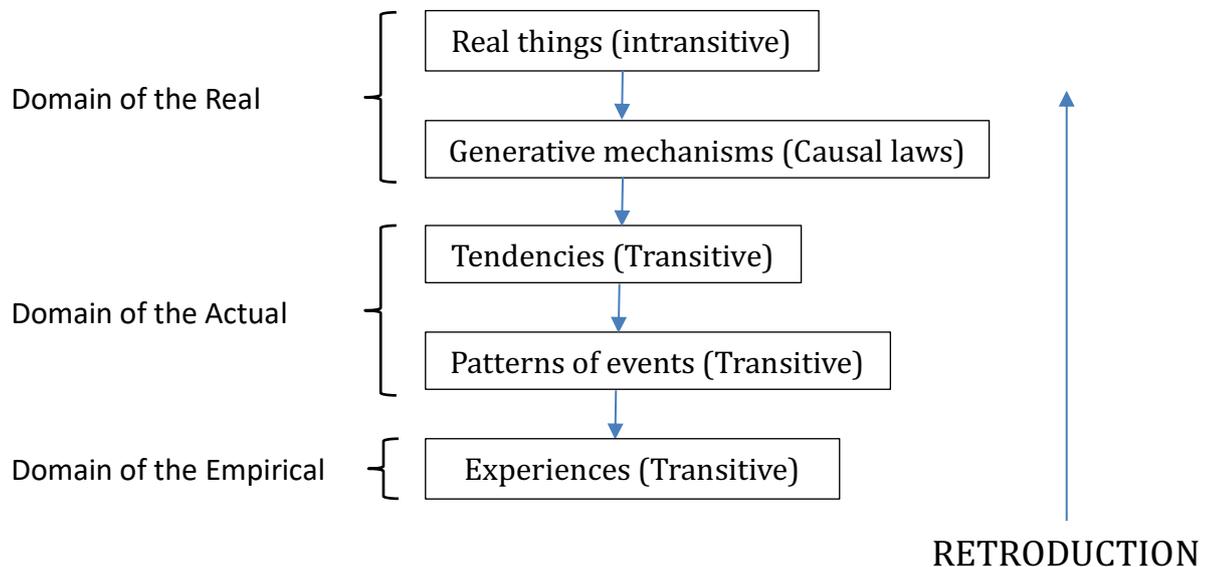
Using this framework, Bhaskar (*ibid*) goes on to describe three domains - the 'empirical', the 'actual' and the 'real' (see figure 4.1). The empirical refers to the stimuli we can experience through our sensations and perceptions, whereas the actual refers to the events that occur in the world. These events can be based upon the empirical (either individually or socially) but can also occur independently. The real refers to the underlying material, mechanisms and structures of the world that can only be accessed by us through flawed empirical processes (Healy and Chad, 2000; Stake, 1995).

The ways in which the things of the world act on it are termed 'generative mechanisms'. These generative mechanisms contain causal laws, but they are expressed as 'tendencies' rather than constant facts in a closed system (Bhaskar, 2008). Therefore, in direct contrast to positivism's search for universal laws, causal laws can be "understood as specifying the tendencies of mechanisms rather than as licensing the deductions of events" (Bhaskar, 1986, p31).

In this concept I find particular alignment with mindfulness, my beliefs and personal epistemology. To understand that things tend to be a certain way in an impermanent

manner but that they don't always have to be that way is a central theme of the course being studied here and my own coaching work with clients. Believing that things exist in a closed system and that the current experience will persist and cannot be changed is an attitude that learners and clients are invited to question. For the critical realist, this questioning is particular important when attempting to understand social reality (Archer, 1990; 1998).

For a closed system to operate consistently in a cause and effect manner there must be control and replication of the environment. Only when such a temporary, experimental system is established do deterministic causal mechanisms emerge (Bhaskar, 2008). Scott (2005) argues that social objects occur in an open system in which neither control or replication are possible. For educational research such as this study, this is particularly salient as the environment is subject to perpetual change and complexity (Ponce and Pagán-Moldanado, 2014). For the teaching of mindfulness this perspective has been discussed in McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) view that each mindfulness course, teacher, group of learners, individual learner, session and practice is unique.

The acceptance of the open system nature of social objects by critical realism was central to its selection in this study. For here I also found synergy between the social constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness and some of its key concepts. One such concept is that of impermanence, whereby each unique moment in the flow of experience is to be accepted and engaged with. It can also be noted here that the dominant positivistic discourse in mindfulness, with its attempt to create a standardised account of mindfulness for teaching and research, is attempting to develop mindfulness within a closed system approach that is clearly in contrast to the nature of its journey, practices, concepts and pedagogical nature. It may be that the before mentioned issue concerning the naturally fluctuating measurement of state mindfulness found in the research by Hindman et al. (2015) and Hanley et al. (2017) are examples of the open system nature of mindfulness.

Applying this process to this research, the pedagogy of mindfulness is viewed as transitive and so the experiences (of learners and teacher) and the patterns of events

(curriculum, practices, activities, individual and group growth, etc.) constitute elements from which data could be gathered. Through the analysis of this data and the process of retroduction, tendencies can be identified and the generative mechanisms that underpin them uncovered. From this position theorisation is possible and the goal of critical realist science can be met, being "the theoretical identification of things and their causal powers" (Warner, 1993, p312).

From the beginning of this research process I was acutely aware that any theorisation would itself exist in an open system in which science was an always-in-motion process. Scott (2005, p644) articulates this well by stating that:

> *Any description we make about the way social life is constructed in part by other descriptions that have been made of that social world in the past and are presently being made.*

As mindfulness remains an emerging and fast-paced field I accept that this research exists in the context of this environment. Indeed, in the always-in-motion process advocated by critical realists, clearer understandings emerge through a critical re-perception of existing ones. As such, our understanding of things represents a journey of ever-increasing awareness, as does the mindfulness journey itself. For critical realists and myself, this journey of understanding must be underpinned by a philosophy of science that accepts and seeks to uncover both the transitive and intransitive elements of our world and the multitude of in-the-moment perspectives such an undertaking produces.

Interestingly, in the philosophy of critical realism I also find a synergy with both the spiritual aspects of mindfulness and with my own beliefs of faith. In each of these there is an acceptance that the world cannot be reduced to what we can either measure quantitatively or perceive qualitatively. As the real things in the world are expressed through the generative mechanisms, they tend to produce patterns of events that are available to be experienced by people through flawed perception. This concept aligns with my Christian belief that we see the world "through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians

13:12), which implies that reality does exist, but we are as yet incapable of comprehending it without distortion.

Bhaskar (2008) argues that events would occur with or without any perception or experience of them and I agree. Taking this concept further though it is logical to argue that there may well be things, generative mechanisms, tendencies and events that remain less or not perceived, experienced or understood. Indeed, it is posited by psychologists that our perceptual capacities and processes experience the world differently dependent upon our habitually-grounded 'perceptual set' (Allport, 1955; Vernon, 1955). The mindfulness practices and journey concern bringing clarity to our perceptions to see ourselves and the world more clearly, as has been described in the literature review concerning the benefits of mindfulness (e.g. Carson and Langer, 2006; Heppner and Kernis, 2007). Bhaskar argues that science is an ever-in-motion process of uncovering the things of the world through linking experiences to patterns of events to tendencies to generative mechanisms. I would argue that in this research, mindfulness and my faith essentially have the same destination, even if the vehicles differ.

Due to its questioning nature, critical realism is often claimed to be particularly useful for evaluation–based studies (e.g. Douglas, Gray and van Teijlingen, 2010; Johnson and Stefurak, 2013). The process of retroduction enables a researcher to ask critical questions concerning issues of agency and structure that underpin any evaluative data (e.g. student satisfaction survey data). As such, I deem it appropriate for this study as it is framed as an evaluation of an AO-MBP. Of particular importance to the decision to employ it was the compatibility approach (Shannon-Baker, 2016). In discussing this, Scott (2005, p634) states that:

Critical realism makes the assumption that an ontological theory presupposes an epistemological theory; and further to this that this meta-theory influences that way that data are collected and analysed about the social world.

When applied faithfully, research would flow from theory through methodology and manifest itself in the methods employed in a study. Such an approach, whereby there is

a logical flow from theory through methodology to methods, was chosen here in an attempt to bring authenticity and alignment to the research design and implementation.

Thus far in this chapter, I have explained the selection of the realist paradigm and the critical realist theoretical stance. A discussion of critical realism's core beliefs has also been outlined and its alignment with this research, mindfulness and my personal epistemology and beliefs highlighted. Whilst the case for the adoption of a critical realist stance seems clear to me, there are some critiques of it that deserve discussion here, particularly as many of them will impact upon the methodology for the research and, indeed, the selection of methods utilised.

As critical realism exists within the wider paradigm of realism and again within the greater paradigmatic landscape, there exist a range of criticism from those proponents of other perspectives. As critical realism accepts that independent reality exists and that it is perceived and constructed subjectively, it is prone to critiques from both sides in the so-called paradigm wars (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

From my personal perspective I feel that critical realism has articulated and justified its position well, but it does seem that the issue of the basis of reality is where much of the philosophical debate still lies. In discussing this Scott (2005) identifies a criticism from the 'naïve realism' perspective, being that reality does exist independently and can be directly and objectively understood. In contrast to this positivistic view, 'radical relativism' argues that because our experiences and understanding of the world are constructed and transitive, it is of no use to claim an independence of reality. As articulated in this thesis, my perspective is that the internal critique process of critical realism (and of mindfulness) is important for the evolving of our perceptions and constructions of the world. As such, this process aligns with relativist perspectives. By this process we can proceed to a clearer, yet ultimately still fallible understanding of reality, whether it be to a greater (e.g. the physical world) or lesser degree (e.g. the social world) intransitive.

One of the key criticisms of critical realism concerns the use of the term 'critical' and in my own understandings of the wider realist paradigm this was also an issue initially. From a more Marxist and Critical Theory perspective, Little (2013) argues that Bhaskar established himself in a transcendental realist perspective in his earlier writings and has never clarified the critical element of critical realism. However, in an analysis of his critique I find that Little did indeed extract the role of the critical very well. He questions whether the critical role could be concerned with the questioning of perception and I feel that this is clearly a component laid out in critical realism, as I have already discussed and related to the journey of mindfulness. Further, he states that the critical role could be concerned with the relations between structures, agents and agency and I feel that this has been firmly established here using the work of Archer (1990). Finally, Little wonders whether the critical in critical realism could refer to the process of bringing change and emancipation. Again, I feel that this has been firmly established as a goal of critical realism. Thus, in contrast to Little's analysis, I see a clear role and rationale for the critical element of critical realism and that the process of retroduction accommodates the three 'possibilities' that he discusses. In doing so I agree with Scott (2005, p635), who sums this position up well by stating that:

> *Critical realism is critical then because any attempts at explaining at describing and explaining the world are fallible … and are always open to critique and their replacement.*

In another critique Hammersley (2009), whilst advocating for the importance of the wider realist paradigm, again questions the role of the critical process. Here he argues against the "drawing of value conclusions from factual evidence alone" (p2) for two main reasons. The first is that a critical realist perspective is susceptible to the establishment of causal facts from inherently incomplete views of the object or event under study. For example, in this study there was the danger that any findings could be presented as universal and deterministic. This seems to be a problem with the belief that reality does exist independently from human construction and perception and is, in essence a criticism of positivism that remains relevant here.

Taking this issue further, Hammersely (*ibid*) argues convincingly that once any causal facts are established (even with the admission of fallibility), they provide a framework and benchmark for the critical process of retroduction. As a consequence, the direction and nature of the critical process of critical realism is often based upon an incomplete and fallible perspective to begin with. This perspective is susceptible to all manner of biases (Foster, Gomm and Hammersley, 1996), be they ideological, economic, political, etc. Any framework and benchmarks created from these ultimately impact upon the view of structures, agents and agency, and therefore the nature and validity of the research itself.

For example, in the critique of critical realism by Little (2013), the Marxist perspective taken by the author inherently leads to the identification of aspects that do not conform to that perspective and there is therefore the drive to change it (or emancipate it) to do so. However, this (or any) perspective itself is not value free of objective but emerges from an ideological position within an environment of competing ideologies. The article by Little (ibid) highlights the dangers of presenting causal facts from ideological positions as objective and infallible. In doing so, the trajectory of the diagnosis of the problem and of the solutions available is set without consideration of competing positions, diagnoses or solutions. Thus, these are rooted in the subjective position of the person from which they emerge, which is itself a result of their flawed perceptions of reality.

Whilst I certainly agree that there exists the temptation to establish casual facts and the susceptibility of bias with critical realist research, I feel that theoretically it does recognise these and advocates for the detailed reflexive account of the researcher as a solution. As such, the academic reflective style was chosen for the thesis and chapter 3 was included to negate the susceptibility of bias (or at least to uncover it).

Another disputed element of the critical realist approach concerns the logical relationship between ontology, epistemology and methodology mentioned previously in this section. Here, critics such as Bryman (1988) have argued that the practical pressures upon research often leads to data collection methods taking primacy in the design of research. This may well account for the before-mentioned lack of the

articulation of the theoretical foundations of social research discovered by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). On this issue I agree with Scott (2005) who states that although there are such practical pressures on research, ontological, epistemological and methodological issues are ever present and impact greatly upon the methods utilised, the analysis of the data and the interpretation of the findings. Indeed, one of the foundational concepts of this research is that offered by Jarvis (2010, p244) that:

Underlying every programme of education there is a philosophy, whether it is explicit or implicit, considered or rarely thought about, consistent or inconsistent.

A final critique of relevance to this study relates to issues of evaluation criteria. According to Healy and Chad (2000), the early development of critical realism was void of criteria for judging the quality of research undertaken from its perspective. Whereas issues of quality will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter concerning methodology, Healy and Chad (*ibid*) do offer six categories for judging the quality of critical realist research that are situated within the theoretical discussion of this chapter. These will be outlined here to contextualise the methodological discussion.

The first category is termed 'ontological appropriateness' and refers to whether the research is investigating transitive reality through intransitive perceptions and constructions of that reality. The second category is 'contingent validity'. Whereas positivism seeks internal validity based upon the controlled manipulation of variables to establish a causal relationship in a closed system, the intransitive, open system nature of the social world requires a family of answers to be developed for different contexts. Therefore, a value check for critical realist research concerns whether similar contexts produce similar findings. Not only can there be a variety of findings for different contexts, critical realism allows for a variety of findings concerning one object of study. Thus, the third category concerns 'triangulation', whereby multiple views are brought together to produce the findings.

The fourth category set out by Healy and Chad (2000) is termed 'methodological trustworthiness'. Here the validity of the findings can be traced and questioned through

the inclusion of raw data and the use of quotations in the written report where appropriate. In a similar way to constructivism, the fifth category concerns a bottom-up approach to theory building. Here theories are to be built and refined deeply before being generalised more widely and is term 'analytic generalisation'. The final category is similar to criteria from positivism and concerns 'construct validity'. Here, a judgement can be made about how well the methods used are measuring the object under investigation.

In providing these six categories for the evaluation of research from the critical realist perspective, Healy and Chad (*ibid*) provide a framework that is extremely useful to researchers and to this research specifically.

4.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have articulated and justified the theoretical stance of the research. Issues of philosophy, ontology and paradigmatic approaches have been discussed and the decisions that led me to adopt the critical realistic stance expressed. Further, evaluative issues regarding critical realism have been addressed and have yielded techniques to improve the quality of this research. In the following chapter I proceed to discuss methodological and ethical issues that are relevant to the critical realists-based stance adopted for this research.

|Chapter 5: Methodology

"Choosing the route"

After framing this research in a complex environment and situating it in a critical realism stance, I felt that the logical and linear methodological approach to employ was that of mixed methods. Indeed, due to its compatibility approach "realists are taking to mixed methods like ducks to water" (Olsen, 2009, p14). The mixing of multiple methods that spanned the quantitative-qualitative spectrum seemed appropriate for answering the research questions in the complex environment that they existed in. As I was positioning myself firmly within the research, in accordance with the theoretical stance, it also contained an element of the teacher-research and/or practitioner research approaches. In addition, as I was to adopt an eclectic and pragmatic manner in using a diverse range of methods to study the complex environment, I became a 'bricoleur' researcher (Greenwood, 2015). I shall now discuss these approaches and progress to consider relevant issues of research ethics and value.

5.1 The Mixed Methods approach

The term mixed methods is used to describe what some people refer to as the third model of research in social and behavioural sciences. In a similar manner to critical realism, it offers an alternative to the dichotomous view of quantitative and qualitative methodology produced during the paradigm wars of the 1970s and 1980s (Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2014). According to Jonson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p17) it is:

> *the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study.*

Preissle et al. (2016) extoll the potential of mixed methods research and the ability to prioritise what is to be learned rather than being restricted by the question of how to learn it. Regarding this they state:

No longer confined by the boundaries of a single method or epistemology, we marvel at the options in combining various approaches to suit the research problem and context. (p2)

Emerging from studies that employed multiple methods (e.g. Campbell and Fiske, 1959) to achieve triangulation (Webb et al., 1966), mixed methods is now considered to be a methodological approach in its own right and is finding prominence in educational research (Symonds and Gorard, 2010). One of the drivers of this prominence is that many now view education as a fluid cultural and social phenomenon rather than a static natural one (Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2014).

In alignment with the critical realism stance adopted in this study, education is seen to exist in an open system rather than a closed one. However, even in this open system environment there exists aspect that are best suited to quantitative study and analysis. These prominently concern student data and include demographic, enrolment, retention, completion, outcome and course evaluation data. As such, qualitative methods are important for studying the cultural and social aspects of the educational environment, but quantitative methods do have a role to play for studying such numerical based aspects. In this research I had chosen to study aspects that spanned both of these in an attempt to illuminate both the effectiveness and the pedagogy of the course being studied. The popularity of mixed methods in educational research and its alignment with the critical realist stance led me to adopt it with confidence.

Despite its popularity, however, the mixed methods approach is not without critique. Some dismiss it as a third paradigm on the basis that the original division between the first (quantitative) and second (qualitative) paradigm lacks validity in itself. Here, Symonds and Gorard (2010) consider the construct validity of the paradigms in depth and conclude that the original separation is artificial and, therefore, the basis of the mixed methods paradigm non-existent. Further, they also consider the mixed methods paradigm in terms of its content validity and conclude that many studies that claim to be following a mixed methods approach fall outside of its standard description. Therefore, they present the argument that, rather than freeing the researcher from the

constraints of qualitative and quantitative epistemological arguments, mixed methods actually reinforces these divisions. To encapsulate their position, Gorard (2007, p1) states that:

> *Mixing methods is wrong, not because methods should be kept separate but because they should not have been divided in the first place.*

Despite the epistemological arguments against the consideration of mixed methods as a separate research paradigm, I concur with others (such as Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2014) who argue that mixed methods is an appropriate approach within educational research as the educational environment contains complex and elusive phenomena that are often both natural and social in nature. According to Phillips (2009), this complexity means that the use of quantitative and qualitative research is considered an important component of any educational research program.

As the epistemological arguments in this area continue, I find a position that agrees with Symonds and Gorard's (2010) claim that the questioning of the validity of the mixed methods is a concern for those who are philosophically for the division of paradigms and for those who are philosophically against it. As I do not hold either of these views and the critical realist stance allows for both to be employed, I conclude that this debate has little practical bearing upon the research itself. In doing this I concur with Jonson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p15) who state that rather than being overly concerned with the epistemological arguments, mixed methods should:

> *Instead (at this time) use a method and philosophy that attempt to fit together the insights provided by qualitative and quantitative research into workable solutions.*

Based upon this, Jonson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) propose that the most appropriate epistemologies for mixed methods are ones that allow for both quantitative and qualitative methods to exists, such as in the compatibility approach of critical realism. Thus, I find an epistemological position whereby I can employ mixed methods in this study with confidence.

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5.2 Teacher-Practitioner Research

In basing myself firmly within the context of the research and being an active participant in it, there is an element of this study that was classed as teacher or practitioner-research. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007) the phrase 'teacher-research' commonly refers the K-12 educational system in the USA. Practitioner inquiry, as proposed by Boyer (1990) can include the scholarship of teaching and learning. Therefore, in this study I use the amalgamated phrases 'teacher-practitioner research' and 'teacher-practitioner researcher' to account for the fact that I was the teacher of a HE-based course who was personally conducting research into aspects of teaching and learning on that course.

In Hammersley's (1993) classic paper on the approach, he identifies the origins of teacher-research to the 1950's in the United States of America and the 1960s and 1970s in the UK. In particular, teacher-research was developed as a method for studying curriculum development and the processes of teaching, with a view towards greater democracy and social transformation. One of the most influential figures in the advocacy and development of teacher-research was Lawrence Stenhouse. Stenhouse (1975) argued that educational generally, and educational research, were constrained by the assumptions and habits of the past and that the purpose of education was to emancipate us from these constraints. It is in statements like these that I saw synergy between this approach and the theoretical stance, methodology and topic of this research. For all seems to share the goal of freeing us from those habitual responses that constrain our lives.

Integral to the teacher-research approach was the move away from quantitative methodology and towards the increased use and development of qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods, it was argued, were better at capturing the complexities of teaching and learning and the findings were more accessible to the range of audiences that educational research informs.

Although a contested approach, teacher-research has become increasingly popular in recent times, especially as a component of the increasingly utilised educational action research approach (McNiff, 2013). This research did not constitute an action research study as the focus was upon a retrospective analysis of the effectiveness and pedagogy of the mindfulness course. As such, no pedagogical actions were introduced during the research phase. Despite recognising the potential that an action research approach would give to the development of the pedagogy of mindfulness, the ethical issues relating to making emerging pedagogical changes to a course that students had enrolled on based upon advertised information was deemed inappropriate in accordance with contemporary legislation that open-access courses have to abide by. Further, as any actions would have been evaluated through ongoing learner responses and experiences, their right to withdraw from the study but not the course would not have been possible.

First-person teacher-research is a widely and increasingly used approach within the field of education (Campbell, 2013). In a review of such research, Zeichner (2003) states that teacher-research "has often had a profound effect on those who have done it, in some cases transforming the classrooms and schools in which they work" (p303). My own analysis of such studies (e.g. Gravett, 2004; Walton, 2011; Tillapaugh and Haber-Curran, 2013; Casey, 2013) elicited some key opportunities and challenges in the use of the method. By adopting the teacher-research approach, one assumes that the researcher concurs with the ontological and epistemological foundation of it, particularly with the shift in power dynamics from 'research on people' to 'research with people' (Greenwood, 2015) and the democratic and collaborative focus. However, it seems that this has been found to be difficult in some cases.

In discussing such difficulties in her own Participatory Action Research (PAR) study, Hawkins (2015) states that issues concerning power, democracy and collaboration arose out of her own position, agenda, characteristics and abilities and those of her co-researchers. In the study of pedagogy in higher education teachers by Gravett (2004) there were issues with the researcher's own agenda, where she claimed that only the outcomes of renunciation or synthesis of existing views were available to the co-researchers and no others. Also, in the study by Tillapaugh and Haber-Curran (2013) on

adopting a transformative pedagogical approach in an undergraduate leadership programme, it appeared that the researchers banned the use of the word 'frustration' in the reflection focus group. These examples highlight the delicacy in finding the balance between the role of being the lead researcher and seeking democratic participation with co-researchers.

In discussing the benefits and appropriateness of teacher-research, McNiff (2013) provides many arguments for the inclusion and leading role of the teacher. One such reason for this is that, as an active practitioner, the responsibility and accountability of the practice rests solely with the teacher-researcher. The teacher-researcher understands the context in which their practice takes place and the wider internal and external influences on any aspects studied. Another reason is that the researcher will usually be qualified and skilled in the field of practice, in the practice itself and in performing research, whereas other participants or co-researchers may not be. Due to these reasons, the teacher-researcher has a duty to shape, lead and direct the study whilst attempting to retain the core features of the methodological approach employed. In discussing this in relation to action research, McNiff and Whitehead (2005) state that:

Teachers are in control of their own work. They decide on which aspects need to be addressed, on the basis of whether or not they are living out their values in practice. (p97)

As the teacher of the course I have designed this research upon issues that I feel are relevant in the context of my own teaching, the course to be studied and my knowledge of the wider field. In doing so, I advocate the important role that my experiences and perceptions can play in contributing the answering of the research questions whilst also accepting that there may be other perspectives that can add to the answering of the research questions.

Despite the benefits advocated by McNiff (2013), teacher-research has been criticised by some educational researchers and theorists, such as Hammersley (1993). In his critique of Stenhouse and the teacher-researcher approach, Hammersley (1993) argues against the original criticisms of conventional educational research presented by

proponents of teacher-research. In summarising his position, Hammersley (1993, p441) states that:

> while teacher research can be useful, it does not substitute for educational research of a more conventional kind. I looked at each of the arguments directed against conventional research: that it is irrelevant to practice, that it is invalid, that it is undemocratic, and that it involves exploitation of teachers. In each case I argued that these are not convincing.

Rather than dismissing the role of teacher-researcher altogether, however, Hammersley (1993) concludes by claiming that there is a role for teacher-research in educational research, but not at the expense of conventional, quantitative methodology. It is here that I find further justification for the mixed methods approach adopted in this study. Employing this approach, however, does present some challenges in that I, as the researcher, will have to be skilled in both the quantitative and qualitative methods being used and in the combination of them. In this sense, any mixed methods researcher must become a bricoleur in using multiple approaches and methods whilst retaining the freedom to not be confined to any.

5.3 Pedagogic research

In designing the research, I made an attempt to ensure that it represented pedagogic research and not another form of evidence-informed scholarship (Prosser, 2005). According to Stenhouse (1985, pp.18-19), pedagogic research is "systematic and sustained inquiry, planned and self-critical, which is subject to public criticism and empirical tests". Further, a statement by HEFCE, HEFCW, SFC and DfEL (2006) states that it is "firmly situated in the literature and high-quality pedagogic research makes a substantial contribution to the literature". Further, Norton (2007) claims that its aims are to modify practice and influence wider policy and strategy.

Using Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) model of the hierarchical relationship between pedagogic research and other forms of investigation (see table 5.1), the study was designed to ensure that it meets each level and, thus, represented rigorous pedagogic research.

Table 5.1
Levels of research adapted from Ashwin and Trigwell's (2004) model.

Level	Purpose	Verification	Contribution
1	To inform oneself	By self	Personal knowledge
2	To inform a group within a shared context	By those within the same context	Local knowledge
3	To inform a wider audience	By those outside of the context	Public knowledge

At level 1, this teacher-practitioner research was a critical evaluation of my own teaching and course. As the person responsible for the course, I could use chosen aspects of the findings to improve at the personal level. As an MBP the course exists within a wider shard context. As such it was designed to contribute to local knowledge in this context and was available for scrutiny by other mindfulness teachers, researchers and commentators. As a doctoral thesis, of course, it is to be scrutinised by external examiners from the wider field of mindfulness. Following Norton (2007), it aims to not only improve my practice and the pedagogy of the course, but also to have a wider impact through the creation of the AO-MBP framework. Finally, there are aspects of this study that are designed to contribute to knowledge in a wider context. For example, findings from this research may be relatable to other attempts to include contemplative practices in academic environments. In addition, the eclectic use of research methodologies and methods may contribute to these areas where there is a focus upon mindfulness and beyond.

5.4 Bricolage

Popularised by Levi-Strauss in 1966, a 'bricoleur' researcher is eclectic and pragmatic in using theories and methods in order to illuminate complex problems (Greenwood, 2015). In this study, the eclectic nature can be seen in the acceptance of the discourses in mindfulness, the critical realist theoretical stance adopted, and the mixed methods approach utilised. According to Greenwood (2015, p210), when doing performing research, the bricoleur must be:

> an experienced craftsman who is not simply throwing ideas and methods at a problem but whose experience and capacity for reflection helps guide the processes in positive directions.

The inclusion of a teacher-researcher element to this study allows for my experience and reflection to guide the process. As a reflective-practitioner in my general teaching, this study also allows for the utilisation of my reflections to inform the research questions in conjunction with the other methods employed with the aim of revealing quality insights into the effectiveness and pedagogy of the course being studied. It must be considered, however, that there are challenges with adopting a bricoleur approach, such as having to have the necessary understanding and skills required to employ a variety of methods that may have distinct ontological and epistemological bases. Such understanding and skills are required at the planning, implementation and reporting stages of a piece of the research. Fortunately, I have had experience in learning, teaching and utilising in research both quantitative and qualitative methods and so felt confident in taking this approach.

5.5 Research ethics and quality

In presenting and justifying the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in this study aspects of research ethics and quality have emerged in an implicit manner.

These represent extremely important facets in which I had to make a series of decision to position the research. How these decisions manifested themselves in the methods employed will be detailed in the following chapter. In this chapter I feel it important to discuss the wider environment concerning these facets and how this research is positioned to contextualise and justify the methods used.

5.5.1 The wider environment

According to Preissle et al. (2016) when the philosophical terms of 'ethics' and 'morals' are applied to research they are in a consideration of its 'goodness'. Whereas the judgement of goodness is itself contextually and time-bound, Hinman (2003) claims that the standards and principles upon which decisions are made are available for scrutiny. This scrutiny has come to be based upon the two concepts of 'compliance' and 'integrity'. Compliance refers to the conforming to established and accepted guidelines for research conduct. Such guidance frameworks are numerable and based upon the same ethical principles to a large degree (Freeman and Preissle, 2010). They are also field specific and in the following sub-section I discuss the two frameworks used in this study.

Integrity in research refers to the quality of its scholarship, practices and honesty (Macfarlane, 2009). It is, of course, heavily influenced by the guidance framework(s) that it is conforming to. However, the decision-making process in research is much more complex and emergent, with competing levels of goodness, conformity and integrity needing to be balanced throughout the research process (Preissle et al., 2016). This balance is further challenged in teacher-practitioner research.

In their discussion of practitioner-research in higher education settings, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007) claim that it provides many challenges to HE institutions. The questioning of assumptions and practices related to teaching and learning is something that universities are vocal about concerning external institutions (e.g. schools) but hesitant about when it concerns self-examination (Anderson and Herr, 1999). Complex

dilemmas and tensions can emerge concerning relationships, accountability, ownership, authorship and organisational culture amongst others. In their in-depth discussion, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007) conclude by claiming that "when it comes to practitioner inquiry and university culture, 'everything's ethics'" (p24). Issues of research value and evaluation are also deemed to be encapsulated within this encompassing framework of ethics:

Whenever practitioner inquiry is conceptualised, conducted, supported used, referenced to, or evaluated by those working within the cultures of universities, all issues are in a certain essence ethical issues. (p28)

The all-encompassing nature of ethics in the HE setting becomes even more pronounced in pedagogic research (Norton, 2007). Here the researcher has to balance the concerns of the institution, teacher(s) and learner(s). Issues of reputation, power and fairness become extremely salient. For example, what happens if the research shows the institution in a bad light? How do I ensure that I am not coercing participation through my position as both teacher and researcher? Is it fair to dedicate contact learning time to the completion of research-related data collection methods (e.g. a survey)?

The balancing of the many competing ethical issues is an important component of high-quality research. According to Collins (2016), high quality mixed methods research is "justified; the process is transparent; the outcomes are defensible; and the findings are viewed as applicable by research consumers" (p2). The multidimensional nature of mixed methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010) ensures that ethical considerations are vitally important for the logical progression from ontology to epistemology to methodology to methods that is often neglected in published reports of mixed methods studies (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

Whilst with some ethical concerns there are clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches, with others there are not. For example, value neutrality is something claimed and sought by positivists. For interpretivist-based approaches, such as critical realism, value neutrality is not assumed to be possible and therefore personal

perspectives are themselves valued and their underpinnings sought (Collins, 2016). In mixed methods research it is important to use methods that allow for the leaning into disparate approaches.

To perform high quality mixed methods, teacher-practitioner research requires that the researcher demonstrates high levels of professionalism (Sachs, 2003; Bottery, 1996). From a review of models of research professionalism offered by Bottery (1996) and Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007) I found several common aspects. These were:

1. An ethic of subjectivity, honesty and transparency
2. An ethic of reflexive integrity
3. An ethic of humility and fallibility
4. An ethic of compliance to guidance frameworks
5. An ethic of seeking positive transformation.

The roles of reflexivity and transparency seemed vital to achieving a high level of research professionalism. Reflexivity allows for potential biases in the research to be articulated and scrutinised (Collins, 2016). It concerns how the researcher's experiences, perspectives and values shape the research process (Preissle et al., 2016). The use of reflexive practices creates transparency through the documentation of the decisions made and the articulation of the positionality of the research.

A further aspect of high-quality mixed methods research concerns the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Doyle (2007) suggests that the perspective of researching *with* rather than *on* participants represents an ethical and professional position. This perspective has also been advocated by Greenwood (2015) and previously discussed in this chapter.

As a researcher begins to shape the position of the research within this wider environment, they will move closer towards the consideration of how this position will manifest itself. Specific issues concerning the integration of the rational, purpose and design will arise (Bryman, 2006). For the mixed methods researcher, the rationale and purpose of mixing data must be specified. This may include the achievement of

triangulation, exploration, explanation, development, and/or transformation amongst many other (Bryman, 2006). There are also decisions to be made between sequential or concurrent/convergent designs. The value of mixing methods over a single method should also be articulated (Preissle et al., 2016). The method-related decisions that I undertook as part of this research will feature in the next chapter.

Before articulating the position of this research regarding research ethics and value, the latter needs to be discussed further. According to Collins (2016):

A critical dimension of high-quality research is to establish quality criteria for assessing the degree that process and the outcome of the research are interpreted as credible, defensible, and rigorous. (p10)

Collins (*ibid*) also claims that in mixed methods research it is important that the quality criteria used to judge the value of a study contains elements that measure compliance to both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. This view is also supported by Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2014).

Quantitative approaches in research are usually designed from within a positivistic paradigm that utilises the hypothetic-deductive model of reasoning. This model is well established in the natural sciences (Collins, 2016). The research process has the goal of collecting objective data from representative samples of participants. The data is analysed statistically to identify relationships amongst and between variables. Controls are employed to minimise potential bias and cause and effect conclusions are sought. Value judgements regarding the research are made based upon concepts such as internal validity, external validity, reliability, objectivity and generalisability (these will be further explained where they feature in the evaluation framework of this study).

Since the paradigm wars that saw the questioning of well-established positivistic methodologies, the qualities of newly-developed qualitative approaches have come under much scrutiny (Jovanović (2011). The trustworthiness of research that employs such approaches is of central concern here and positivists argue that the concepts of

validity and reliability that they rely on to evaluate the quality of quantitative research cannot be operationalised in the same manner in social research (Shenton, 2004). As such, the onus has been upon developing corresponding qualitative criteria to justify their value.

Early examples of attempts to formulate developing qualitative criteria in to a model or framework can be found in Lincoln and Guba (1986) and Maxwell (1992). The former of these informed one of the modern models that was used as part of the research evaluation framework in this study. As such, it will be discussed in the next sub-section. Maxwell's (1992) model included 3 broad categories that have also been expanded upon in modern models. The first of these categories is 'descriptive validity' and relates to the factual accuracy of the research and its reporting. The second, 'Interpretive validity', refers to the accuracy of the interpretations made from the data. Finally, 'Theoretical validity' concerns the degree to which the inferences derived align with the data analysed.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1994), qualitative approaches have found it difficult to develop a corresponding criterion to judge the generalisability of research findings. Dzakiria (2012) reviews some of the key attempts to do so and offers the concept of 'relatability'. Relatability refers to the degree that "knowledge gained from one context is relevant to, or applicable for other contexts" (p46). It can also be applied to the same context over different time frames. By taking this perspective the judgement of relatedness lies with the consumer of the research rather than the researcher. The research does though have the responsibility to provide enough contextual information in the study and report to allow for the judgement to be made.

5.5.2 The approach to ethics and quality in this study

With the wider environment concerning research ethics and value discussed, the position that I adopted for this research can be articulated. The multi-faceted and complex environment that the research was based had been discussed and the rationale

for mixing methods presented. In sum, the purpose of the study was to critically analyse the effectiveness of the course being studied and its pedagogy to uncover the generative mechanisms at play. These mechanisms would then be formulated into a framework for the design, development, implementation and evaluation of AO-MBPs going forward. The various discourses that influence a taught mindfulness course themselves span the positivist-interpretivist and quantitative-qualitative spectrums. Therefore, both the critical realism stance and the mixed method approach were deemed appropriate. The use of a single method would have biased the research in favour of one of the discourses rather than providing a balanced approach. Further, this study aimed to achieve many of the aspects that Bryman (2006) claimed are appropriate for the employment of mixed methods, including seeking transformation through exploration, explanation and evaluation. In doing so I accepted the importance of transparency in research (Collins, 2016) and attempted to adopt an ethic of subjectivity, honesty and transparency (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007). To support this position, the academic-reflective style was chosen for this thesis as it allowed me to interlace reflexivity and reflective commentary (Shenton, 2004) throughout. I attempted to approach this with the ethic of humility and fallibility.

I also decided to approach the research with a high degree of fairness and balance (Norton, 2007). In terms of the reputation of the institution I decided not to identify it or the course being studied. I did though decide to give thick descriptions of the course, its pedagogy and myself to provide adequate contextualised information for scrutiny and scrutiny. Thus, it would be possible to identify the course and institution from the publication of this thesis, but I felt that this was an acceptable risk that most teacher-practitioner research would suffer from.

Fairness in relation to the participants of this study was also something that I felt aligned with my own personal epistemology, values and the philosophy, practices and approach of mindfulness. Here I viewed the study as research *with* participants rather than *on* them (Greenwood, 2015; Doyle, 2007). To align with this, I made the decision to collect naturally emerging data from the participants and not to overburden them with additional collection methods where possible. I also decided that I too would engage

with one of the naturally occurring sources of data (the reflective account). As such I considered myself a co-journeyer with the learners in terms of both mindfulness and this research.

In alignment with mindfulness, critical realism and the aims of pedagogic research I adopted an ethic of seeking positive transformation through the research (Ashwin and Trigwell, 2004; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007). Such transformation was designed to have local and wider applications and implications for myself, the learners, the course, the institution, the development of AO-MBPs, the wider field and research methodology.

In this study I chose to comply with two ethical guidance frameworks. One of these was the departmental/Institutional framework to which adherence was a requirement for this study as doctoral research. The second was to the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) guidance, which contained many overlapping criteria with the first. From these, the following specific ethical categories were used to guide the research. How each one was met will be discussed in sub-section 8.2 ('Participants and procedure') of the following chapter.

1. **Informed consent** – voluntary informed consent was sought from each participant for each data collection method via an opt-in approach. Before giving consent, participants were provided with a generic Participant Information Sheet (PIS) that explained the details of the research and the role(s) of the participant(s). Following the BERA guidelines, Details were provided regarding why their participation was necessary, what they were to be asked to do, what will happen to the data they provided and how it will be reported. This PIS was based upon the template provided by the institution for which this study was performed in. Further specific information was provided for each individual data collection method prior to consent being given or not.

2. **Right to withdraw** – The participants right to withdraw was stated clearly in the PIS and again in the specific information provided for each individual data collection method. Specific details regarding this were given and, in the collaborative ethos of the study, participants were told to contact me directly if they wished to withdraw at any time.

3. **Protection of participants** – A key consideration here was the avoidance of making excessive demands upon the participants. I felt that it was best to collect naturally occurring data as much as was possible. This was achieved via the FFMQ, course evaluation form, learner reflective accounts and teacher reflective account. However, the learner survey, learner interviews and focus group methods did represent additional demands. To lessens the burden on participants, the leaner survey was designed to be completed online and both the learner interviews and focus groups only consisted of a small number of participants. I also decided not to ask participants to complete any other clinical measure that has been associated with growth in mindfulness. This will be discussed further in the following chapter and regarding the FFMQ data collection method specifically.

4. **Confidentiality and anonymity** – All possible steps were taken to assure and ensure that any data provided by the participants would be confidential and anonymous. The BERA guidelines mention that specific consideration should be taken regarding this matter for teacher-practitioner research due to the dual roles adopted by the researcher. Therefore, in this study and in each data collection method (apart from the focus group) steps were taken to ensure that I could not identify the participant from the data that they provided. To achieve this the quantitative data sets for each participant was assigned a random numerical identifier. For the qualitative data, pseudonyms were assigned randomly and used in this thesis. As all of the participants had completed the course there was no possibility of any bias or adverse effects regarding the course for the participants. No incentives were given for participation.

5. **Data storage and destruction** – Participants were informed that the data that they provided would be kept privately on a secure and password protected server of the institution in which the research was being carried out. They were also informed that the data would be destroyed following the completion of the research. Should the data be required beyond this point (e.g. for future or further research) the participants would be contacted again to consent to this.

In the BERA guidelines I also found two other considerations that guided the research and this thesis. The first was that I did not privilege particular research methods or approaches over others. Indeed, the use of the critical realist framework and the convergent parallel phase mixed methods design were chosen to allow for a range of methods to be used and given equal weighting for their possibility to inform the research

questions. The second was that the theoretical and methodological environment regarding research has been presented and discussed in this thesis. In doing this, I met many of the criteria of the evaluation framework adopted for the study (table 5.2). These concerned both the quantitative and qualitative guidance used in the framework, such as reliability and objectivity, dependability and confirmability and methodological trustworthiness (Healy and Chad, 2000).

In terms of the criterion used for judging the quality of the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study, I decided to adopt the use of 'separate criteria' (Collins, 2016). Here, each approach was judged using its own criteria rather than using a 'convergent criteria' approach where the same criteria would be applied to both. I decided that this was appropriate because I intended to analyse the data from each approach separately and then to synthesise the results to produce overall findings. The specific criteria used is discussed in the following sub-section with the additions of generalisability for the quantitative approaches and relatability for the qualitative.

Despite applying separate evaluation criteria to the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study, I did seek to produce a bespoke framework for this research in which the alignment of the separate criteria was produced and presented. This allowed for a coherent approach to be adopted for the evaluation of the study in relation to its research value.

5.5.3 The evaluation framework for the study

For this study I felt that there were three hierarchical elements of the approach adopted that required the identification of evaluation criteria to be used to assess its quality. The first of these was the adoption of the critical realist stance and mixed-methods as its logically corresponding methodological approach (as argued above). Here, the six criteria offered by Healy and Chad (2000) and discussed in the previous chapter were adopted into the evaluation framework.

In a discussion of mixed methods uniquely, Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2014) offer four criteria for judging value. In order to 'establish the conceptual validity of the research problem', they suggest that both the objective and subjective elements are identified, and this corresponds to Healy and Chad's (2000) ontological appropriateness. A further correspondence to Healy and Chad's criteria (methodological trustworthiness) was evident in the claim that a researcher should 'establish the validity of the research product', whereby any interpretations are grounded clearly in the data analysis and that this analysis provides an accurate reflection of the raw data collected. Finally, as two distinct models of research are being employed, Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2014) also suggest that the researcher shows 'compliance with the validity criteria established in each research model' by adopting relevant methods and practices. These criteria were also adopted into the evaluation framework.

The second element that I identified as requiring specific evaluation criteria was the qualitative approaches employed in this study. As has been discussed, it is the qualitative approaches that have had to justify their quality in the environment of the dominance of positivistic methodology (Jovanović, 2011). Thus, in a mixed methods study, this remains the case. After considering the attempts to do this by a number of forerunners, I concluded that Shenton's (2004) model of increasing the trustworthiness of qualitative research offered the most adopted into the framework.

Shenton's model itself is based upon the work of Guba (Guba, 1981; Guba and Lincoln, 1989), who has sought to develop guidelines for qualitative research that are now 'accepted by many' (Shenton, 2004, p64). Guba identified four constructs that were important for the justification of qualitative research, being:

1. **Credibility** – an equivalent concept to internal validity in quantitative research, here the study is judged for how much it reflects the reality of the subject under investigation.

2. **Transferability** – due to the accepted context-dependent nature of qualitative research, the external validity and generalisability concepts of positivism cannot be operationalised in qualitative research. Instead, the degree to which other practitioners can transfer or relate to the findings is judged based upon the degree of contextualisation in the research.

3. **Dependability** – in operating in an open system, qualitative researchers cannot employ methods to test reliability in the same manner as quantitative researchers can. As an alternative qualitative research can be judged in regard to the ability to employ the same methods in a different context.

4. **Confirmability** – as an alternative to objectivity in quantitative research, qualitative researchers are concerned with multiple perspectives of the object under investigation to illuminate the most credible description of it.

When considering these four constructs, Shenton (*ibid*) proposed a range of specific practical provisions that can possibly be adopted by a researcher. These specific provisions were adopted into the evaluation framework for this study and will be presented later in this sub-section (table 5.2).

As I deemed numerous sources of quantitative data to be important in illuminating the some of the research areas, and in accordance with Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado's (2014) criteria that mixed methods research shows compliance with the validity criteria established in each research model, the established criteria for quantitative research chosen for this study were the third element to identify. As Shenton (2004) discussed some of the most important of these in relation to Guba's four criteria above, it was logical to use these as a basis and to attempt to trace the generic alignments between the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The criteria identified were:

1. **Internal validity** – concerning the degree to which the methods used and findings obtained reflect the reality of the subject under investigation.

2. **External validity** – whereby the degree to which the causal findings can be generalised to different contexts. Along with being influenced by the methods used, sample issues and the strength of controls employed are also to be considered.

3. **Reliability** – referring to the degree to which the results would be found over a consistent period of time or replication. Many established techniques are available to test for reliability, including the test-retest method, inter-rater correlational tests and test of internal consistency (the degree to which the same construct is measured in different ways within one method).

4. **Objectivity** – concerning the degree to which the variables under investigation remain value-free and without bias. Such bias may emerge through the methods used, from

the sampling techniques employed (e.g. response bias), from the researcher (experimenter bias) and from the participants (e.g. demand characteristics, social desirability bias, etc.).

These criteria are extensively used in quantitative research and were familiar to me from my experience as a teacher and researcher. As such, they were also incorporated into the evaluation framework for this study.

Table 5.2 shows the final evaluation framework that was devised based upon the criteria offered by Healy and Chad (2000), Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2014) and Shenton (2004). As each of these were in turn based upon previously established attempts to justify the value of quantitative and qualitative research, I feel that the final framework represents a convincing approach that aligned with the ontological and epistemological foundations of myself, critical realism, mixed methods and teacher-practitioner research.

As most of the criteria for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this research concern the methods employed, I shall return to the evaluation framework presented here in my discussion of the specific methods employed in this study in the next chapter. Whilst this is the case, there are some provisions suggested by Shenton (2004) that I feel have already been met in this thesis.

Firstly, the style of thesis has allowed me to implicitly discuss my own beliefs and assumptions in relation to the material being discussed. Chapter 3 included detailed descriptions concerning my background, qualification, beliefs and experiences in relation to all aspects of the research. In doing this I attempt to provide the reader with contextual information through which to judge the value of it and, if appropriate, transfer or relate it to other similar contexts.

Secondly, in this current section concerning theory, methodology and methods I attempt to provide an in-depth description and justification in order for the research to be repeated and for its integrity to be scrutinised. Thirdly, in chapter 2 previous research

Table 5.2

The research evaluation framework adopted for this study (continued overleaf).

Quantitative	Qualitative			
Criteria	*Construct (Guba, 1981)*	*Provisions (Shenton, 2004)*	*Category (Healy and Chad, 2000)*	*Criteria (Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2014)*
			Ontological appropriateness	Establish the conceptual validity of the research problem
Internal validity	Credibility	Adoption of appropriate, well recognised research methods Development of familiarity with culture of participating organisation Random sampling of individuals serving as informants Triangulation via use of different methods and informants Tactics to help ensure honesty of informants Iterative questioning in data collection dialogues Negative case analysis Debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors Use of "reflective commentary" Description of background, qualifications and experience of researcher Member checks of data collected and interpretations/theories formed Thick descriptions of phenomenon under scrutiny Examination of previous research to frame findings	Contingent validity & Construct validity	Compliance with the validity criteria established in each research model

Quantitative	Qualitative			
External validity	Transferability	Provision of background data to establish context of study	Analytic generalisation	
		Detailed description of phenomenon to allow comparisons to be made		
Reliability	Dependability	Employment of "overlapping" methods		
		In-depth methodological description to allow the study to be repeated		
Objectivity	Confirmability	Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias	Triangulation	
		Admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions		
		Recognition of shortcomings in study's method and their potential effects		
		In-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinised	Methodological trustworthiness	Establish the validity of the research product
		Use of diagrams to demonstrate "audit trail"		

has been discussed in detail to frame the study and this will feature again in the findings chapters to frame the interpretations of the results.

In relation to internal validity, the ontological appropriateness category of Healy and Chad (2000) and Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado's (2014) criteria of establishing the conceptual validity of the research problem, the chapters proceeding and including this one have discussed the research context, objectives and questions in detail. To summarise here in relation to this discussion, this research aims to investigate the effectiveness and pedagogy of an AO-MBP offered to adult learners in an open-access manner. Using figure 4.1's illustration of the critical realist stance adopted for this investigation, it concerns the experiences of the learners and the teacher of the course. It uses quantitative and qualitative data from various sources concerning these experiences (see the following chapter) in an attempt to uncover patterns of events that are contained in them. Through the process of retroduction, the tendencies expressed in the experiences and events are to be extrapolated. From these tendencies, the general mechanisms that produced them (being intransitive in nature) are to be theorised. Thus, I feel that the ontological appropriateness and the conceptual validity of the research problem had been demonstrated.

5.6 Chapter summary

From within the framework of the critical realist stance adopted for this study relevant methodological issues have been discussed. The positionality of the study in regard to the key components of mixed-methods research, teacher-practitioner research, pedagogical research and bricolage were articulated. Wider issues of research ethics and quality were discussed to contextualise the articulation and justification of the evaluation framework that was adopted for the study.

With the methodological aspects of the study conveyed here the following chapter proceeds to articulate and justify the specific data collection and analysis methods employed in the study.

|Chapter 6: Method

"Charting the path"

Based upon the previous two chapters, this chapter completes the logical and linear flow from theory to methodology to methods. It begins with a discussion regarding the design chosen for the study. This includes the specific mixed-methods design and the course evaluation approach employed. Then, the participants and procedure are explained together in order to illustrate the various methods of recruitment for the multiple sources of data used. In the following section the individual data collection methods are detailed and include 3 quantitative and 7 qualitative sources. The methods for analysing the two forms of data are then detailed also.

In the discussion of the data collection and analysis methods I chose to provide relevant information to allow for the varied methods used to be clearly understood. At times this includes specific evaluation points. However, due to the employment of the holistic evaluation framework for the study developed in section 5.5.3, I decided to perform a more thorough evaluation of the methods using this framework and present it with the wider evaluation of the whole study. This evaluation is presented in section 10.1 of this thesis. By doing this I aim to avoid repetition of evaluative points which, although they may have been relevant in this chapter, feature more effectively as part of the holistic evaluation of the study once the findings have been articulated.

6.1 Design

Aligned with the critical realist stance adopted for the study, I required a method that would allow me to collect data from the experiences of those involved (from the domain of the empirical) but would also allow me to engage in the process of retroduction to uncover the events, tendencies (from the domain of the actual) and general mechanisms (from the domain of the real) at play in the course being studied. For the overall method I decided that the 'convergent parallel phase design' (Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2014; Caruth, 2013) of mixed methods was most appropriate. In this design, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used simultaneously and are integrated by the researcher to produce findings (Collins, 2016).

In employing the chosen mixed methods design, I distinguish this research from most other approaches used to study mindfulness (e.g. Finucane and Mercer, 2006; Sibinga et al., 2011; Keane, 2014). In doing this, I seek to make a significant novel contribution to the development of methodological approaches in the field in manner proposed by others (e.g. Crane et al., 2015; Grossman, 2011).

Other studies have mostly employed a sequential phase design, whereby the first phase consisted of quantitative data collection, analysis and findings. Following this the second phase consisted qualitative data collection, analysis and findings. The reason for selecting the chosen design was to align with the theoretical stance and methodological approach of the study. Only the convergent parallel phase design allowed me to study different experiences and perceptions of the topics under scrutiny. As a shared but personally contextualised experience, the mindfulness course being studied contains multiple perspectives of value. The use of these was important to illuminate the patterns of events, tendencies and generative mechanisms at play in the course. Further, this design allowed for the adoption of appropriate and well recognised methods, the use of overlapping methods and for triangulation to be included; all of which are included in the evaluation framework. Figure 6.1 shows the distinction between the two types of mixed methods design and figure 6.2 outlines the sources of data for the quantitative and qualitative phases in this study.

Figure 6.1
Sequential and parallel phase designs for mixed methods research.
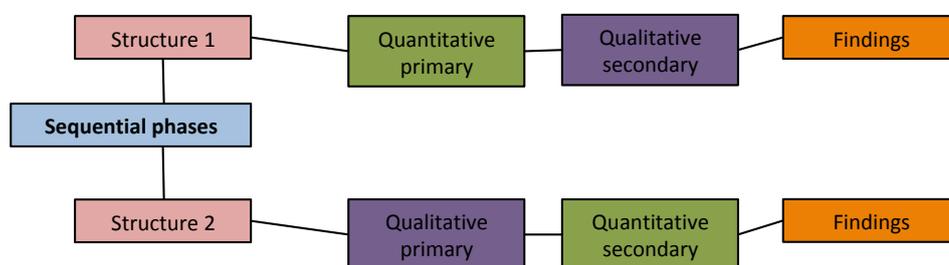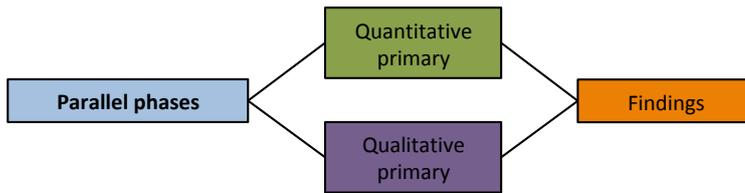
The study also has features of a 'multilevel design' in that it used different samples for specific components of the data collection. This decision was made because of the longitudinal nature of seeking data from previous students of the course and due to the pedagogic nature of the course allowing for learners to opt in or out of the activities from which much of the naturally occurring data emerged. Although this ensures a large number and wide variety of participants across the study, it does have a significant weakness. This was that the data collected could not be analysed at the 'respondent level'. Respondent level data refers to data in which each participant's data across different collection methods can be traced. This allows for sophisticated analysis within each participant and between participants across the collection methods.   This weakness was reduced in this study by the employment of the critical realist stance and convergent parallel phase mixed methods design. Here, data from multiple perspectives are sought and valued for their contribution to the overall findings.   Therefore, respondent level data was less important for this research, although it would have been useful for the exploration of participant-specific patterns and tendencies.

Figure 6.2
The sources of data for the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study.
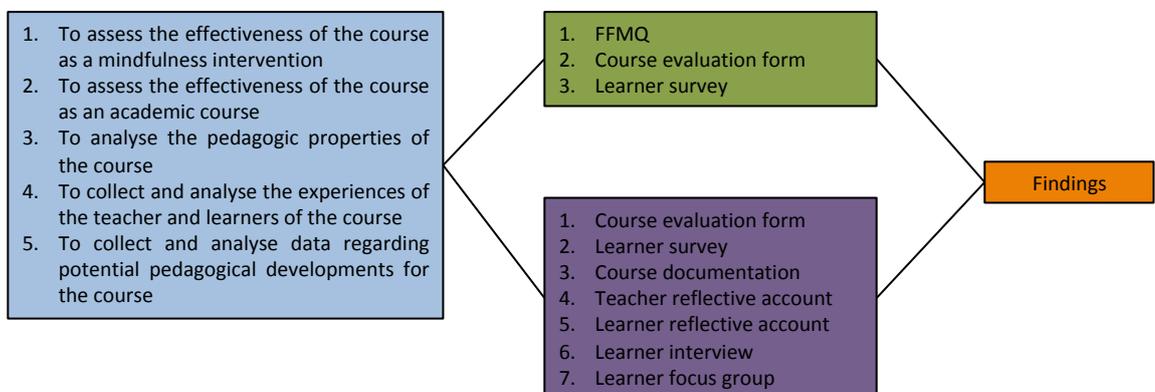
Key: Blue = objectives | Green = quantitative phase | Purple = qualitative phase

The study does have an element of sequential phase design in regard to the learner focus group data collection method. Here, six discussion topics were produced from the emerging findings from the other sources of data. These topics were discussed by the focus group along with any other topics that the group felt were relevant.

6.1.1 Course evaluation approach

In section 3.4 of this thesis I discussed methods of evaluating academic courses in the context of HE. From an analysis of some key existing approaches, I explained how the model by Kirkpatrick (1996) offers a framework that could be used to evaluate AO-MBPs and other mindfulness courses. Although most of the data required by the model was naturally occurring in mindfulness courses, I did argue for a range of additional sources that would contextualise it for mindfulness and, in doing so, become more effective. As such, I decided to incorporate a modified version of the model into this study.

Table 6.1 gives an overview of the sources of data that were incorporated in this study. For the sources that did feature, a detailed description will feature in the remainder of this chapter. For those that did not, I shall offer an explanation here.

Despite advocating for the use of case studies in the research of mindfulness courses, I decided not to include them in this research. The reason for this was that I felt that there was a large range of data sources available and I sought to analyse as many different perspectives on the research questions as possible, in accordance with the theoretical stance and methodological approach adopted. The inclusion of case studies here would have meant an additional data collection and analysis load that I did not feel was sustainable. Such a method would be better suited to a more focussed study, possibly utilising a technique such as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Table 6.1

The four levels of Kirkpatrick's (1996) training evaluation model as incorporated into this study.

Level	Sources of data	Incorporated?
Reaction	Learner surveys, accounts, interviews and case studies	Yes (surveys, accounts and interviews)
	Teacher account(s)	Yes
	Teacher observation feedback	No
Learning	Pre- and post- course mindfulness measure(s)	Yes
	Associated pre- and post- course measure(s)	No
	Learner surveys, accounts, interviews and case studies	Yes (surveys, accounts and interviews)
Behaviour/transfer	Learner surveys, accounts, interviews and case studies	Yes (surveys, accounts and interviews)
	Teacher account(s)	Yes
Results	Longitudinal post-course measures and learner interviews and case studies	Yes (accounts, learner interviews)

Another source of data that I advocate for is teacher observation data. Unfortunately, I did not feel that this was possible without further significant development. Whilst my teaching practice was observed during the data collection phase, it was in accordance with the department's criteria rather than criteria related to the pedagogy of mindfulness. Although there are some common features, I felt that to be effective here the observer would require and understanding of mindfulness and its pedagogy in order to provide useful feedback in relation to the pedagogical properties under investigation. In future research, those trained in MBSR/MBCT could be observed using the MBI-TAC procedure discussed in the literature review. As I do not hold qualifications in these intervention programmes, this was not possible in this study. As a component of my argument here is that such qualification should not be a requirement to teach AO-MBPs (and that these programmes do not necessarily express the pedagogy of mindfulness authentically), other criteria (or a whole new approach) need to be developed in this area.

Finally, as is common in the existing studies concerning the clinical benefits of mindfulness, the use of associated and additional pre- and post-course measures was also a feature in my recommended model. However, I chose not to include any here for a number of reasons. Firstly, as has already been discussed, the learners engaged with the course being studied for reasons that span the spectrum of aims and intentions offered by Crane (2016). Thus, I felt it inappropriate to require the all of the learners to complete an instrument that may not be relevant to them. Further, I felt that there was a particular ethical concern in asking the learners to consider questions of a clinical nature as these may trigger an unwanted thought or feeling.

Secondly, the course inherently contained a number of other activities that were designed to invite the learners to reflect upon their current experiences. As such, I did not wish to overload the learners with more measurement and reflective activities. Such an approach (often adopted by researchers from the scientific), I felt, would not be an authentic expression of the supportive, co-journeying, growth journey of mindfulness but would view the learners more as subjects on which research was to be performed. Thus, I expressed the ethic of fairness and balance (Norton, 2007) and the position of performing research with participants rather than on them (Greenwood, 2015; Doyle, 2007).

Finally, the relationship between existing direct measures of mindfulness (e.g. the FFMQ, the MAAS, etc.) and associated benefits in a variety of areas is sufficiently well established (e.g. Grossman, 2004; Khoury et al., 2013a; Gotink et al., 2015; Lenz, Hall and Smith, 2015; Veehoff et al., 2016; Carrière et al., 2017). As this is a study of the educational-orientation of mindfulness, I felt that it could lean into this body of evidence and focus upon educationally-relevant aspects specifically.

6.2 Participants and procedure

As discussed in the previous chapter, this research contained aspects of teacher-practitioner research in that I, as the teacher of the course being studied, featured as a participant and contributed data for analysis. The other participants in the study consisted of previous students of the course by the end of the data collection period. The course (in the format being studied) had run for 10 consecutive terms prior to the data collection period and for a further three terms during the data collection period.

Across the various sources a total of 170 separate responses were collected and analysed from the participants. As has been discussed, these did not represent respondent level data. Although the same participant may have contributed to more than one data source, each response and source was treated separately. Although the learners of the course did provide a diverse range of participants, all were adults who attended the sessions of the course at a leading university based in the West Midlands of England.

The overall sampling method used here was self-selected as volunteers were sought to participate in the study and as participation in the activities that produced emergent sources of data was optional. A weakness of the self-selected sampling method is that it has the potential to return a non-representative sample. However, to counter this in the context of the evaluation framework used for the study, I employed two well-documented other strategies within the voluntary sample (Preissle et al., 2016). Where there were a large number of volunteers, I employed random or probability sampling to select the final sample. This was used to increase the integrity of the sample (Teddlie and Yu, 2007) and was applied to the FFMQ and learner reflective account sources of data. To achieve randomisation, each available participant was assigned a number and a computer-generated random number sequence was used to produce the final sample.

For the selection of participants for the focus group source of data I applied purposive sampling by personally inviting previous learners of the course to participate. Based

upon Hill, Pace and Robbin's (2010) perspective, I felt that this would allow me to gather "rich data from knowledgeable and informative participants for a deeper understanding of a phenomena" (Preissle et al., 2016, p9). Invited participants were members of the follow-on experiential course to the course being studied who had demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding of the mindfulness journey from regularly contributions to group discussions and activities.

As a naturally occurring part of the study the course evaluation forms were collected for the data collection period of the study. These were completed on a voluntary basis and it was made clear to the learners that these would be used to analyse the effectiveness of the course generally and as part of this study. The evaluations forms were anonymous, but learners were asked to provide an email address if they wished to be contacted by the department in which the study resided. As this represented an identifiable feature, any evaluation forms that did include an email address were omitted.

All potential participants for the other aspects of the study were contacted via an initial email and invited to take part. They were also directed to the PIS for the study that was included as an attachment to the email. For those that completed the course, a link was included in the email that directed them to the online survey for completion (see appendix 1). Before completing this survey, additional information was provided to the participants and their consent required via an opt-in method of them actively clicking a button to begin the survey. They were informed that they could refuse to answer any question(s) that they wished and that they could withdraw from this collection method completely by simply closing their browser before they had finished the survey.

Learners who had completed the course and submitted a reflective account were also asked for their consent for me to use their reflective accounts and pre- and post-course FFMQ scores for analysis. I again employed an opt-in method here as participants were required to actively reply to my email giving explicit consent for this data collection method.   A random number was assigned to each participant did volunteer their

reflection and FFMQ data. A random sample was then produced from these to create the final sample for analysis.

Learners who didn't complete the course were invited to be part of the interview component of the study. This enabled the perspectives of such participants to also inform the findings and represents an attempt to meet the negative case analysis provision suggested in the evaluation framework. The details of those that did volunteer for this study were forwarded to 2 interviewers who arranged and carried out the interviews. This method was employed to avoid any issues of bias that may have merged from my dual role in the research. It was also used as an attempt to assist in the honesty of informants (Shenton, 2004).

The 2 interviewers were both recent graduates who had experience in conducting interviews as part of their course and careers. They were known to me having attended other courses that I taught. I approached them purposively as I was aware of their experience in conducting interviews. They conducted the interviews on a voluntary basis and received no incentive for doing so. I initially produced the interview schedule with the final version (see appendix 2) resulting from collaboration between myself and the 2 interviewers. Three interviews were conducted using the interview schedule. Of these participants, 2 were female and 1 was male.

I also invited members of the follow-on experiential course who had previously completed the course being studied to participate in a focus group. As these had continued to practice mindfulness in a formal setting beyond the end of the course being studied, I felt that they could offer salient perspectives upon the course itself and upon issues that emerged from the initial analysis of the data collected via the other sources. As such, I included it in an attempt to allow for member checks of the data and interpretation provision of the evaluation framework. Due to the variety of data sources and the difficulties in contacting the previous learners of the course from the prior years, I felt that I couldn't allow for member checks from the participants that provided this other data. As such, using the focus group seemed to be the most beneficial method available.

Four participants chose to participate in the focus group initially. They were all female and had continued to practice mindfulness beyond the course being studied for a minimum of one year. Interestingly, another member of the follow-on course expressed an interest in being part of the focus group. Although she hadn't completed the course being studied, she had completed another MBSR-based course prior to joining the follow-on course group. I felt that she could provide an interesting perspective concerning the differences and uniqueness of each mindfulness course and the wider issues in mindfulness. As such, she also took part in the focus group, bringing the total number of participants in this element to 5. To align with the ethical and quality approaches of this research I was not present for the focus group discussion.

6.3 Data collection methods

6.3.1 The Quantitative Phases

For the quantitative phases of the study data was collected from the following sources:
1) The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)
2) The course evaluation form
3) The learner survey

1) As has been discussed in the literature review, the FFMQ was developed by Baer et al. (2006) and consists of 39 self-report items measuring five aspects of mindfulness. These are:

a) **Observing** – referring to a person's experiences of noticing or not-noticing present-moment thoughts, sensations and/or emotions
b) **Describing** – referring to a person's experiences of being able to describe and label present-moment thoughts, sensations and/or emotions in words

c) **Acting with awareness** – referring to a person's experiences of concentrating awareness in the present-moment rather than being on "automatic pilot"

d) **Non-judging of inner experience** – referring to a person's experiences of judging or not-judging their own thoughts, sensations and/or emotions

e) **Non-reactivity to inner experience** – referring to a person's experiences of reacting or nor-reacting to their thoughts, sensations and/or emotions.

These five factors were elicited from a factor analysis study of five existing and independently developed mindfulness questionnaires. The factors were then used to create the FFMQ inventory, which yielded high levels of both internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (thus meeting the quantitative criteria in the evaluation framework for this study). Based upon this rigorous development and feedback from learners, the FFMQ was chosen as the preferred mindfulness measure for the course being studied. As such, it has been used in each of the iterations of it to collect pre- and post-course data (at weeks 1 and 8 respectively).

It is important to note here that whilst I invite the learners to complete the FFMQ in this manner, it is not a requirement. This is because some learners have expressed that they did not wish to compete it and I have attempted to be authentic to the mindfulness approach and pedagogy in my teaching of it. Making it a requirement would remove elements of the personal-journeying, democratic, self-discovery and co-journeying nature of mindfulness, as I view it be. Therefore, I feel that to invite the learners to complete the FFMQ and explaining why I would advise it seemed like the best approach.

It is also important to note again here that I felt that requiring the participants to complete associated instruments (such as the many clinical ones discussed in the literature review) would have been inappropriate. To add further requirements to the learners would have been unfair and, as 10 of the iterations of the course were completed before the data collection period began, there was no method for retrospectively obtaining data from such instruments. Rather, there is sufficient existing research that demonstrates the correlation between growth in mindfulness (as

measured by mindfulness instruments including the FFMQ) and improvements in both clinical and non-clinical areas.

Thus, for the research question concerning the effectiveness of mindfulness as an intervention, the FFMQ was used in the quantitative phase. In doing this I accept that any significant growth indicated by the results of the FFMQ data would only suggest that the course increased the participant's levels of mindfulness and would have to lean into the existing evidence-base to make any further links to growth in associated areas. On its own I feel that this was a weakness of the design, however the convergent parallel phase design adopted allowed for the learner reflective accounts to also inform the findings concerning the effectiveness of the course as a mindfulness intervention. This is another example of the power of the design of this study and of investigating multiple perspectives of the topics under scrutiny. As such, I am satisfied that the FFMQ alone was the only quantitative method required for research question 1.

Overall, 74 pre- and post-course FFMQ scores were collected for analysis.

2) The second source of data from which quantitative data was collection method was the course evaluation form. This EOCE contained nine quantitative self-report items with responses via a five-point Likert scale (see table 6.2). This form was the standard course evaluation form of the department where the course being studied resided. It had also been used in each of the iterations of the course to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of the course as an academic course by myself and the department. Therefore, it represented data that emerged organically as part of the course but through and in a standard format. Although it can be argued that such self-report EOCE's may lack validity, I feel that this was reduced in this case as the feedback was given with anonymity.

Seventy evaluation forms were available for analysis after omissions had been made.

Table 6.2

The nine self-report questions of the course evaluation form.

Item	Question
1	How well did the content of the certificate match the publicity?
2	How well did the academic level of the certificate meet your expectations?
3	To what extent were you encouraged to participate in discussion and other class activity?
4	How appropriate for the subject were the teaching methods which were adopted?
5	How well had the tutor prepared the subject-matter for the certificate?
6	How satisfied were you with material which was made available to you (e.g. handouts)?
7	How well were assessment tasks explained?
8	How satisfied were you with the accommodation for the certificate?
9	Overall, how satisfied were you with the certificate?

3) The final source of quantitative data was contained in the learner survey created specifically for this research (table 6.3 provides demographic information for the 70 participants sampled). I decided to produce a unique survey for the study for two main reasons. Firstly, I felt that I needed a method could be effectively and efficient in collecting data from a wide a range of learners as possible. This would allow for the different perspectives that I sought from within the critical realist approach adopted to influence the findings. Secondly, no existing survey existed that would collect the various and field-specific data that I sought in this study. Indeed, as will be explained later in this sub-section, in creating this survey I included a range of aspects from relevant literature, previous research and my own reflections of teaching the course. Therefore, a bespoke approach was necessary. Despite these decisions, I did acknowledge that the use of a non-standardised survey may reduce the validity of the findings and will discuss the implications of this more widely in the overall evaluation of the study (section 10.1).

Table 6.3
Demographic characteristics of the participants from the learner survey.

Characteristic	N	%
Gender:		
Male	18	25.7
Female	52	74.3
Other	0	0
Age:		
18-24	0	0
25-34	15	21.4
35-44	16	22.9
45-54	19	27.1
55-64	17	24.3
65-74	3	4.3
75+	0	0
Course attended:		
Jan-Mar 2014	0	0
Apr-July 2014	0	0
Oct-Dec 2014	5	7.3
Jan-Mar 2015	6	8.7
Apr-July 2015	3	4.3
Oct-Dec 2015	15	21.7
Jan-Mar 2016	6	8.7
Apr-July 2016	8	11.6
Oct-Dec 2016	10	14.5
Jan-Mar 2017	8	11.6
Apr-July 2017	6	8.7
Don't know/Can't remember	2	2.9
Status:		
A member of staff at the university	45	66.2
An undergraduate student of another course at the university	0	0
A postgraduate student of another course at the university	0	0
A learner enrolled only on this course at the university	23	33.8
Final status:		
Attended some sessions (less than 8) but did not submit an assignment	9	12.9
Attended some sessions (less than 8) and did submit an assignment	0	0
Attended most sessions (8+) but did not submit an assignment	26	37.1
Attended most sessions (8+) and did submit an assignment	34	48.6
Don't know/can't remember	1	1.4

This was made available to the participants in an online format. This was deemed appropriate for several reasons, including:

a) The need to provide an accessible location for each participant to contribute (due to the geographical spread of previous students)

b) The need to provide opportunities to contribute at a variety of times to suit each participant

c) The need to reduce the demands placed on the participants by taking part in the study

d) The need to collect quantitative and qualitative data in the survey

e) The need to avoid any demand characteristics due to the presence of the researcher (also their teacher).

The survey collected data regarding the experiences and opinions of learners on the course concerning the pedagogical properties under investigation. It consisted of 71 questions in four sections. Section one contained several closed questions that were designed to collect demographic data. Section two began by asking the participants to rate how satisfied they were with their experience of the course on a five-point Likert scale, with a higher score indicating a more positive response.

Section two also contained a series of rating scale responses (five-point Likert scale, with a higher score indicating a more positive response) concerning 13 pedagogical properties that I chose for investigation in this study (see table 6.4). These were selected based upon my analysis of existing research concerning the pedagogy of mindfulness, the constructivist principles on which the pedagogy of mindfulness sits (according to many but not all), associated pedagogical models presented in this thesis (Transformative Learning, Transformative Teaching and Transpersonal Education) and my own reflections from teaching the course being studied for many years.

From research concerning the pedagogy of mindfulness, although limited in scope and number (Crane et al., 2015), some key elements have emerged as being important to pedagogic effectiveness in mindfulness. The four themes uncovered in the study by van Aalderen et al. (2012) were chosen here, being located in property 1, 2, 6, 9 and 10. From the study by Crane at al. (2015), aspects of the teacher were chosen in properties 8, 9 and 10. Elements of the MBSR standards of practice (Santorellli, 2014), the MBSR

authorised curriculum guide (Santorelli et al. 2017) and the MBI-TAC (Crane et al., 2012a; 2012b) that have not been studied in depth but align with the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness were also selected. These feature in properties 2, 4, 5 and 6.

Table 6.4
The 13 pedagogic properties chosen for investigation in the study.

Pedagogic property
1. The sharing of experiences
2. Opportunities for self-directed learning
3. Opportunities for learner participation
4. The teaching of mindfulness-related theory
5. The teaching of mindfulness practices
6. The promotion of personal confidence and control
7. Assessment
8. Sensitive teacher responses to learner contributions
9. Teacher acceptance and non-judgement
10. Teacher commitment to the mindfulness journey
11. Exploration of changes in behaviour
12. Exploration of moral and ethical dimensions
13. Exploration of spiritual dimension

From some of the current issues and debates in mindfulness properties 11, 12 and 13 were chosen. These concerned issues relating to behaviour change in mindfulness and the degree to which it should concern moral, ethical and spiritual dimension (e.g. Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths, 2015; Baer, 2015; Monteiro, 2015). Property 3 was selected as a principle of constructivist pedagogy that did not distinctly emerge from other research. I also selected property 7 as I was interested in how this element was and could align with the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness, leaning into the work by Luxton-Reilly and Denny (2010) and Evans (2013) in this area.

In using these properties for study, I acknowledge that there were many other properties that emerged from the literature concerning pedagogy and the pedagogy of mindfulness that were also be worthy of study. However, due to the size and scope of this research I feel that these were the most relevant in terms of their articulation in the

literature and their exitance in the course being studied. In doing this, as suggested by Shenton (2004) in the framework for the evaluation of this study, I acknowledge that this may be an area of researcher bias and, indeed, confirmation bias (in that I selected properties that I felt did feature in the course being studied). However, I conclude that the properties have sufficient standing in the literature to justify their inclusion and that to include properties that didn't feature would be worthless as the critical realist stance adopted begins with a consideration of the empirical experiences of participants. Thus, the research process would not have been able to continue.

One pedagogical property that would have been extremely interesting to explore in relation to the course being studied here was that of home-practice. Unfortunately, as this topic is in its infancy and has not attracted much research, I only became aware of it after during the data collection period (two key articles by Parsons et al. and Lloyd et al. were published in 2017) and felt it was too late to include it here.

In section 2 of the survey the participants were invited to provide a rating for each of the 13 pedagogic properties in relation to the question "From your reflections of the course, how would you rate the effectiveness of the following?". This was an attempt to capture the experiences of the participants in relation to these properties. Section two also contained further questions concerning views upon the length of the course and the physical learning environment as both of these have emerged from the feedback regarding the course previously.

In section 3 the participants were invited to rate the 13 pedagogic properties again but in regard to the question "How important do you think the following are to mindfulness courses in general?". This question was included as an explorative question as I was interested to see if there were any discrepancies between the ratings from the two questions. If there were, this may indicate an area of improvement for the course and for the development of AO-MBPs going forward.

Section 3 of the survey also contained options regarding potential developments to the pedagogy of the course for participants to select. These developments included aspects

from the literature concerning the pedagogy of mindfulness. From communal constructivism (Holmes et al., 2001) I included options regarding learners teaching, communicating and sharing work with each other. I was also interested in the views regarding online mindfulness courses as this was a popular topic in the field, and so included this as an option. In terms of the curriculum I was interested to see if certain inclusions in the standard MBSR programme were of interest, including Yoga activities and retreats. From an academic course related perspective, I included options for a follow-on taught course and a follow-on experiential course.

6.3.2 The Qualitative Phases

Data for the qualitative phases of the study was collected from the following sources:

1) The course evaluation form
2) The learner survey
3) The course documentation
4) The learner reflective account
5) The teacher reflective account
6) The learner interviews
7) The learner focus group

1) Along with the nine items providing quantitative data, the course evaluation form also contained five open-ended questions that provided me with qualitative data. One of these questions, "Are there any other comments which you would like to make?", was of particular importance as it had the potential to yield comments that concern issues of the pedagogical properties inherent in the course. As with the quantitative data from the course evaluation form, I chose to include this data for analysis as it represented emergent data from learners but from within a standard framework. Therefore, this allowed for the comments provided to be analysed and compared in relation to the question that was being responded to.

2) The learner survey (appendix 1) also contained open-ended questions designed to collect qualitative data. As with the course evaluation form, I felt that the asking of specific questions to yield qualitative responses here would provide the opportunity for question-specific analysis.

In section one of the survey there were several open-ended questions concerning their reasons for enrolling and their expectations of the course being studied. In section two, there were questions regarding possible additional comments concerning reflections of the course and possible developments. In section three, participants had the opportunity to include any additional enhancements that did not feature as options provided. Section four also contained an open-ended question in which participants could provide any further comments about the teaching and learning of the course.

3) Another source of data used in the qualitative phases was the course documentation. The use of such resources in teacher-practitioner research concerning aspects of teaching and learning is well established (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2007). Here they were included to elicit data concerning the pedagogical properties of the course. As such, I considered them to represent the domain of the real in that they represented stable structures that underpinned the course. Although the use of the documentation was extremely useful, I did recognise that they would not contain any non-documented, implicit or emergent aspect of the pedagogical properties under study. This would be a significant weakness of the method if used in isolation. However, I felt that the use of multiple data sources for triangulation would account for such weaknesses in this and each of the methods employed. Again, I will return to this point further in the overall evaluation of the study (section 10.1).

These documents included 10 session plans and 10 presentation files. In addition to these, I was also interested in the feedback that I gave to the learners on regard to the assessment of their reflective account. This appeared in two forms. The first was the comments on the document itself and the second was the comments I would write on the formal feedback sheet. Based upon the work of Evans (2013) discussed previously (section 3.2.3), I was interested in the nature of the feedback I gave in relation to the

cognitivist-constructivist spectrum suggested and in relation to the nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness. Eighteen reflective accounts were sampled for this purpose.

4) As an AO-MBP, the course being studied included an assessment component that learners could undertake to gain accreditation for the course. The assessment component had been, and remained for the data collection period, a reflective account of the learner's experience of mindfulness during the course. This was submitted as a 2000-word document and was marked according to the marking criteria for academic courses at the university where the course resides. These accounts contained (to varying degrees) information concerning the effectiveness of the course as a mindfulness intervention and as an academic course. In some cases, they also constituted a reflection of the learner's experiences of the course and its pedagogic properties. Due to the accounts containing such data, and because they were a naturally occurring feature of the course, these accounts were deemed to be appropriate and extremely useful for the study. Eighteen accounts were sampled.

5) The teacher reflective account consisted of a reflective journal produced by myself during the duration of the data collection period (3 terms). In addition to being an on-going account, it also contained reflections upon my previous experiences of designing, developing and teaching the course over many years. In doing this I was also attempting to meet the criteria of using a reflective commentary and the admission of the researcher's beliefs and assumptions from the evaluation framework for this study.

As part of the reflective account I provided my reflections upon the effectiveness of the course, the pedagogic properties of the course and upon the possible pedagogic developments from my perspective. I also used the MBSR authorised curriculum (Santorelli et al., 2017), the MBI-TAC instrument (Crane et al., 2012) and other relevant publications discussed in the literature review to consider the context and nature of the course and my teaching. My reservations and concerns about these representing a pathway that I feel is incongruent with the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes of mindfulness have been discussed throughout this thesis. However, as the course being studied was based upon the standard MBSR programme model and the MBI-TAC

instrument was developed for teaching on such programmes, I felt that it would be worthwhile to reflect upon my own teaching practices in this context. The employment of the critical realist analytical stance and the use of the wide variety of methods and data sources increased my comfort in doing this as I felt that through the process of retroduction any findings from this evaluation would be moderated accordingly into the emerging findings.

6) To collect experiences and perspectives from learners who did not complete the course, semi-structured interviews were undertaken according to the procedure discussed previously in this chapter. These concerned experiences of the course, along with existing and possible pedagogic developments. The semi-structured interview approach was chosen as it allowed me to guide the direction of the interview whilst also allowing the interviewee to contribute outside of this guidance. The semi-structured interview method allowed me to set the interview schedule to ensure that the pedagogic properties identified in the study to be considered, whilst also allowing for the course non-completer participants to respond in ways that may be unique to them. This was important to allow the participant to express their experiences and perspectives regarding the topics being discussed. In a further control, I did not personally conduct the interviews to avoid any demand characteristics or ethical issues that may arise because of this. As such, this represented an attempt to employ tactics to help ensure the honesty of participants in accordance with the evaluation framework for this study. Three participants were sampled for this aspect of the study.

7) The focus group element of the study has been described in the participants section above. Here, the five participants met for approximate 90 minutes on a single occasion. In an attempt to reduce demand characteristics, socials desirability bias and to improve the honesty of the participants, I did attend the focus group discussion. The discussion was recorded using a portable voice recorder. Prior to the discussion beginning, I delivered a set of instructions and topic cards to the focus group (see appendix 3). In the instructions the group were invited to select a coordinator who would lead the session. There were six topic cards and the coordinator arranged these in view of all of the members. The topic cards consisted of a title in large print on one side and further

details concerning that topic on the other. The six titles were topics chosen from the issues and debates in the field of mindfulness presented in this study and/or emerging findings from the other data sources. The topics were:

a) Assessment in mindfulness courses

b) The exploration of ethics and morals in mindfulness courses

c) The exploration of spirituality in mindfulness

d) Teaching and learning activities in mindfulness

e) Continuing the mindfulness journey

f) Environment and accommodation.

The group were invited to select a topic in any order and discuss it to the degree that they deemed necessary. The coordinator ensured that all contributions were made before inviting another topic to be chosen. The group were also invited to discuss any other topics that they felt were relevant, either in relation to the topics given or to a separate topic of their choosing (in the context of mindfulness). Once all desired contributions had been made, the coordinator ended the session and stopped the recording. The recording was subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

6.3.3 Triangulation

A key feature of the mixed-methods approach undertaken in the study is the use of varied data collection methods to provide for greater triangulation. For each of the research questions in the study there were at least two data collection sources within the parallel phase design. Overall, there were eight different data sources used. Along with providing diverse perspectives on the research questions, this use of different methods "compensates for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits" (Shenton, 2004, p65). Further, the study also had the strength of collecting data from a variety of informants (the teacher, previous completers and previous non-completers of the course) and used a range of documents as source material. These provisions for triangulation are included to strengthen the findings and increase the rigour of the study.

6.4 Data analysis methods

6.4.1 The Quantitative Phases

The quantitative data provided by the FFMQ, course evaluations and learner surveys were analysed statistically using version 22 of the SPSS software package (IBM Corp., 2017). Paired-samples t-test were employed to test for significant differences in pre- and post-course scores. This was calculated for the total FFMQ score across all of the five facets and for each individual facet, in line with previous research that has used this instrument (e.g. Hindman et al., 2015; Ramler et al., 2016). For the course evaluation data, course documentation and learner survey, descriptive statistics were produced. These quantitative methods were employed to allow for experiences to be analysed and for patterns of events to be illuminated. Both descriptive and inferential statistics seek to present norms that represent the entire data set. As such, they align with the process of retroduction in moving from individual experiences to normative patterns of events.

In analysing the FFMQ pre- and post-course scores, the study employed an adapted method for improving the precision of the instrument produced by Medvedev et al. (2016). Although a high internal reliability score of $\alpha = 0.89$ was found for the 39-item scale (suggesting that each item was consistent in its measurement as related to the other items), Medvedev and colleagues applied a Rasch Analysis (Siegert et al., 2010) to each of the 5 sub-scales to produce minor modifications that improved its psychometric properties. Two modifications were found to be central to the improvement of the measure but only one could be adopted fully here, with the other having to be slightly adapted.

From the Rash analysis, it is suggested that two of the items in the scale be removed, being item 24 ("When I have distressing thoughts or images, I feel calm soon after") and item 32 ("My tendency is to put my experiences into words"). Unfortunately, these items could not be removed from the analysis of the pre- and post-scores for the course being. This was because much of the data was produced before the improvement

methods had been published and there was no way to omit the individual items from the data collected, as the data collected was in the form of scores for each sub-scale not each individual item. To account for this the second improvement suggested was adopted but based upon an adapted version of the above.

The second improvement involved converting the raw scores of each item from an ordinal level measure to an interval level measure. This process improves the psychometric properties of the instrument and allows for parametric statistical analysis. However, it must be noted that there is much debate regarding the analysis of data derived from Likert Scale responses (Joshi et al., 2015). The use of parametric statistical analysis for the standard FFMQ is common in the field but Medvedev et al's (2016) improvements give such analysis a stronger theoretical and statistical grounding.

To achieve the conversion from ordinal to interval level data, Medvedev et al. (2016) provide conversion tables for each sub-scale of a modified 37-item FFMQ, which were applied to the data collected for this study. To produce equivalent data for the conversions, however, the scores for the sub-scales in which the two suggested omitted items reside ('Describe' and 'Non-Judge') needed to be adjusted to represent scores from 7 items and 6 items respectively (rather than the original 8 and 7 items). To accomplish this, mean scores were calculated for each of the two sub-scales and subtracted from the overall sub-scale score.

From this adapted data set, the conversion tables were applied to produce the final data set, in which the level of data had been improved from ordinal to interval. It is this process, according to Medvedev et al. (2016), that improves the precision of the scale. Whilst this is the case, it must be noted that the adapted technique used in this study does deviate from that produced under statistical scrutiny by Medvedev and his colleagues. As such, although the adaptations are logical, the rigour of the results from the analysis of them are less valid than if the improvements could have been implemented fully.

6.4.2 The Qualitative Phases

For the qualitative data from course evaluations, learner surveys, the teacher reflective account, the learner reflective account and learner interviews, I chose Thematic Analysis as the preferred method for analysis. This method of analysis was either performed manually or using version 11.4.3 of the NVivo software (NVIVO, 2017). As with the quantitative methods, this method was employed as it allowed for experiences to be analysed and for patterns of events to be illuminated. In seeking themes from the data, this method of analysis inherently travels along the process of retroduction of the critical realist analytical framework of the study (see figure 4.1).

Thematic analysis has been described as "a foundational method for qualitative analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p4). It has been employed here due to its ability to identify, analyse, report (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and interpret (Boyatzis, 1998) various aspects of the emerging data. To further validate the use of thematic analysis in this study, it can be noted that many other studies concerning pedagogy have also used it as their primary data analysis method (e.g. Davies et al., 2014; Casey, 2013; Tillapaugh and Haber-Curran, 2013).

As a method that could transcend ontological and epistemological approaches, thematic analysis also aligned with the critical realist stance of the study. It is considered a method that can "provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p5). Whilst it is grounded in the identification of themes, there can also be a strong interpretive focus (Boyatzis, 1998). Having theoretical freedom and flexibility, it can be used to illuminate perceptions of reality and the underlying mechanisms that produce the perceptions. Thus, it allows the critical realist technique of retroduction to be applied and the nature of reality to be further elucidated.

One of the key purposes of this research was to navigate through the various dichotomies and paradigms to provide detailed and multi-perspective answers to the research questions. This involved me leaning into different paradigms and methods

when appropriate. This approach was also inherent in the thematic analysis component of the data analysis. Through the process of retroduction, there was a journeying from a realist-semantic perspective (where a linear relationship between experience, meaning and language was assumed) to a constructionist-latent perspective (where the underlying structures that produced the experience, meaning and language were scrutinised). Further, there was also a journeying from narrow, theoretical thematic analysis (e.g. being based upon the 13 pedagogic properties) to a wider, inductive analysis of emergent and holistic themes.

Although there no standardised process of conducting thematic analysis existed (Patton, 1990), I decided to adopt the method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) here as it provides a detailed account of the major steps included and has an associated 'checklist of criteria for good practice'.   There are six steps or phases to the model, but it is accepted that the process is more recursive than linear and that it develops over time (Ely et al., 1997). The six steps can be seen in table 6.5.

Table 6.5
The thematic analysis process model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and adopted in this study.

Step or phase	Description
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Data should be transcribed (if necessary), read and re-read whist noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	The coding should be performed in a systematic manner, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Codes should be collated into potential themes and supporting data gathered
4. Reviewing themes	Themes should be reviewed in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2)
5. Defining and naming themes	Clear names and definitions of the themes should be generated
6. Producing the report	Extracts should be selected and presented that give compelling demonstrations, explanations and justifications of the themes and wider analysis

In terms of the identification of themes, for some large data sets (such as the learner reflective accounts), I relied on prevalence as the driving factor. However, in the smaller

data sets (such as the teacher reflective account, survey comments and course evaluation form comments) I used keyness or salience as the driver of theme identification. However, following the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006), the identification of themes was approached with a large degree of flexibility and both prevalence and keyness played a role both within data sets and across them.

Data from the learner interviews and focus group was transcribed verbatim for analysis. To achieve this, I used a generic transcription protocol.

6.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter the parallel phase mixed methods design of the study has been articulated and framed the presentation of the specific data collection and analysis methods employed for the various data sources and types. The adapted version of Kirkpatrick's (1996) method for the evaluation of academic courses was also presented and discussed. Details concerning the participants of the study and the various procedures employed with different participant groups were also provided.

Data for the study was collected and analysed according to the details provide here. The following chapter presents the themes that emerged from the data following its subjection to the initial stages of the analytical process of retroduction.

|Chapter 7: Results

"Treading the path"

Using the analytical framework of critical realism (see figure 4.1), I consider the data collected from the various sources to represent experiences and features of the course being studied from which patterns of events or 'demi-regularities' can be identified (Fletcher, 2017). Using this framework and approach, this chapter illuminates transitive elements of the empirical and actual domains through the initial stages of the process of retroduction (Bhaskar, 2008). For this I accept that the experiences collected were influenced by the flawed perceptual processes (Healy and Chad, 2000; Stake, 1995) of both myself and the other participants. Further, I accept that the objects of study existed in open systems in which interactions and change created a level of impermanence (Brown, Fleetwood and Roberts, 2002). However, the identification of the patterns of events or demi-regularities from individual experiences is designed to begin the process of moving the objects of study from subjective, internal and individual experiences and towards more objective, external and shared phenomena (Bhaskar, 2008). It is here that triangulation from the various sources of data is to be used to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. This process begins in this chapter and continues into the next, where the tendencies and generative mechanisms of the course being studied will be deduced and discussed to complete the retroduction process.

The patterns of events discussed here emerged from the analysis of the data from the individual sources as outlined in the previous chapter. To aid presentation <u>patterns of events</u> will appear underlined, 'themes' in single quotation marks (with sub-themes in brackets) and individual experiences in "separate quotations".

7.1 Growth and benefits

From the analysis of data primarily from the FFMQ, the learner reflective accounts and the focus group there was clear evidence that <u>learners of the course experienced significant growth in mindfulness as a distinct construct</u>, <u>developed greater awareness</u> and <u>experienced a range of associated benefits.</u>

7.1.1 Growth in mindfulness as distinct construct

The FFMQ pre- and post-course scores were included in the study as a measure of the outcome effectiveness of the course in relation to growth in mindfulness as a distinct construct. For this source, I analysed data from seventy-four previous learners of the course being studied (16 male, 58 female). Based upon a visual inspection of the histograms of the data (figure 7.1), I considered that the distributions for both the pre- and post-measure could be considered normal. Using the information provided by the standard deviation scores for each measure (see below for scores) and the scores for skewness (pre = -.495, post = -.503) and kurtosis (pre = 1.308, post = 2.479), I concluded that this indeed was the case.

Figure 7.1
Frequency distributions for the pre-course and post-course FFMQ scores.
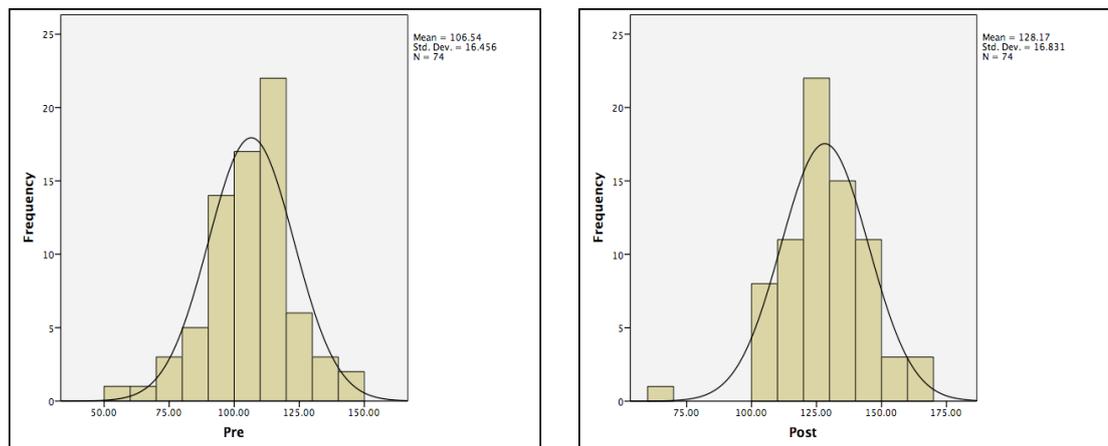
Upon inspection, I realised that the outlier in the post-course distribution represented a participant that scored equally in both measures. As this represents a valid measure (in that a difference of zero between measures signifies no growth) the score was not removed. Overall, participants scored higher in the post-course measure (*M*=128.17, *SD* = 16.83) compared to the pre-course measure (*M*=106.54, *SD* = 16.46), as shown in figure 7.2. At the beginning of the course the average rating scale score (out of 5) was 2.73. At week 8 of the course, when the learners completed the FFMQ again for the post-course score, the average rating scale score was 3.29. Therefore, there was an

average rating scale increase of .56 and an average total score increase of 21.63 from the pre- to post-course measures.

Figure 7.2
Mean overall pre-course and post-course FFMQ scores.
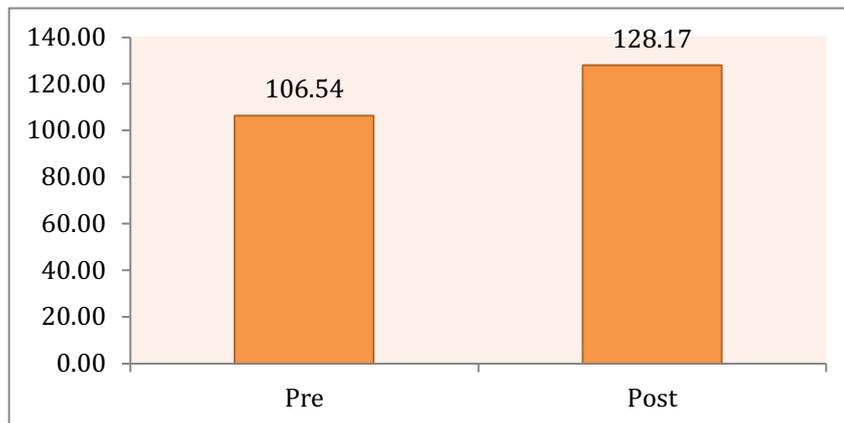
With the employment of the adapted method for improving the precision of the FFMQ devised by Medvedev et al. (2016), the data was transformed into interval level data. With this, the near equal variances (pre = 270.79, post = 283.30) and the normal distributions of the pre- and post-measure data sets, I concluded that the parametric assumptions had been met. As such, I proceeded to analyse the data using inferential methods. For this, a paired samples t-test indicated that the post-course scores were significantly higher than the pre-course scores, $t(73) = -12.52$, $p < .001$.

Due to the multi-faceted nature of the FFMQ, I decided to perform further analysis for each of the five sub-scales that it consists of. A comparison of the mean scores for the pre-course and post-course measures (figure 7.3) showed higher post-course scores for each of the facets. The greatest increase was seen for the Observe facet (+4.68), followed by the NonJudge facet (+4.55), the Act with awareness facet (+4.4), the Describe facet (+4.12) and the NonReact facet (+3.89). Results of the paired samples t-tests produced significant results for each of these differences (table 7.1).

From the statistical analysis I concluded that the learners of the course experienced significant growth in mindfulness as a distinct construct. This was evident for the overall

pre- and post-course FFMQ scores and for each individual facet of mindfulness that it measures.

Figure 7.3
Mean pre- and post-course scores for the five sub-scales representing different facets of mindfulness.
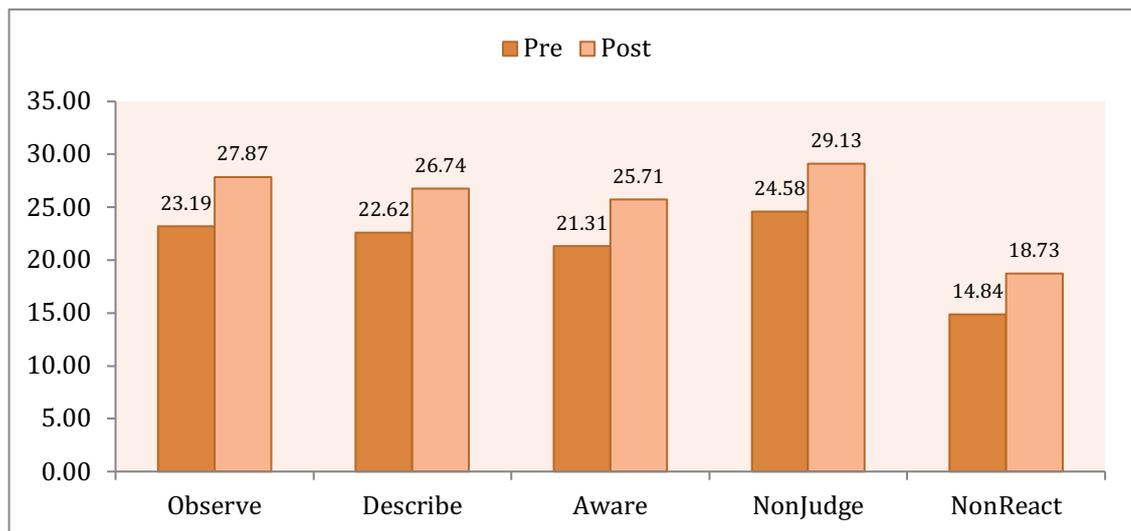
Table 7.1
Paired Sample t-test results for the five sub-scales of the FFMQ.

Sub-scale	M (Pre)	SD (Pre)	M (Post)	SD (Post)	t(73)	P (<)
Observe	23.19	5.22	27.87	4.97	-8.39	.001
Describe	22.62	6.20	26.74	5.78	-6.41	.001
Aware	21.31	6.57	25.71	6.98	-6.11	.001
NonJudge	24.58	5.81	29.13	5.86	-7.26	.001
NonReact	14.84	4.52	18.73	4.59	-7.10	.001

7.1.2 Growth in awareness

Identified themes from the qualitative analysis of the learner reflective accounts supported the emergence of this pattern and provided additional illuminations. The most prevalent and salient theme from this source of data was 'Greater awareness (of Self)'. Examples included:

"Despite the difficulties I encountered, this was my first true experience and understanding of the concept of being totally in the present moment and discovered that my hassles do not have to become overwhelming and although I can't remove them, I can replace them with positive emotions and control how I react to them." (Jenny)

"I would certainly agree with this and am definitely finding that by focussing on other body parts and sensations, my mind and the anxious thoughts that I have are slowly starting to feel like they are being left behind." (Tony)

"Through mindfulness I now realise I was actually repressing unwanted thoughts rather than actually letting them go." (Nina)

The latter example above also demonstrated an increasing awareness of the mindfulness approach and philosophy. In the sub-theme 'Greater awareness (of the mindfulness approach)' comments mentioned the general philosophy of mindfulness, such as:

"I see mindfulness as a practice which relates to this strand of the change process, whereby the person can stand back from their habitual deadlock of unexamined, negative thinking and tune into a reflective space. Enabling this kind of detachment can bring the person into a new space to, review what they habitually do." (Neil)

"However, reflecting on this after 8 weeks of classes and having a more holistic view of mindfulness I believe that the last 2 areas of the FFMQ, the non-judging and non-reactivity to be the key principles because they are the aspects which even experienced meditators I have met would say are the ones that require most time to understand within ourselves." (Sian)

Other comments also mentioned a specific increase in awareness in relation to the theory and science of mindfulness, an important component of the AO-MBP. Such comments were coded as 'Greater awareness (of theory and science)' and included:

"These two sessions have also look more detail at the science and the effect on the body which I have really enjoyed doing. I have found that my extra reading has really complemented what we have been doing in class. I have been doing some reading on the anxiety pathways (figure 1) in the brain and amygdala." (Samantha)

"A second key area of learning for me in this course was the discovery that mindfulness could actually have a direct and beneficial impact on neurological function, something I had not realised so strongly before (Williams and Penman, 2011)." (Taresa)

Interestingly, I found that eleven comments in the reflective accounts referred to an increasing awareness of the challenge of mindfulness and were coded as 'Greater awareness (of the challenge of mindfulness)'. Some of these comments concerned internal challenges, such as our own expectations and habitual responses:

"I believe that the biggest obstacle to being mindful are our expectations – getting caught up in what we expect as outcomes, what we expect of people, what we expect of ourselves, what we expect people think of us, how we expect people to react to us, what we imagine we expect to project. Expectation is, I believe, what disturbs "our peace" and inhibits our ability of being mindful and at one with our "true self." (Briony)

"I still find this difficult as I do recognise when I am becoming stressed but I feel that I cannot halt the process." (Daniel)

A salient comment concerned the worry about not being able to incorporate mindfulness outside of the classroom, something that learners often expressed during the course:

"The main barrier that I am worried about halting my progress is my inability to incorporate meditation into my daily routine thus far … Despite the huge benefits I feel from the practices we do together on a Tuesday evening." (Gail)

Another salient finding was themed 'Greater awareness (of others)'. Examples of this sub-theme include:

"In week 6 we were introduced to transpersonal psychology, a few of the specific barriers which was mentioned included 'fear of what others think' and 'frustration of other people's level of development'. I am definitely experiencing these with a few people, however have learnt through being non-judgemental that of people are not currently travelling on a similar path to me, then they probably won't fully understand the benefits. It is important to remember that I would have probably also felt like this several months ago." (Julie)

"Although as a westerner it can be frustrating to live and work amongst people who automatically operate in a different way, it is fascinating to witness how they respond to situations and learn that there are other ways of being and doing." (Angela)

From the analysis of the data from the focus group I found that one of the main emergent topics that was discussed repeatedly was the response to mindfulness by other people. The group reported that others had often thoughts that mindfulness was "culty" (Mary) or "hippyish" (Ellie). They discussed how they now had a 'greater awareness of the misconceptions of mindfulness', giving the following experiences in a light-hearted manner.

"A lady in my office said it does sound nice but I don't like incense so I can't go" (Ellie)

"A lady in my office said that her brother brought her some Tarot cards because he knew she was into mindfulness" (Mary)

The discussion moved on to consider how these misconceptions may lead people to doubt the effectiveness of mindfulness. All members of the group expressed a desire to introduce mindfulness to other people. Three of group reported that they had actively attempted this to varying degrees of success. Mary offer salient comments here by stating that:

"If it helped you you know it works so I think … it's hard not to share that with other people you just want them to benefit from it"

"A lot of it is down to you have to be ready yourself I think"

7.1.3 Experience of associated benefits

Another prevalent and salient theme that I discovered in the learner reflective account was coded as 'Benefits of mindfulness'. This theme referred to comments in which the learner discussed the ways in which mindfulness had had a positive impact for them. The comments often mention changes in the activities and responses of the mind itself, for example:

"This course has made me see that it is possible to change, and there are huge benefits to gain from not listening to that voice and understand it is only saying that because it is afraid." (Annabelle)

"I am finding that the past dwelling and 'what if' thoughts are starting to reduce in my mind throughout each day." (Jenny)

"I've got to a stage where I can say it does make a difference. At times when my mind tends to wander, I take a pause and meditate. Not only is there a sense of composure to be achieved but also I do feel more clear headed." (Zara)

"I have begun to really enjoy doing my mindfulness exercises. I have really noticed a benefit in how I react to things." (Ed)

Interestingly, two learners wrote about the results of other measurements taken during the course. Extract 1 below shows improvements in weight loss and blood pressure during the course for Tony. Kathy reported benefits according to two other measurements also:

"During this course, I tried to score myself several times on a GAD7 questionnaire (this scale is used by Birmingham Healthy Minds) and I found my score dropped from 10 to 3 points, while my IAPTY Social Phobia scale dropped from 5 to 1 point. These are two small

examples of very good reductions over the ten week period and I will try to maintain the progress in this area by engaging in regular practice."

Extract 1:
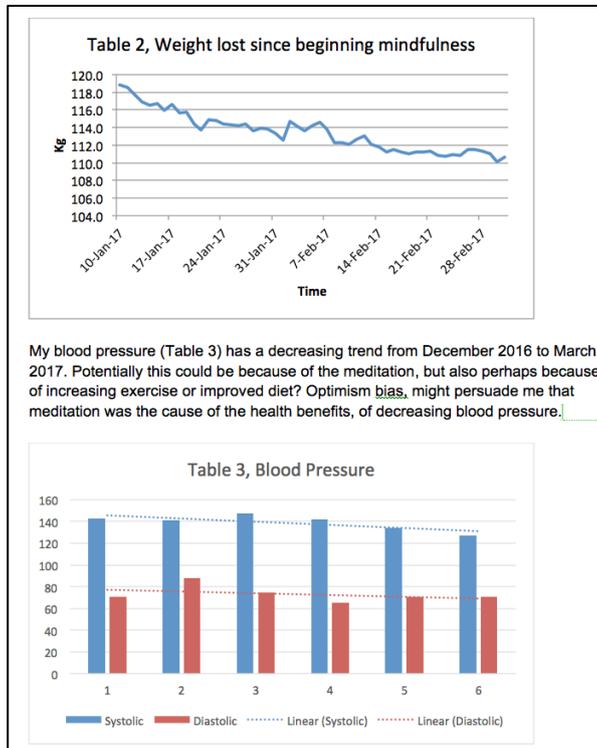
The theme of 'Positive applications to everyday life' that was also prevalent in the learner reflective accounts made specific references to everyday situations in which the learner applied the philosophy and/or techniques of mindfulness and reported a positive change in their experience. Examples include:

"I have since used the technique to tackle household tasks I dislike, and felt much calmer as a result." (Carol)

"I think it has been very useful to instead be mindful in-between sessions and paying attention to my surroundings. I think it actually made me more refreshed and energised." (Zara)

Not all attempts at applying the practices to everyday situations that were reported were successful, however. I discovered several comments that referred to a moment where the learner was aware of the need to apply the techniques learned but couldn't bring about a positive change in experience, for example:

"Now was the time to employ my new mindfulness techniques, try controlled breathing; I couldn't. My first real test and I couldn't interrupt the stress response." (Max)

On several occasions, however, learners commented on an increased motivation to perform mindfulness practices because of the perceived benefits that emerged in everyday life. This is evident in the comments by Ed and Samantha respectively:

"I have continued mindful practices with more spontaneous mindful moments emerging. Moreover, changes to long term habits are becoming evident. I have undertaken five guided mindful meditations this week including one early morning session mostly because of the noticeable changes they are bringing to daily life."

"At the start of the course I believed that this journey was all about learning to meditate but I have actually enjoyed the process of learning to live mindfully."

7.2 Effectiveness, satisfaction, balance and impact

From the full range of data sources, a number of patterns of events emerged that concerned the course in terms of satisfaction, effectiveness and impact. These were that <u>learners were highly satisfied with the course</u>, <u>the course was effectively organised and taught</u>, <u>learners valued the sharing of experiences with other learners</u>, <u>the course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of being an AO-MBP</u>, <u>the course had a longitudinal impact on the learners</u>, <u>learners were appreciative of the course</u> and that <u>learners desired to continue their practise and study of mindfulness</u>.

7.2.1 Course effectiveness and satisfaction

Primarily emerging from the analysis of the data from the course evaluation form and the learner survey, there was clear evidence that the <u>learners were highly satisfied with the course</u>, <u>the course was effectively organised and taught</u> and that <u>learners valued the sharing of experiences with other learners</u>.

The course evaluation form was a significant source of data for this study as they were completed in the final session of the course (week 10). As such, they provided me with learner feedback from a moment in time when the course was fresh in the minds of the learners. From the quantitative analysis of these evaluation forms (n = 70), the course scored extremely highly for eight of the nine items and fairly-highly for the other (figure 7.4). This provided a source of evidence for the course being very effective as an academic-oriented mindfulness course. The evaluation form focussed upon the academic level, content, teaching methods, learning activities, materials, assessment and marketing aspects. Although still rated fairly-highly, the accommodation for the course did receive the lowest rating. The overall satisfaction rating for the course was also extremely high at 4.76.

From the qualitative analysis of the course evaluation form the theme of 'Course effectiveness' emerged. This contained 25 comments. All of these comments were positive statements. Comments given by the learners here include:

"I have found this course helpful, informative, enriching, a wonderful start to my mindfulness journey." (Joel)

"I thought the course was excellent." (Tasmin)

Interestingly, some of the learners also referred to the effectiveness of the course as a mindfulness intervention. A selection of such comments included:

"This has helped me out considerably in terms of gaining positive mental health." (Derek)

"This course has helped me in my personal life/issues." (Annabelle)

Figure 7.4

Learner ratings (out of 5) for the nine course evaluation form items. Higher scores represent more positive responses. Item questions are provided underneath as a key.

Item	Question
1	How well did the content of the certificate match the publicity?
2	How well did the academic level of the certificate meet your expectations?
3	To what extent were you encouraged to participate in discussion and other class activity?
4	How appropriate for the subject were the teaching methods which were adopted?
5	How well had the tutor prepared the subject-matter for the certificate?
6	How satisfied were you with material which was made available to you (e.g. handouts)?
7	How well were assessment tasks explained?
8	How satisfied were you with the accommodation for the certificate?
9	Overall, how satisfied were you with the certificate?

The uniqueness of the course as an academic-oriented course was also referenced in one comment.

"This is a unique course on Mindfulness combining both the practise and academic aspects – I have been unable to find any other course like this." (Daisy)

A consideration of the themes 'Structure and content of course' and 'Structure and activities of sessions' also provided me with evidence of the effectiveness of the course. Learner comments from these theme included:

"A really enjoyable course with a good balance between theory and practice and lots of interesting resources available." (Neil)

"Dean provided an excellent balance of the background of science and research as well the very practical nature of the subject area." (Teresa)

"The course was exceptionally well planned and delivered. Dean is knowledgeable and engaging. A fascinating experience." (Daniel)

"Dean's organisation of the course was stimulating and thought-provoking. The balance between theory and practice is excellent and there is very interesting academic input. I would strongly recommend - this was my first course and I was impressed with the organisation and course design." (Lucy)

The analysis of data from the learner survey supported the findings from the course evaluation form and provided further illuminations. In response to the question "Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience of the course?", 71% of participant gave the highest rating of 5, 28% gave a rating of 4 and 1% gave a rating of 1. The mean score for the overall satisfaction of the course from the learner survey was 4.7 and I noted that this correlated almost exactly with the average satisfaction rating from the course evaluation form. As the learner survey was completed after the learner had completed the course (and for some 3 years after), I perceived this satisfaction rating as evidence of the reliability of the measure. It also demonstrated the longitudinal impact of the course.

I was also interested in the opinions of the learners regarding the length of the course being studied. In response to the question "What are your thoughts on the length of the course (10 weeks)?", most responses indicated that the length of the course was "Just right" (figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5

Data from the learner survey indicating views regarding the length of the course.
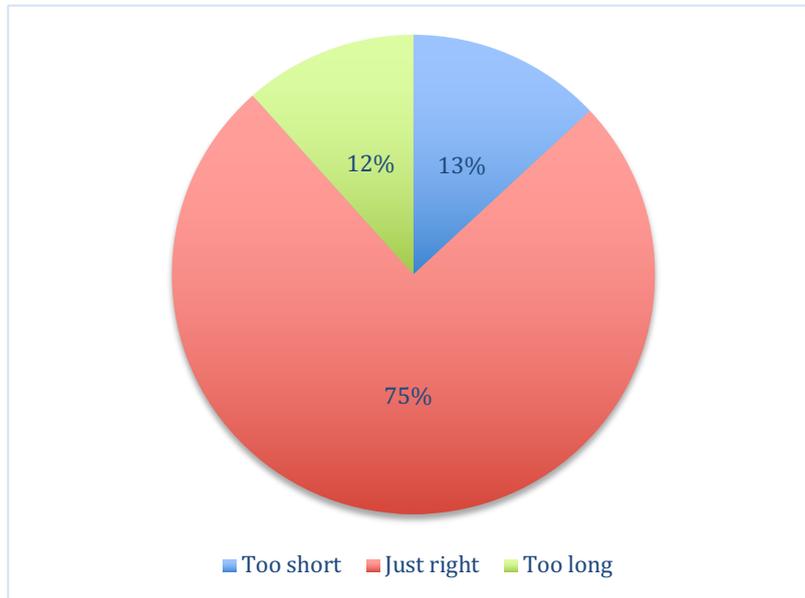
The thirteen pedagogic properties that I chose for study were explicitly measured in the learner survey both in terms of the participant's reflection of them and in terms of their opinion as to how important the property was for mindfulness courses generally. In terms of reflection, all properties received a score that was above half (2.5/5), with many of receiving high ratings (above 4) or just below (figure 7.6). Most properties were rated similar for both reflection and for their importance in mindfulness courses generally, with some reflection scores being slightly higher and others slightly lower in comparison. The lowest property for both related to assessment component of the course.

Qualitative analysis of the leaner survey comments also supported the effectiveness of the course. The balance between theory and practice was again mentioned on several occasions and included:

> *"A good balance between theory and practice within the class. The provision of the theory and science behind mindfulness aiding understanding and motivated to do the actual*

practice. The class provided a good environment and the dedicated time to practice, both of which I struggle to find in daily life." (Kiran)

"An excellent introduction to the topic, pitched at a good level for those with little or no previous experience" (Jenny)

Figure 7.6
Ratings (out of 5) for the 13 pedagogic properties in terms of learner reflections and perceptions of importance for a mindfulness course. Higher scores represent more positive responses. Item questions are provided underneath as a key.
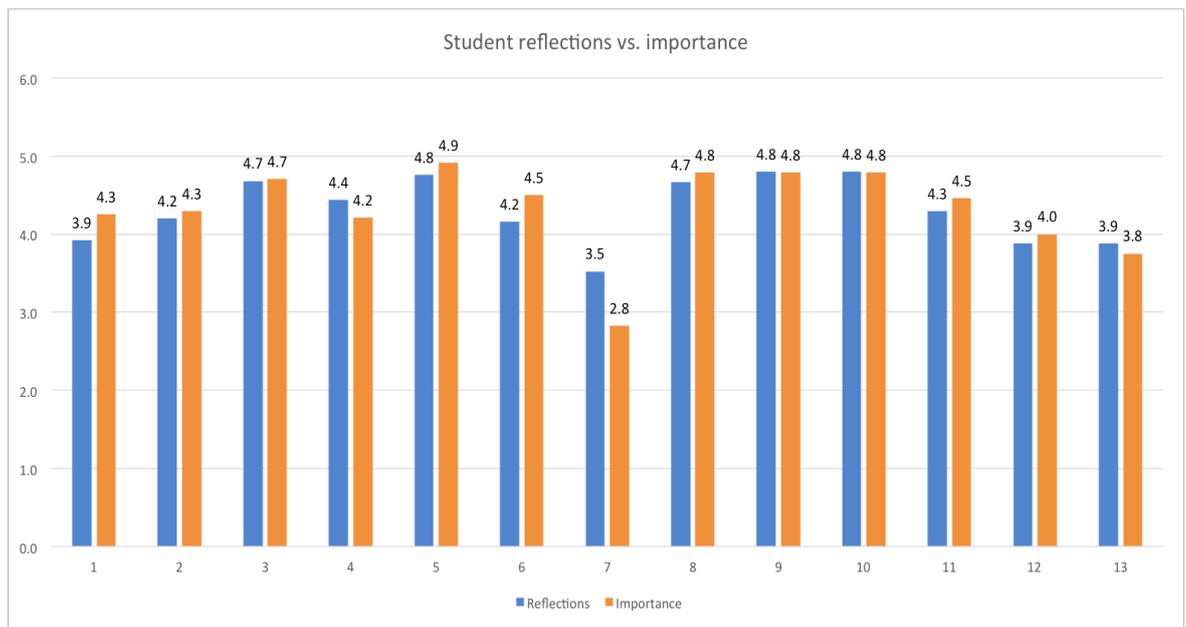
Item	Pedagogic Property
1	The sharing of experiences
2	Opportunities for self-directed learning
3	Opportunities for learner participation
4	The teaching of mindfulness-related theory
5	The teaching of mindfulness practices
6	The promotion of personal confidence and control
7	Assessment
8	Sensitive teacher responses to learner contributions
9	Teacher acceptance and non-judgment
10	Teacher commitment to the mindfulness journey
11	The exploration of changes to behaviour
12	The exploration of morals and ethics
13	The exploration of spirituality

Positive reflection regarding my skill as a teacher were most common in the third most prevalent theme. These were mainly generic comments, such as:

"Dean is a really engaging, interesting and friendly teacher. It was a pleasure attending those sessions with him" (Patricia)

"Dean was fantastic. Very enthusiastic and a great teacher." (Neil)

Some of these often included with comments regarding the sharing of learner experiences on the course. Examples of both include:

"It takes a rare teacher to build us into a group willing to share some very personal reflections in such a short space of time." (Tim)

"I gradually became more confident in the group as the course went on and more able to contribute." (Hannah)

"I found the group very open to talking about what could be a personal subject. There was plenty of scope for discussion and people were able to share their experiences. Most people seemed very invested in the entire process". (Joel)

There was also a comment here that I found particularly salient. Nieve mentioned the opportunities to share experiences but also indicated that she was pleased that there wasn't any pressure to do this. Interestingly, the importance of this approach was supported by Sam's comment from the focus group too.

"There was plenty of opportunity in each session to practise mindfulness meditation; plenty of opportunities to ask questions or ask for clarification or share experiences. There was (thankfully!) no pressure to share. It felt like a very safe environment." (Nieve)

"I like our group because sometimes people will say a lot and others wont say a word and that's okay sort of thing … it's not expected to give a lot of information or anything really

you can do what you like and I that's a really nice part of it and a really important part of it as no-one really feels like they have to contribute or have to share anything." (Sam)

Findings from the learner reflective accounts also included evidence to support the conclusion that learners valued the sharing of experiences. Eleven comments in the theme 'Sharing of learner experiences' referred to the learners sharing their experiences in small-group or whole-group class discussions. Some of these comments were reflections of specific discussions, others were final reflections looking back upon the group dynamic and still others mention the growing confidence that they (the learner) felt regarding sharing in the group setting. These are evident in the comments made by Hannah, Sian and Francis respectively:

"I discussed it with the group in my next class, they were very supportive and congratulated me on recognising that I was entering a stress situation."

"The people I have met in class have been great, as a group we are all coming from different walks of life but at this moment in time we have decided to take the first steps to understanding ourselves better and it's been a real pleasure to be on this journey with them."

"At the same time, I gradually developed my ability to share more with others in the group, and to feel less detached and depersonalised, which is something I can feel in group situations."

Interestingly, findings from the learner interviews also supported the effectiveness of the course even though the participants here did not begin or complete it. From the theme 'positive reflections' Priti commented upon the mixture of teaching and experience as a positive of the course.

"I remember it seemed to be very well organised consecutive and the the yeah there was a mixture of teaching and experience in each session ... I just seem to remember it all hang hung really well."

Priti's comments here carried extra weight as she mentioned that she had engaged in many adult learning courses and experienced a range of teaching styles and approaches. Concerning the course studied here she claimed:

> *"I couldn't really fault Dean on that erm I think he did it very well having obviously done quiet a few courses in the past myself ... and experienced other tuition different forms I just felt it was all felt very appropriate."*

7.2.2 Balance

Many of the findings in the previous sub-section suggested that <u>the course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of being an AO-MBP</u>. The key components to balance here were the theoretical and practical aspects, the MBSR and additional aspects and the learner-led and teacher-led aspects.

In the analysis of the course session plans (n = 10) and session presentation files (n = 10), I found themes that demonstrated the multi-faceted nature of the course. These included activities designed to facilitate learner participation, the sharing of learner experiences and self-directed learning but also more teacher-led, didactic or 'Homiletic' content and guided mindfulness practices. Key aspects of the pedagogy of mindfulness (e.g. van Aalderen et al, 2012; Crane et al., 2015) and the MBSR curriculum model (Sanorelli et al., 2017; 2014) were clearly at the heart of the course.

Further, the analysis also revealed that some themes were present to differing degrees in either the session plans or the presentation files. Particularly salient examples of these are 'Sharing of learner experiences', 'Standard formal practice' and 'Homiletics 2 - Practice information', which featured more in the session plans than in the presentation files. In contrast, 'Homiletics 1 - Theory information' and 'Self-directed learning' featured more in the presentation files. Other salient themes such as 'Signposting', 'Uniqueness of journey', 'Exploration of changes in behaviour' and 'Learner empowerment' featured exclusively in the presentation files.

In terms of the academic-orientation of the course, the learner reflective accounts also represented the formal assessment of the learning outcomes. As such, they were graded according to the university marking criteria and awarded a mark out of 100. According to this criteria a score of 74 or above represented the grade of 1st class at FHEQ level 4. Scores between 62 and 68 represented the grade of upper second class, 52 to 58 the grade of lower second class, 42 to 48 third class and a score of 38 or below represented a failed attempt.

In the sample of reflective accounts analysed the spread of scores were at the higher range (see figure 7.7). From the individual scores (see figure 7.8) it emerged that that average score was 73. The high grades achieved may represent the high level of qualifications and/or academic ability of the learners.

Figure 7.7
A histogram of the grades awarded for the sample of learner reflective accounts.
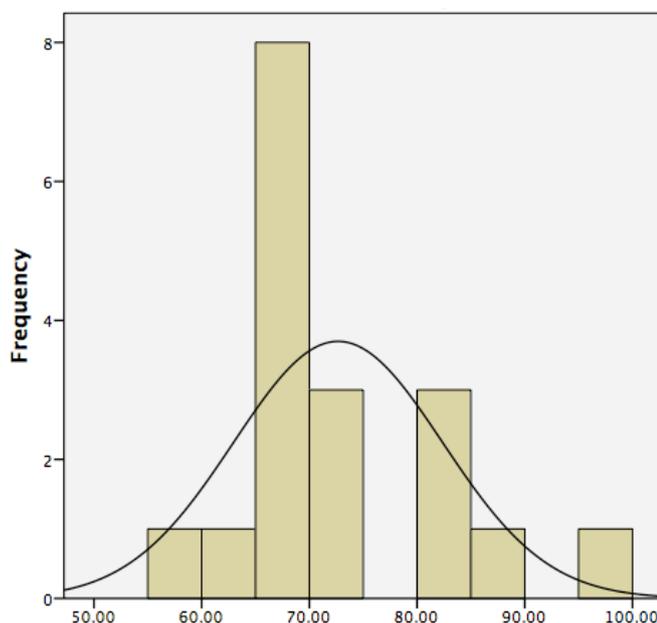
The analysis of the tutor feedback comments on both the assessment scripts and the assignment feedback form also supported the finding that there was effective balance. Using the model of feedback proposed by Evans (2013) I inferred that the feedback comments given on the assignment scripts were more constructivist in nature. They

were more dialogic, active and continued the facilitation of the learning process. Examples include:

> "Good – your deep engagement seems to be allowing you to tailor your use of mindfulness – this is often when people get the most benefits from it."

> "I would like to hear your reflection upon breathing and the strategies and experiences of it."

Figure 7.8
A bar chart of the individual scores for the sample of 18 learner reflective accounts.
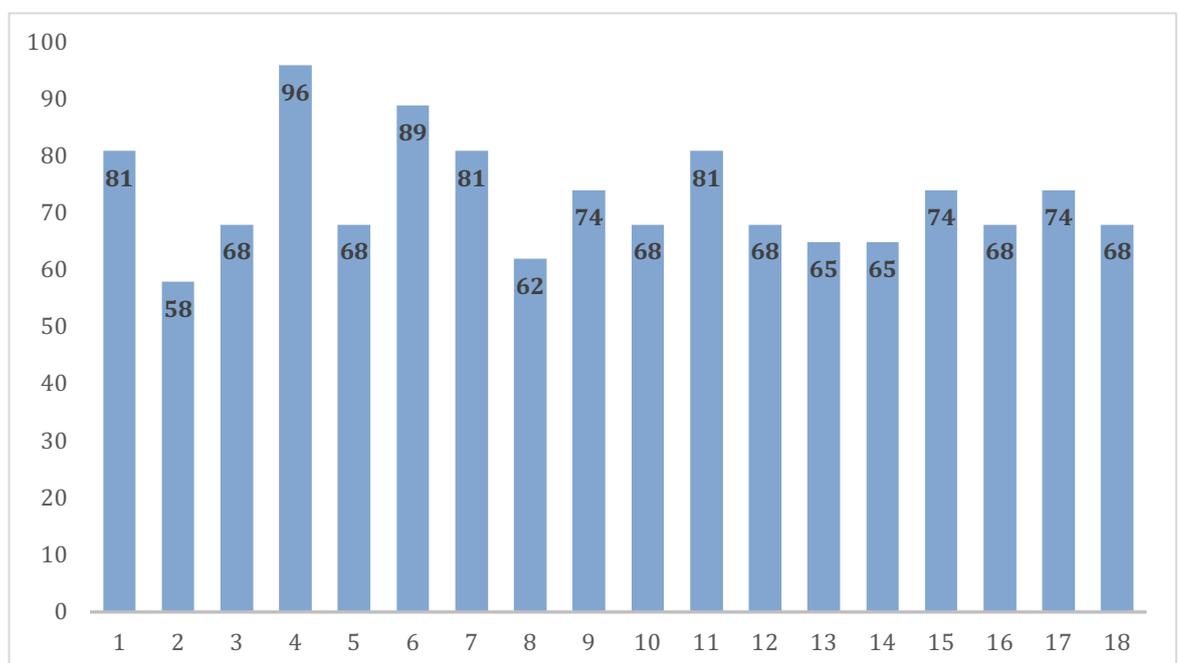
My comments also often concerned the continuing and unique journeying of mindfulness and were also coded as such in the 'Link to personal journey' theme, for example:

> "Good – your willingness to try different practices will help you to find those that sit best with you."

The 'Tutor question' theme contained specific questions that also attempted to encourage continued engagement and growth in the learner. In these, I sometimes referred to the academic skills under assessment but more often referred to the students' personal experience of mindfulness. Examples of each of these include:

"What opportunities and barriers do you see for mindfulness in the sporting arena?"

"How did you find the process of bringing the mind back?"

"Good evaluation – how do you feel that your journey has gone in the areas covered by the FFMQ?"

The theme 'Link to marking scheme' contained comments that specifically referred to the academic skills, content and structure required by the assessment and that featured on the marking scheme employed. More often these were positive, but they were also constructive at times. Examples include:

"Good description of some of the main issues and debates within the field."

"Excellent analysis, application and evaluation."

"A good range of relevant sources used. There are a few errors and inconsistencies in the style though."

Regarding the comments themed as 'Link to content', these were often in relation to core components of the course and assessment, such as the practices, key theories and models, experiences outside of the formal sessions and the FFMQ pre- and post-course scores. Examples include:

"Good inclusion and it is useful to have a correlation between your views and the FFMQ results."

"Good use of this model to inform your reflections."

Often, comments coded as 'Suggested improvement' would also concern the content mentioned previously, such as:

"… could you also have referenced the FFMQ questionnaire mentioned?"

"Good inclusion. A graph would also have helped the reader to see the changes clearly."

In contrast to the script-based comments, the feedback on the assignment feedback forms were inferred to be more cognitive-based in that it made judgements against a pre-defined set of standards (the university marking criteria). To illustrate this structure and the themes coded from my comments, one feedback form used in the analysis is shown below (with the student's name redacted).

Extract 2:

The two areas in which the comments were analysed were "Best features" and "Suggestions for improvement or development". From this analysis, it is evident that my comments focussed more upon the academic quality of the script by relating to the marking scheme and assignment content most. Each feedback form contained similar comments in a similar order but used qualifying statements to differentiate and highlight the quality of the reflective account. For example, in terms of the quality of writing and presentation, comments ranged from "Good style of writing" to "Well written and presented" to "Very well written and presented".

7.2.3 Course impact

Key patterns emerged concerning the lasting impact of the course. These were that <u>the course had a longitudinal impact on the learners</u>, that the <u>learners were appreciative of the course</u> and that <u>learners desired to continue their practise and study of mindfulness</u>.

In terms of the longitudinal impact, the average course satisfaction rating found from the learner survey (4.7/5) suggest that there remained a positive perception of it even after a period of 3 years for some participants. In another demonstration 98% of participants reported that they continued to practise mindfulness to some degree following the course. Further, 43% reported practising for the empirically-supported recommendation of several times per week or more (see figure 7.9).

Also, from the learner survey there emerged the theme of 'Gratitude'. When given the opportunity to contribute any final comments, many learners expressed gratitude for the course. Examples include:

> *"The course met all my expectations and has given me valuable ideas and recordings to use in practise following on from the end of the course. I would absolutely recommend this course to anyone at the beginning of their 'mindful' journey." (Jenny)*

> *"Many thanks to the tutor for providing a really interesting, varied and informative course." (Samantha)*

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to take this course" (Nina)

"Dean is natural teacher and helps students feel comfortable when undertaking in session practice. He dedication and knowledge to mindfulness was a great inspiration." (Patricia)

Figure 7.9
Data from the learner survey showing responses to the question "How often have you practiced mindfulness since you attended the course?".
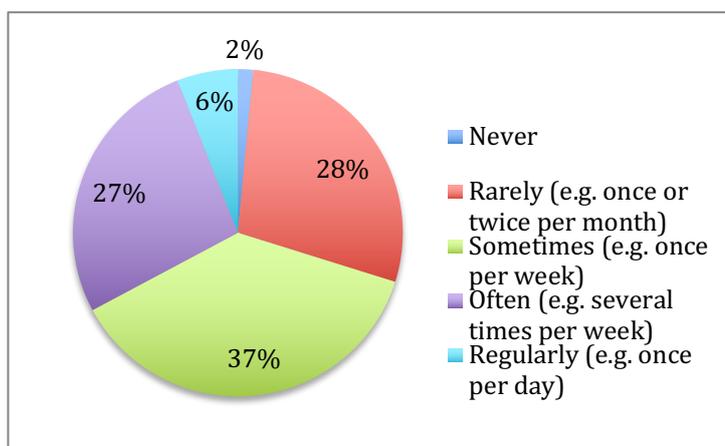
Further evidence to support the conclusion that the course had a positive impact upon learners was found in the theme of 'Desire to continue'. In the course evaluation form, I found nineteen comments in which learners explicitly expressed their desire to continue to learn about and practice mindfulness after their participation in the course. A sample of comments from this theme given by learners include:

"I have thoroughly enjoyed this programme and would love to do a follow on course on Mindfulness, if there were any available." (Zara)

"This is an excellent course and I would like to continue to pursue further studies related to Mindfulness. It would be very beneficial to have a follow-on course." (Teresa)

Fifteen occurrences of this theme also emerged from the learner survey, including:

"It is very important for me to continue on my mindfulness journey as I really can see the benefits in myself and find it really enjoyable." (Tim)

"I would like to learn more about mindfulness and will research what further training is available. I do not feel confident enough to practice mindfulness on my own at present and therefore plan to join a group where I can benefit from guided meditation until my confidence grows." (Judy)

"Long may this journey continue and I hope I have the strength and presence of mind to continue…" (Teresa)

The topic of continuing the mindfulness journey was also discussed by the focus group. Mary summed up the position of the group well in her statement that:

"Because you're not quite done either I think for the first that first time I know it's an 8-week course and it is to give you the tools to carry on but you know I think we all think of it as a start and end date … and if you get your certificate whatever and then it … I don't think you're quite ready to I wasn't anyway ready to take it into your everyday lives"

Concerning the follow-on course that I offer, Ellie commented that:

"When I finished the theory course I was so happy that there was something else I could come onto and practice it every week"

Mary asked the group if they felt that they got more benefit from practicing as a group rather than on their own and all other members responded that that they did. Sam wondered whether the group dynamic of "like-minded people" was influential in making the group sessions more powerful. Ellie noted that the sharing of experiences in the group format was a major source of positivity for her. She also commented that she would have liked a follow-on academic course to explore the theory of mindfulness more deeply. Interestingly, this was supported by all of the other members of the group.

The group also discussed their desire to experience a mindfulness retreat and Anika commented that she had engaged with a standard MBSR course in which there was a one-day silent retreat. The group seemed extremely interested in this possibility.

7.3 Reasons, expectations, pedagogy and preferences

Four key patterns of events emerged from the data that concern the learner's reasons for enrolment on the course, their expectations of the course and their experiences and preferences in terms of pedagogical properties. The patterns were that <u>learners enrolled on the course for a variety of reasons and with a variety of expectations</u>, <u>learners had divided opinions on the role of the exploration of the spiritual dimension in mindfulness</u>, <u>learners preferred a learner-led, self-directed and value-free approach to ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness</u> and that <u>learners preferred a constructivist-based pedagogical approach in the teaching of mindfulness</u>.

7.3.1 Reasons and expectations

One clear pattern that emerged from the data was that <u>learners enrolled on the course for a variety of reasons and with a variety of expectations</u>.

From the learner survey the most prevalent theme regarding this was 'Personal reasons'. This theme contained comments that referred to self-development and non-clinical reasons outside of the workplace. Examples of these include:

> *"I was interested in knowing more about mindfulness and in practicing it in my everyday life." (Neil)*

> *"Continuing professional development and self-development." (Rob)*

Interestingly, many comments referred to learning and the pursuit of knowledge as reasons for enrolling. This was often accompanied by comments referring to a desire to practice mindfulness, such as:

"I wanted to do some course based learning rather than just reading and practising to get a flavour for how mindfulness could help in my everyday personal and work life." (Kathy)

Often comments referenced both personal and work reasons for enrolling on the course, something I had noticed over the duration of teaching it. Some of these referred to the navigation of difficulties in both personal and work life, such as:

"An interest in mindfulness as a practice to help me manage my approach to life and work." (Kiran)

In recent iterations of the course I had noticed an increase in learners who had either recently retired or who were due to retire soon. From the sample who completed the survey, there was one comment that was related to retirement and the readjustment of this from the world of work. The comment was:

"To help adjust to retired life following a demanding career in Health Care." (Angela)

From the theme of 'Work reasons' itself, most comments concerned using mindfulness to help to navigate difficulties relating to work. Many comments also referenced the desire to use mindfulness as part of the participant's work, which is again something I had noticed from my experiences of the course. Examples of comments in this theme include:

"To explore mindfulness as a self development tool and to support my pursuit of becoming a counsellor." (Amelia)

"I am a Yoga Teacher and wanted to learn more about Mindfulness so that I could incorporate it into my classes." (Annalbelle)

Wellbeing reasons were also prevalent. These contained comments that mentioned specific difficulties, such as stress, anxiety or depression but did not specifically mention whether the participant suffered from these at clinical levels. Oftentimes, these also included references to wanting improvements in happiness, health, relaxation, worry and other wellbeing components. Examples include:

"I felt I needed to raise my awareness of how I was dragging myself down and missing the opportunity to be happier, more fulfilled and less fearful." (Lucy)

"to increase my ability to relax, to help my mind clear all the ' business' of thought, to bring a sense of reason to my tendency to over think and worry, to focus on the present and fully engage in daily activities, to stand back and moderate my emotions rather that constant reacting" (Michael)

Twelve comments were coded at the theme of 'Prior learning or experience reasons'. The comments here included references to a range of topics, courses and experiences that participants had had and thought that the course being studied could compliment.

"I wanted to explore Mindfulness more - I've done meditation and autogenic training before and had heard good things about Mindfulness." (Derek)

"I have had a long standing interest in mindfulness and meditation since learning TM 25 years ago but had been out of practice for many years and wanted to get back into it." (Nina)

In a result I found very interesting, less prevalent reasons included clinical reasons and the course being recommended by other people. In terms of recommendations, the comments were divided between family and colleagues as the source of the recommendation. Comments themed as 'Clinical reasons' made specific references to diagnosed or chronic difficulties. Examples include.

"A colleague of mine is a former student on the course and recommended it to me as a way to managing my chronic insomnia (which I have suffered with since my teens)." (Julie)

"I have a long term mood disorder which is not as major as bipolar but along these lines (cyclothymia) so I do regular CBT and mindfulness sessions to ensure that I am able to stay well." (Nieve)

Regarding expectations specifically, participants expected to learn about the theory of mindfulness, to practice mindfulness techniques and to experience the personal benefits of this practice. Nine participants made comments that suggest that they had no expectations upon beginning the course. Some specifically mentioned bringing calm to their lives and others to applying mindfulness to their everyday lives. These themes are evident in the following comments:

"Learn about the theory and practice of mindfulness and about ways to embed it in my everyday life." (Joel)

"To be able to practice mindfulness and know more about the theory behind it." (Kathy)

"I would learn the background, some practical skills and how mindfulness can improve my life." (Lucy)

A further illumination emerged here in that many learners enrolled on the course with the aim of helping themselves but also to use what they have learned to help others (either in a personal or professional capacity). A selection of comments that illustrate these findings appears below.

"My motives for doing this course are both personal and professional. Personally I enjoy learning about new ideas and reflective practice. Professionally I am hearing many references to Mindfulness, without knowing much about it." (Nieve)

"The reason for undertaking the course followed my decision to retire from a senior manager role in the NHS. I was concerned about the effect of stopping a highly responsible, stress inducing and all-consuming career." (Angela)

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"I attended the [course title] course with a view to helping lead these hospital sessions, but also for myself in particular to find out if mindfulness can be used to enhance the Christian practice of prayer." (Francis)

In terms of the reasons for not beginning or completing the course for participants in the learner interview, two distinct reasons were given. For Priti, who did begin the course but did not complete it, the reason was that she had a friend who was ill and required care.

"I was looking after a friend ... who had terminal cancer ... and there were erm she lived on her own ... er she lived quite near to me she lived on her own and I was helping her a fair bit and there were a couple of crises so I actually couldn't attend every single session ... that's why... I didn't you know I missed some and you know I think I didn't finish it."

Another participant, Anne, reported that she was interested in engaging with the course as part of a wider motivation to undertake more mind and body-related activities. She highlighted the demands on time that undertaking such health and wellbeing activities can have, stating in relation to the course being studied:

"Well I didn't do it in the end because I ended up doing a lot of swimming and choir and other stuff."

For Anne, who did not begin the course, the initial email that I sent out that included an electronic copy of the course handbook and the PowerPoint slides for the first session also seemed to have influenced her decision not to attend. It seems that these slides created the perception that the course was going to be too similar to her work at the university. As she was looking for a different range of mind and body related experiences, she didn't begin the course. She did also comment that the slides may have been used to support more learner-led activities but the initial response she had was enough for her to not want to attend the first session.

Tom, who also attended some sessions but did not complete the course, also reported time pressures as the reason for not completing the course. For him, however, the difficulties of balancing a demanding work-life with outside responsibilities, relationships and activities resulted in him dropping out of the course in the early sessions.

7.3.2 Pedagogy and preferences

From the analysis of the data there also emerged a range of findings that related to the pedagogical properties of the course. Some of these have been discussed in the previous sections and sub-sections. Other findings concerned the spiritual dimension of mindfulness, co-journeying, the continued practice and learning of mindfulness and the pedagogical preferences of the learners concerning these aspects and others.

Concerning the spiritual dimension of mindfulness, a clear patter emerged that <u>learners had divided opinions on the role of the exploration of the spiritual dimension in mindfulness</u>. All but one comment from the learner survey (in the theme 'Exploration of the spiritual dimension') referred to the desire for this to be explored more in the course. One comment, however, indicated that it featured too much, particularly towards the end of the course.

In the learner reflective accounts, I discovered two salient themes regarding comments that referred to either religion (8 comments) or spirituality (5 comments). These comments came from only 4 learner accounts, in which 2 referred to Christianity (and spirituality in this context) and 2 to general spirituality without any reference to a religion. This suggested to me that these two aspects were salient to learners who were already on or open to a religious or spiritual journey before beginning the course. As such, they were able to accommodate mindfulness into their existing perspectives and experiences. Examples include:

> *"I am familiar with Christian contemplative traditions which focus on the present moment, especially those arising from monastic traditions." (Angela)*

"…it was easy to decide which are my essential things to focus on: Family and Spiritual Development." (Patricia)

"I started on a journey to be more spiritually aware." (Sunny)

In the learner interview both Priti and Tom reported an interest in exploring the spiritual dimension, but Anne's response highlighted the difficulties in doing this as separate from the traditional religious dimension of mindfulness.

"Erm well I found that interesting that it was er it wasn't too heavy in the spiritual slash religious part because I I think I remember him expressed that at one stage because I consider myself as spiritual not religious." (Anne)

In Tom's response he showed an awareness that not all learners would be interested in exploring this component.

"Yeah I thought that was interesting I mean erm I'm sure other people were errm … probably … don't want to look at that side of it as much but that's that's very interesting to me."

In the focus group the discussion focussed mainly upon whether mindfulness needs to return to its Buddhist roots in order to explore spirituality. Mary began by discussing how she felt that her journey of mindfulness was leading her towards an exploration of spirituality but not towards a particular religion. Ellie agreed. Interestingly, the group acknowledged that this topic was difficult for them to discuss as the term spirituality was difficult to define. Sam discussed that mindfulness was more a "way of being" but that it was difficult to conceptualise in relation to spirituality or religion. The contemplative and introspective approach of mindfulness was suggested by all to be a key aspect of mindfulness.

In relation to ethical and moral dimensions of mindfulness, the focus groups discussed the difficulties of mindfulness being associated with the religion of Buddhism. For Sam, the link with the ethos of Buddhism was what drew her to mindfulness initially. Mary discussed how she had experienced difficulties in navigating her own thoughts during her mindfulness practices without an external moral framework. Interestingly, she also commented that she felt that she had moved beyond these difficulties as she has continued her journey.

In a particularly salient comment Ellie discussed the variety of people that are drawn to mindfulness and how a standardised approach seemed incompatible. Interestingly, she commented that it is not only inter-personal factors that provide such variety but also intra-personal factors. She stated:

"I think with that it's so … everybody is coming from such different backgrounds and and experiences and different outlooks that … what somebody might be thinking oh no its gone too far away from its traditional roots other people saying its no we need to modernise it its different for everybody it's not one shoe fits all its different this time I've done a course followed by another one whereas before I had a year off and its different those two experiences are totally different from each other … I mean I changed"

Anika also made a salient contribution to this discussion in suggesting that in modern mindfulness the moral and ethical framework should be devised by the individual.

"Maybe you build your own framework you know you decide for yourself don't you … based on whatever beliefs you have"

Sam agreed and added:

"That's what's nice about it isn't it? It's like you were saying everyone takes something different from it and approaches it differently"

From these comments it appeared that a pattern emerged that <u>learners preferred a learner-led, self-directed and value-free approach to ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness</u>. Indeed, from other discussions here it emerged that the <u>learners preferred a constructivist-based pedagogical approach in the teaching of mindfulness</u> generally. Ellie suggested that theory-based courses have to be structured as foundational knowledge is required before a personal exploration can develop. This, of course, is one of the difficulties and criticisms of adopting a constructivist pedagogy (Dziubiniski, 2015). Other issues associated with a learner-led approach were also highlighted by comments such as:

"… if it was just open I think that a lot of people would be quiet and not say anything" (Ellie)

"I think it might cause a lot of stress for people because you feel like I 've got to say something otherwise we will all be sitting in silence" (Sam)

Mary extended this further with an admission that she benefitted from a teacher-led approach initially that then invited learners to participate more if they wanted to.

"I much prefer to be led … I know its lazy but I just prefer to be talked at a bit and think about my own thoughts and then like you said … just participate if I want to"

In a salient interaction, the whole group moved to a position that aligned with McCown, Reibel and Micozzi's (2010) perspective that each mindfulness course, group and session is unique. The difficulties of a standardised approach to teaching mindfulness were also mentioned.

"It's what fits the group"

"You need to be flexible don't you?"

"One size doesn't fit all"

This preference for a constructivist-based pedagogy was also evident in the learner interviews and expressed by all 3 participants.

The mindfulness practices undertaken as part of the course were often commented upon in the learner reflective accounts. The standard formal practices featured most and there were comments that referred to them in a positive sense (20 occurrences) and a negative sense (13 occurrences). Positive comments here spanned the full range of formal practices, such as:

> *"I have really enjoyed completing the longer mindfulness activities in class. The time has gone by much faster than I ever expected." (Hannah)*

> *"One area of the course that I particularly enjoyed is the mindful movement that we have done together. For me this was a bit of a breakthrough when we practised it in week 7 as I begun to see a very practical was forward that I could be mindful if I was struggling to incorporate meditation into my everyday routine." (Kathy)*

> *"I found the practice of using a body scan particularly pleasing, relatively easy and helpful." (Kiran)*

I found that the negative comments were more generic and often referred to experiences early in the course or in relation to the first experience of a practice.

> *"I have to confess: I've not found it easy." (Derek)*

> *"The first few weeks of practice were quite alien to me." (Sian)*

> *"In the class meditation, we were invited to detach the self from the contents of the mind, be aware of one's mind. I find it challenging to use my mind to be aware of my mind. I have no image of my mind to focus on." (Tasmin)*

There were also comments regarding this theme that I further coded as 'Standard formal practice (gradual progress)'. This is a salient sub-theme as it referred to growth experienced during the course in relation to the formal practices and often featured later in the reflective accounts after earlier comments referring to initial difficulties with the practices.

Alongside the comments referring to the standard formal practices, I also discovered fifteen comments that referenced the additional practices undertaken in the course being studied. Thirteen of these were positive and only two were negative. Examples include:

"We tried the positive emotional memory technique which I found powerful." (Lucy)

"We also practiced transcendental mindfulness that aims to transcend the ego as described by Washburn's and Wilber's theories. I find this interesting and fascinating, trying to plunge into the inner depth of my mind." (Julie)

"This week we looked at transcendental meditation (TM), which was something I have been interested in for some time … I will definitely be looking to further my knowledge and experience of this." (Nina)

From these findings I concluded that there had emerged the pattern that <u>learners had a positive experience of the MBSR components of the course</u> and also that <u>learners had a positive experience of the additional components of the course.</u>

From the learner survey I was particularly interested in the suggestions for how to develop the course from the learners and <u>there were diverse improvements to the pedagogy suggested by learners</u>.

As can be seen in table 7.2, day retreats were the most frequently selected feature for enhancing a mindfulness course generally. Interestingly, this feature is not offered in the course being studied but is in the curriculum guide for the MBSR (Santorelli et al., 2017;

Santorelli, 2014), as are Yoga practices that also featured highly on the list (40). Follow-on courses (either experiential or taught) were also selected frequently. Opportunities for learners to teach each other was the least frequently selected feature.

Table 7.2
Data from the learner survey showing suggested pedagogic developments.

Suggested development	Frequency
Day retreats	53
A follow-on experiential course	43
Links with other health and wellbeing courses	42
Yoga practices	40
A follow-on taught course	38
Opportunities for learners to create and share their own guided mindfulness practices	27
Blended learning mindfulness courses	25
Opportunities for learners to communicate and share with learners of other mindfulness courses	22
Online mindfulness courses	19
Longer retreats	19
Opportunities for learners to teach each other	10

A salient point was raised in two comments and referred to the ending of the course and how to better prepare the learners for continuing with mindfulness after the course:

"It would be beneficial for the last two sessions of the course (after the 8-weeks) to be more focused on techniques/advice on how to keep the practice going" (Nieve)

"I thought it could be very helpful to have a couple of weeks gap between the penultimate and final session, as this gives people time to experience practising on their own, which they then could reflect on with others before leaving the course for good" (Angela)

7.4 Causes for concern

Despite the majority of the findings demonstrating the positive aspects of the course, there were some areas of concern expressed in the various sources of data. From these 3 patterns of events emerged. These were that the accommodation for the course was an area of concern, that some learners had negative experiences concerning the academic orientation of the course and that some learners had negative experiences regarding the pedagogical approach of the course.

7.4.1 Accommodation

Evidence from a wide variety of data sources demonstrated that the most salient area for concern in the course was the accommodation (rooming). From the learner survey question "Do you feel that the physical environment was conducive to the learning of mindfulness?", 44 (63%) participants responded with "No", 18 (26%) with "Somewhat" and 8 (11%) with "Yes".

Accommodation also received the lowest rating from the course evaluation form items (3.91/5) and was prevalent in the thematic analysis of the data. These mainly referred to the sterility of the formal classroom setting and external distractions. Comments from the course evaluation form included:

"Room not conducive to mindfulness practice." (Hannah)

"The setting could have been better, especially for practising meditation." (Julie)

Rather than referring to meditative practices, however, one learner (Zara) mentioned the geographical location of the room on campus, stating that she would prefer a venue on central campus.

Comments from the learner survey included:

"I didn't find the environment very conducive to the exercises - being in a classroom, and sat on quite a rigid chair at a table, made it hard for me to relax." (Ed)

"The room was horrible. Lighting not good, chairs uncomfortable. Sometimes there were noise from other classes which were distracting as a new learner." (Gail)

In reflection upon the difficulties of the accommodation, one participant did produce a salient comment on how I had tried to deal with this issue:

"one of the key things the tutor did in the first session (and I believe core to Mindfulness) is to get us to acknowledge and then ignore the surrounds; which is clearly key to the practice... so perhaps it shouldn't really matter" (Francis)

When reflecting upon their experience of the course being studied, the focus group participants also echoed the concerns regarding the classroom environment. However, another salient comment was expressed by Ellie, who stated that:

"Erm we were all sat at desks doing it and I felt because it was the first time that I done it I felt quite safe cause I'd got my own space."

In the teacher reflection account, I also commented on the concerns about accommodation. Interestingly the comments regarding this theme were not very prevalent, possibly suggesting that I did not perceive it as a problem in the same manner that the some of the learners did. It was clear that I did recognise the issues with the accommodation and had investigated other rooms and location but to no prevail, as evident in the extracts below.

"There was some noise in the room above today and, although I tried to use it as a learning activity, I could tell that some of the group were annoyed."

"It is often remarked that the room could be more conducive to mindfulness and meditation. However, I have investigated other rooms on … campus but have not yet found one that would be more appropriate as of yet."

7.4.2 Academic orientation

As has been discussed, the evidence from the data collected and analysed for the course being studied suggests that it was effective in balancing the various pedagogical demands of being an AO-MBP. Indeed, from the course evaluation form data the item concerning the academic level of the course received a score of 4.67/5 and supports this conclusion. However, I felt it was important to give particular focus to any concerns over the academic-orientation of the course in order to extract possible developments for the future of the course and for the AO-MBP approach.

From the learner interviews, the most prevalent sub-theme concerned negative reflections of the course. Four of these comments came from one participant (Priti). In her comments, she mentioned not wanting to do the assessment component three times and also mentioned the pre-course information was unclear on this matter and that the group size was too large.

"Well one thing I do remember obviously it was nearly two years I I wasn't expecting erm a [inaudible segment] the literature wasn't clear because I remember other participants experiencing the same. Erm I wasn't expecting to .. erm have to sit things for it and that it would be ?[classes]? and what have you. Because I was doing it for my own interest … So erm er, er I wanted to I wanted to learn more for myself but I wasn't really wanting a certificate."

A further feature of the academic-orientation of the course that was a cause of concern for some learners was the assessment component. From the rating scales for the 13 pedagogical properties considered in the learner survey (see figure 7.6), this component was rated lowest for its importance both in the course being studied and for mindfulness courses in general (3.5 and 2.8 out 5 respectively).   Whilst this demonstrates an area of

concern for some learners it also shows that for some learners the assessment component was a positive and worthwhile activity.

The varieties of perceptions and experiences regarding the assessment component were further illuminated in the focus group discussions of this topic. Sam began by saying that she did not undertake the assessment during the course being studied and was thankful that it was optional. Ellie responded by discussing how she kept a weekly diary of her experiences and produced her assignment from this. All liked the idea of choosing the presentation method for the assignment (blogs, photography, peer group discussion, etc.). The group discussed how such varied methods are becoming more widely used in other areas (e.g. interviewing). Mary, who reported being terrified by formal assessment methods, would have preferred to do a blog. She felt that having the choice of presentation method was more aligned with the mindfulness approach.

"That's reflective of it being your personal journey … personal to you how you communicate really isn't it? If I had to do a blog I'd have loved it and would have done it everyday day or like dedicated a lot more time"

Interestingly, Ellie would have preferred a narrower, structured focus for the assignment and found it difficult to balance the academic and reflective elements. All were appreciative of the flexibility and support offered for the assessment in the course being studied.

As a salient issue that emerged over the duration of teaching the course, the academic-orientation was also a topic that featured in my teacher reflective account. In the extracts below it was clear that I considered the assessment component as an important component for the learners in so far as it aligned with their personal journey. However, I also felt the pressures of adopting this approach given that the course was an accredited academic course offered by a HE institution.

"There was a mixed reaction to me giving more details about the assignment. Some were obviously interested whereas other were not – but maybe that's just my impression and they may warm to it over the next weeks."

"Some of them are obviously there for the learning rather than the accreditation and many previous learners have not submitted an assignment. Whereas that is fine with me and with many lifelong learning approaches, there are organisational and financial pressures and consequences as such learner are termed as non-completers."

7.5 Teacher reflections and self-assessment

From the teacher reflective account and self-assessment there emerged findings that supported and illuminated the patterns of events already presented in this chapter. These have been included in the discussion of these patterns in the previous sections and included that <u>the course was effectively organised and taught</u>, <u>learners valued the sharing of experiences with other learners</u>, <u>the course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of being and AO-MBP</u>, <u>learners enrolled on the course for a variety of reasons and with a variety of expectations</u>, <u>leaners had divided opinions on the role of the exploration of the spiritual dimension in mindfulness</u>, <u>learners had a positive experience of the MBSR components of the course</u> and that <u>learners had a positive experience of the additional components of the course</u>. I now present other salient data that emerged from this source. Some of this discussion will further illuminate and support the patterns mentioned above. Other aspects provide what I considered to be important and interesting perspectives.

7.5.1 Teacher reflections

The theme of 'Pedagogy' emerged from comments that related to aspects of pedagogy as defined in this thesis (Alexander, 2001). As such, it contained comments relating to the philosophy, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and understanding of myself as teacher

and the expression of these in the curriculum, the teaching and learning approaches applied, and the teaching and learning practices activities employed. The pedagogical approach of myself and this course has already been discussed at length. Interestingly, many of the comment in this theme contain reflections about the difficulties in faithfully applying a constructivist, learner-led pedagogy. This is evident most saliently in my pre-course comments for the first term that I kept the reflective account. Obviously, the issues under research in this thesis were foremost in my mind at this time as I wrote:

"Looking at the curriculum and course documentation I feel that there is adequate attention devoted to the learner-led exploration of mindfulness in the course. However, there is a difference between the written curriculum and the lived-out realities of teaching. With best intentions, and in-line with constructivist pedagogy, the learners themselves have much influence over the nature of activities. In the past there have been individuals, sub-groups and/or the whole group that have either engaged more with the learner-led activities or haven't. I have always found it a challenge when learners do not engage in these activities and, in a genuine attempt to respect the personal journeying aspect of mindfulness, have maybe been too quick to become more directive and/or didactic in such situations. Therefore, maybe this is an issues of teaching practice and skill rather than with the curriculum. I will try to be mindful of this and reflect upon it during this year's courses."

Indeed, I did reflect upon the issues raised here and many of the comments referred to the difficulties of attempting to provide enough structure, information and resources for the learners to explore mindfulness from their individual pathway. In considering these the fear and emergence of retreating into a didactic approach was evident once more.

"In this session we had time for the learners to discuss and reflect upon a number of areas. The group seemed to struggle with this choice and often I overheard the conversation moving well away from any of the topics covered in the course. This reminds me of when I worked as a project-based learning consultant and would often use the 'menu' approach

to learning activities. Such a constructivist approach really does require the learners to be willing and able to make best use of the options and opportunities available. Although I feel that this is even more beneficial in adult learning pedagogy, I do understand that in evening classes the learners may well just want to be directed more. This issue also emerged in the final section of the sessions whereby the learners worked to shape the final two sessions. In the end I had to provide a list of things that had been done in past courses and the group then chose from these."

A very interesting associated dilemma emerged in the course during the second term of keeping the reflective journal. In weeks 7 and 8 of the course we explore the longer journey of Self and/or spiritual development (including findings from research into barriers that people often face) and the issues and debates in the wider field of mindfulness respectively. With the variety of starting points, expectations, intentions and pathways inherent in the course, the degree of relevance for the learners during these weeks will also vary hugely. From reflecting upon session 7 I wrote:

"This throws up an interesting dilemma for the mindfulness teacher though - do we not teach things that may not be relevant to where people are on the journey now or do we have a responsibility to inform people of barriers and experiences that are known to be associated with the journey in order to prepare them?"

This question appeared again in my reflections from session 8, where I also reflected upon my own experience in education when I felt that content being delivered was not relevant to me at the time but became very valuable at a later time.

"However, just as was the case last week, there is a question as to whether we should teach such content to inform learners of things that may well be part of their journey going forward beyond the course. This reminds me of when I did my PGCE and remember thinking that some of the content was not relevant to me at the time but looking back upon my career they became relevant at different times."

A key component of my reflections regarding the theme of 'Pedagogy' seemed to be the issues involved with attempting to provide a balance between the experiential practice

of mindfulness, personal and group activities (including reflection and discussion activities) and the learning about mindfulness (including its history, the approaches, theoretical and scientific foundations). The latter of these has been termed 'Homiletics 1 – theory information' in this thesis following McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010). From the analysis of my reflective account I found many comments that related to this component of the course being studied. They again highlight the difficulties of finding the right balance between the different session components and the danger that certain content will be relevant for some on their personal journeys but not so relevant for others, as can be seen in the following extracts.

> *"The learners seemed to respond well to the theoretical aspects in this session and, as always, I sense that there are some learners who would like more of this and others who would like less."*

> *"In terms of the content the group engaged well with the issues and debates but again I felt that for some this was not an immediate concern."*

> *"The content on flow was less well received as I feel that the gravity of the group is towards using mindfulness to navigate negatives in their lives rather than exploring and enhancing positive states, such as flow. This demonstrated to me once more that each group is very unique and there is pressure upon the mindfulness teacher to continually adapt pedagogy in response to the group."*

Interestingly, the theoretical and scientific content that appears earlier in the course, and aligns with the MBSR curriculum, was received most positively across the different terms and groups. This may be due to it concerning fundamental issues of the biological and psychological components of stress. Whereas other content regarding deeper personal or spiritual journeying may not be so relevant, all can relate to this content. It may be that here the "universal dharma" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011) aspects of stress provides a common grounding for the teaching of mindfulness?

The theme 'Session activities' contained comments in my reflective account that referred to the personal and group activities undertaken as part of the course that were included to assist the learner's in becoming more self-aware and in understanding the approach of mindfulness. The majority of these comments were positive in orientation across the three terms that the reflective account covered. They specifically referenced the effectiveness of the activities that involved the following:

1. The FFMQ
2. The Hassles and Uplifts Scale
3. Visual illusions
4. The "Atmosphere" video
5. Mindful planning.

As with the previous theme, the comments for this theme were also overwhelmingly positive across the 3 terms. It was clear that learners felt comfortable in practicing together from an early stage and that they were able to engage in deeper and longer practices as the session progressed.

"However, just as was the case last week, there is a question as to whether we should teach such content to inform learners of things that may well be part of their journey going forward beyond the course. This reminds me of when I did my PGCE and remember thinking that some of the content was not relevant to me at the time but looking back upon my career they became relevant at different times."

"The practices went well in this session and the group engaged with a 16-minute session of mindfulness meditation, which is good at this stage."

"The mindfulness meditation was really good though and the group managed to go for 20+ minutes without any obvious signs of discomfort."

There was evidence though that I felt that some learners were more or less engaged in the different practices depending upon their personal expectations and pathway. This

was particularly salient for the Loving-Kindness Meditation (LK) and the Transcendental Mindfulness (TM) practice.

> *"Even though LK meditation is part of the standard MBSR curriculum my groups (including this one) didn't engage with it very well. Interestingly I always use a guided video here rather than leading it myself. Maybe if I adapted and led a LK meditation I may get a different response."*

> *"For the TM practice most engaged well but this is the deepest form of meditation in mindfulness and for some learners it may be a step beyond where they are. Interestingly though the learners reported that they really liked this practice and would like to explore it further. I have an inclination that this is because it is a form of mindfulness in which you don't have to control your attention so much and may therefore seem easier for learners who may just want to switch off in an evening."*

Drawing upon McCown, Reibel and Micozzi's (2010) concept of stewardship in the teaching of mindfulness, the theme 'Stewardship of the group' represented comments that referred to issues relating to the management of the group and the group space of the sessions.   Many comments concerned positive reflections, but the theme was dominated by comments from one specific group in which there many challenges in this area. It was clear that I had become aware of the possibility of difficulties after the first session, stating that:

> *"The group itself seems great, although there is one learner who already seems to want to dominate both small and whole group discussions."*

Indeed, this dominant member of the group had a significant and deteriorating impact upon the dynamic of the group and the experiences of other learners and myself. This was shown in two other comments during the course:

> *"The group is beginning to gel a lot more now, although the one member is still trying to dominate. I had to attempt to soften this for the group this session by quickly taking a relevant point he made and handing it to the whole group for comment. This worked okay*

but the dominant member seemed to revel in challenging any contribution mode by another member of the group. This created a negative atmosphere and I had to intervene and move the discussion onto the next topic."

"Unfortunately, the dominant member of the group made contributions in the reflection activity that were off-topic and quite controversial. This visibly made some of the group uncomfortable and I had to intervene and as the dominant member to try to keep on topic. Due to this, the mindfulness practice that followed did not go well. This was a shame and I am disappointed that this situation arose. I suppose this is a real risk in adult, learner-led and/or constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. It is also probably a greater risk in a mindfulness course. I noticed that this bothered me after the class and on my drive home. Normally I am in a very positive mood following the sessions but not this time."

The level of impact of this one member was evident in my comment after the final week for this group, in which for the first time in teaching this course I felt "… quite happy that this course has ended". In my post-course reflections, I leaned back into the MBSR programme model to consider ways to mitigate against the potential for disruptive members of the group.

"Many mindfulness courses require the group to create a group contract to govern their interactions so maybe this would be a good approach. However, whilst I see that this is more appropriate in a clinical-oriented mindfulness course I'm not sure that it would be appropriate for an academic-oriented course such as this one."

The co-journeying aspect of mindfulness course has been discussed previously in this thesis. Although not as prevalent as some other themes in my account, I did find the 'Co-journeying' theme particularly salient as it represents an important component and motivation for my own teaching. The pleasure that I felt from co-journeying with the group was expressed in most of the comments in this theme, for example:

"Overall I'm very pleased with the course and once again have loved meeting new people and supporting them on their journey with mindfulness. As always, I have learned a lot about myself as I co-journey with them."

Of course, whilst co-journeying is something that is important to my personal epistemology and the pedagogy of the course being studied, it's manifestation and effectiveness is heavily influenced by the rest of the group. Learners who have different personal epistemologies or have not experienced education in which the teacher co-journeys with the students may find it difficult to facilitate or may simply not recognise it as a component of the course. From my reflections this was most evident in the first session during the initial meet and greet activity. The following extract describes how I asked the learners to meet with me as part of the whole group.

"Interestingly, although I asked the group to include me as they were meeting each other there was once again a sense of the tutor and the learners and only two people included me in the activity. Thus, the perceptions and expectations of learners also influences the degree to which I can faithfully implement some core features of the pedagogy of mindfulness."

In all 3 terms of the reflective account I reported that the group did not include me as I invited them to. On each occasion I used this to introduce the group to the pedagogical approach of the course, including the co-journeying aspect. Usually I did report feeling more like a co-journeyer with the progression of the course as learners become more familiar with each other, with me, with mindfulness and with the pedagogical approach of the course. For example, following the 6th session of term 3 I commented that:

"As always, the mindful planning activity was very well received and many learners shared how they had really learned something valuable from this activity. To be honest, I always perform this activity with the group and I learn something new each time too. I felt most like part of the group, sharing the journey with the class on this activity."

7.5.2 Teacher self-assessment

In addition to basing my teacher reflective account upon the MBSR Standards of Practice (Santorelli, 2014), the MBSR Authorised Curriculum (Santorelli et al., 2017) and the MBI-TAC (Crane et al., 2012b) documents I also completed a self-assessment of my teaching using the MBI-TAC instrument. Table 7.3 shows my scores for each of the 6 domains. They are remarkably consistent apart from the term 2 score for the domain of 'Holding the group environment'. It was in this term that the issues concerning a disruptive member of the group emerged.

As the scores here represented self-reported measures their validity was reduced. However, within the critical realist stance all data is regarded as emerging from flawed perceptual processes to be moderated by other emerging data (Bhaskar, 2008). With this accepted and taking the data in isolation at this stage of the analysis, the scores do suggest a high level of reliability across the 3 terms of the reflective account. From my perspective, I inferred that this is evidence for the internal validity, credibility and fidelity for the course.

For domain 1 I felt that I was proficient in all of the key features. Each session began and ended with a mindfulness practice and at least 50 minutes were spent engaged in practice per session. I had a plan for each session but allowed for the flexibility and organic nature of mindfulness to be the basis of each session. This allowed for me to adapt to each unique moment, session and group. Whilst my time-management and control of pace was often at the advanced level, I did feel that there were times when it suffered. Sometimes this was due to internal factors, such as me feeling that I needed to cover certain aspects (usually theoretical), and at other times it was die to external factors, such as the disruptive learner or the lack of learner-involvement in activities.

Table 7.3

The final MBI-TAC summary sheet from my reflection over the three terms of teaching the course being studied. The score for each term is given and the average score across the terms is given in bold.

MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS: TEACHING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – SUMMARY SHEET		
Domain	**Key features**	**Score**
Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum	*Adherence to curriculum* *Responsiveness and flexibility in adhering* *Appropriateness of themes and content* *Organisation of teacher, room and materials* *Session flow and pacing*	5, 5, 5 **5**
Relational skills	*Authenticity and potency* *Connection and acceptance* *Compassion and warmth* *Curiosity and respect* *Mutuality*	6, 6, 6 **6**
Embodiment of mindfulness	*Present moment focus* *Present moment responsiveness* *Calm and alertness* *Attitudinal foundations* *Person of the teacher*	6, 6, 6 **6**
Guiding mindfulness practices	*Language – precise and spacious* *Key learning for each practice available* *Elements to consider when guiding*	5, 5, 5 **5**
Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching	*Experiential focus* *Layers within the inquiry process* *Conveying learning* *Teaching skills* *Fluency*	5, 5, 5 **5**
Holding the group learning environment	*Learning container* *Group development* *Common humanity* *Leadership style*	6, 4, 6 **5.3**

Score key:

1	2	3	4	5	6
(Incompetent)	(Beginner)	(Advanced Beginner)	(Competent)	(Proficient)	(Advanced)

For domain 2 I rated myself as at the advanced level each term. I felt that I was authentic in expressing myself and the mindfulness approach. I approached each learner with warmth, acceptance and a genuine desire to share the journey together. Overall here I felt that I was expressing "consistently good levels of collaboration, compassion, openness, warmth, acceptance and responsiveness to participants" (Crane et al., 2012b, p14).

I also rated myself at the advanced level for domain 3. Here I felt that my personal practice of mindfulness grounded me firmly in the approach and allowed me to embody the approach in my personal being. I also felt that I embodied and expressed the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness "in a particularly inspiring way" (Crane et al., 2012b, p17).

For domain 4 I rated myself as being proficient in guiding the mindfulness practices. Whilst I felt that I gave effective instructions, guidance on working with the wandering mind and cultivation of the attitudinal qualities, I did not feel that I could rate myself as advanced. This was due to the MBI-TAC providing very specific and restrictive list of practices from which this score should derive. Although I teach the vast majority of them as presented in the document, there were some that I didn't teach or teach in a different way (e.g. rather than doing the raisin practice I do a different mindful eating exercise). Although I felt that these are more than suitable differences, the restrictive nature of the MBI-TAC becomes apparent and so I felt it useful to apply it as it was designed in this case.

I also rated myself as proficient for domain 5. Whereas I felt that I was at the advanced stage for teaching skills, fluency and inquiry techniques, I did feel that there was room to develop in terms of linking the teaching themes and content to the direct experience of the learners. Although I have attempted to authentically apply the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness in the course being studied, I did feel that the course curriculum and session plans remained the driver of the content. As such, I did not feel that I could rate myself at the advanced level and recognise this as a possible area for pedagogic development.

It was in the final domain that the uniqueness of each group of mindfulness learners became particularly apparent. For terms 1 and 2 I rated myself at the advanced level for the stewardship of the group. I felt that I consistently demonstrated "excellent group working skills as evidenced by a highly responsive and skilful way of working with group process while meeting needs of individuals" (Crane et al., 2012b, p35). However, in terms 2 I felt that the disruptive member of the group created challenges in this area and that my management of the situations that arose because of this could have been improved. I felt that this was particularly in the area describe by the MBI-TAC as "demonstrating authority and potency without imposing the teacher's views on participants" (*ibid*).

7.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter the findings from the analysis of the data have been presented. Following the process of retroduction they have been presented as patterns of events that emerged from quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected from the various sources. In line with the parallel-phase mixed methods design emerging data from the sources was used to inform the conclusions and to further illuminate and triangulate them. The patterns of events identified were:

1. Learners experienced significant growth in mindfulness as a distinct construct
2. Learners developed greater awareness
3. Learners experienced a range of associated benefits
4. Learners were highly satisfied with the course
5. The course was effectively organised and taught
6. Learners valued the sharing of experiences with other learners
7. The course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of being an AO-MBP
8. The course had a longitudinal impact on the learners
9. Learners were appreciative of the course
10. Learners desired to continue their practise and study of mindfulness

11. Learners enrolled on the course for a variety of reasons and with a variety of expectations

12. Learners had divided opinions on the role of the exploration of the spiritual dimension in mindfulness

13. Learners preferred a learner-led, self-directed and value-free approach to ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness

14. Learners preferred a constructivist-based pedagogical approach in the teaching of mindfulness

15. Learners had a positive experience of the MBSR components of the course

16. Learners had a positive experience of the additional components of the course

17. There were diverse improvements to the pedagogy suggested by learners

18. The accommodation for the course was an area of concern

19. Some learners had negative experiences concerning the academic orientation of the course

20. Some learners had negative experiences regarding the pedagogical approach of the course.

From these patterns the process of retroduction led to the identification of generic tendencies, from which the generative mechanisms that underpin their expression in the context of the situation could be theorised. For the course being studied I identified four such generic tendencies. The following chapter will discuss these and the generative mechanisms I deemed to be at play in their expression in the course.

|Chapter 8: Discussion (tendencies and general mechanisms)

"Examining the terrain"

With the patterns of events identified in the previous chapter, the process of retroduction could be advanced and completed. The first step was to identify salient tendencies that were evident across the sources of data that concerned the research questions of this study (shown again here in table 8.1). In doing this I was attempting to illuminate common events that represent external phenomena of the domain of the actual (Bhaskar, 2008). Here, the power of the convergent parallel phase design employed in the study manifested itself. It did this by enabling me to synthesise the data from the multiple perspectives and methods to build emerging and converging inferences. It allowed for triangulation to drive the inferences and to compensate for the limitations of individual methods (Shenton, 2004). In doing this, it also allowed me to "genuinely integrate" the quantitative and qualitative components (Bryman, 2007, p8) in a "mutually illuminating" manner (Wolley, 2009, p7).

Table 8.1
The research questions for the study.

Research Questions
1) What is the effectiveness of the course as a mindfulness intervention?
2) What is the effectiveness of the course as a HE-based academic course?
3) How effective is the pedagogical approach of the course?
4) What are the possible pedagogic developments for the course?
5) Based upon the finding from research questions 1 to 4, what recommendations and guidance can be provided for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of academic-oriented mindfulness-based courses?

Whereas the process of retroduction began in relation to the patterns that emerged from each individual source of data, here the theoretical redescription becomes much thicker in the consideration of the tendencies that emerged from across the sources. This allows me to proceed to the final stage of retroduction – the identification of the generative mechanisms or causal laws at play in the course being studied. At this stage, the aim is "to identify the necessary contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and to result in the empirical trends observed" (Fletcher, 2017, p188). In doing this, the intransitive underlying material, mechanisms and structures of the world (the course being studied) can be theorised (Healy and Chad, 2000).

According to Fletcher (2017, p189), "the goal of retroduction is to constantly move between empirical and deeper levels of reality to fully understand the phenomena under study". The experiences of the participants are used to evaluate the theorisation of the "essential relations that necessitate them" (Bhaskar, 1979, p2). Thus, there is a cyclical motion that moves through the three domains (empirical, actual, real) of critical realism to conclude the process of retroduction.

In this chapter I follow this process. Tendencies are discussed in relation to their contribution to answering the research questions. Following this, the general mechanisms inferred to play a significant role in the expression of the tendencies in the course being studied are considered. To aid presentation and to illustrate the cyclical process, **generative mechanisms** will feature in bold type. The styling from the previous chapter will also be maintained; <u>patterns of events</u> will be underlined, 'themes' will appear in single quotation marks and "individual experiences" will feature as separate quotes.

8.1 Tendencies in the course being studied

From the process of retroduction it emerged that, for the course being studied and in relation to the research questions, there is a tendency for:

1. The pedagogic approach to be effective in balancing of the demands of the course (RQ3)
2. The learners to experience significant growth in mindfulness and related benefits (RQ1)
3. The course to be an effective HE-based academic-oriented course (RQ2)
4. Possible pedagogic developments that can move the course towards greater fidelity, integrity and authenticity (RQ4)

8.1.1 The tendency for the pedagogic approach to be effective in balancing the demands of the course

From the analysis of the data it is clear that there is a tendency for the pedagogic approach of the course to be effective in balancing of the demands of the course. This provides an answer to research question 3.

The pedagogical landscape of the course is, however, complicated and features many, often disparate and/or competing demands. These include 1) learner-led and teacher-led factors; 2) theoretical and practical aspects; 3) structured and personal learning pathways and 4) MBSR and additional content and activities. In this way the course mirrors the wider teaching of mindfulness that McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) describe as being "unstable ground" (p3) and previous research that found there to be tensions between standardised, teacher-led and didactic elements, and the personal, emergent and organic elements of the pedagogy mindfulness (Crane et al., 2015).

It has been argued throughout this thesis that the nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness is essentially constructivist but that the transformative power of it has been reduced by the drives concerning experimentation, standardisation and professionalisation. Indeed, I have posited that only by being based in its constructivist nature can mindfulness allow for the varieties inherent in mindfulness to exist and travel along their own pathways. This approach is not only vital for the development of AO-MBPs that aim to teach and cultivate these varieties or spectrums, but also for the entire field of mindfulness as it develops in an environment of mixed demands, discourses and perspectives (McCown, 2017; 2014).

From within this perspective it is essential to explore the nature of the pedagogical approach of the course being studied and to demonstrate how this was experienced by the learners and teacher. In chapter 2 I discussed constructivist pedagogy using the work of Yilmaz (2008), Fosnot (1996) and Brooks and Brooks (1999). From these there emerged a series of characteristics that I used to illustrate its features. These will be

used again here to guide the exploration of the nature of the pedagogy of the course being studied.

From the data analysed for the study a clear pattern emerged that <u>learners preferred a constructivist-based pedagogical approach in the teaching of mindfulness</u>. However, I acknowledge that the validity and relatability of this finding is weakened if the participants only had experience the course being studied and not any other mindfulness course. Despite this, the preference of adult learners for such pedagogical approaches is widely supported in this study and in the wider literature (Slavich and Zimbardo, 2012).

One key characteristic of constructivist pedagogy is that learning is an active, adaptive and learner-led process. Although incorporating teacher-led components such as homiletics and guided practices, the nature of the pedagogy of the course being studied has these elements at its core. Despite <u>some learners having negative experiences of the pedagogy of the course</u>, the evidence suggests that <u>learners were highly satisfied with the course</u>, that <u>the course was effectively taught and organised</u> and that <u>the course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of being an AO-MBP</u>.

Interestingly, the content and activities of the course that are additional to the MBSR curriculum model allow for greater learner-led and active engagement. Activities such as the 'Hassles and Uplifts Scale' (Delongis, Folkman and Lazarus, 1988), 'Mindful planning', and the 'Visual illusions activity' allow for learner-generated content to direct the learning. I feel that such activities provide balance to standardised, teacher-led and didactic elements. The evidence from this study suggests that <u>learners had a positive experience of the additional components of the course</u>. It must also be noted that <u>learners had a positive experience of the MBSR components of the course</u> also and that these experiences also contribute to the effectiveness of its pedagogy in providing a balanced programme.

The additional activities and practices also serve to align the course being studied with another characteristic of constructivist pedagogy - that learning is contextually-bound. The aim of the course is to allow for the exploration of the full spectrum of mindfulness as proposed by Crane (2016) in a personal and self-directed manner. For the course being studied and for AO-MBPs more widely, the finding that <u>learners enrolled on the course for a variety of reasons and with a variety of expectations</u> refines this necessity further.

The availability of resources that span the spectrums of mindfulness and allow for learner-led, self-directed personal journeying are also an important component of the course being studied and for AO-MBPs. These allow learners to construct their own learning experiences beyond the classroom.

Although <u>a small number of learners had a negative experience of the academic-orientation of the course</u>, the reflective account does support and allow for contextualised expressions in the assessment component. That learners can opt not submit an assignment and not gain accreditation for the course also aligns with the principles of constructivist pedagogy.

Another important feature of constructivist pedagogy is that learning is socially constructed. In the theory of Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1991), the recognition that one is not alone in experiences difficulty or disorientation is a central component (phase 4). I found that, although a small number of learners had the opposite experience, the evidence suggests that <u>learners valued the sharing of experiences with other learners</u> during the course. After each practice or activity learners have the opportunity to discuss their experiences with each other in small groups. From these discussions they are invited to bring and questions, comments or reflection to the attention of the whole group if appropriate. In alignment with the approach of constructivist pedagogy and of mindfulness, there is no pressure or requirement to share but it is encouraged. From the data analysed in this study I found that learners appreciate this approach.

The sharing of experiences is a central feature of the pedagogy of mindfulness and is linked to the concept of co-journeying. Interestingly, I also found that 'Co-journeying' was a salient theme in my reflective account and serves as a major source of motivation and satisfaction for teaching the course. Indeed, the level of co-journeying impacted greatly upon my own experience of teaching each group.

The importance of disequilibrium to learning is also a feature of constructivist pedagogy. It is also a central component of Mezirow's (1991) theory of Transformative Learning. From the learner comments analysed in this study (e.g. from Derek, Sian and Tasmin in section 7.3.2) it is clear that many learners experienced such disequilibrium in the early stages of the course. With mindfulness purposely uncovering and challenging existing ego habits, defences and responses, this is to be expected. However, it is important that any mindfulness course supports growth beyond just an awareness of these features and towards the development of new structures as TL proposes. The evidence for the course being studied suggests that this growth did indeed occur and that learners experienced a range of associated benefits. Indeed, some of the growth indicated by the FFMQ results and in the learner reflective accounts suggests significant levels of transformation.

8.2.1 The tendency for learners to experience significant growth in mindfulness and related benefits

A clear tendency emerges from across the data sources for the learners to have experienced significant growth in mindfulness as a distinct construct from engaging with the course being studied. The significant findings from the quantitative analysis of the leaner pre- and post-course FFMQ scores are supported and further illustrated by qualitative analysis from a variety of other sources. In relation to research question 1, this suggests that the course being studied is extremely effective as a mindfulness-based intervention programme. The conclusion from this tendency is vitally important to this research for a number of reasons.

Firstly, and most importantly, learner-centred cultivation of growth in mindfulness and its associated benefits is the main aim of the course being studied. Ultimately, from my perspective, this should be the aim of every mindfulness course in the MBP family. This aim needs to be contextualised depending upon the orientation (e.g. clinical or academic) and/or the intervention focus (e.g. specific or holistic) of the course. The recent acceptance and consideration by Crane (2016) of the spectrums inherent in mindfulness are useful for such contextualisation.

Secondly, in relation to the previous point, it is my perspective that there should be more flexibility in the MBP family in terms of course contextualisation. Here I borrow from Dobkin and Hassed (2016) in claiming that mindfulness can be "flexible with the form but faithful to the philosophy" (p44). It is my view that the dominance of the Scientific discourse and of the drive for increased fidelity discussed by McCown (2017; 2014) is leading mindfulness away from this flexibility. However, I also hold the view that each variant of mindfulness course does need to demonstrate its effectiveness as a mindfulness intervention. In demonstrating this here, it can be claimed that the course being studied is an effective mindfulness intervention in which learners tend to experience personalised growth in mindfulness and a range of associated benefits.

Thirdly, even though as an AO-MBP the context of the course being studied differed from other courses that may have greater fidelity to the MBSR programme model, the comparison against other studies that have used the FFMQ instrument to measure growth in mindfulness demonstrates that its intervention power is equivalent and at times greater (see tables 8.2 and 8.3). Indeed, the course being studied shows high levels of consistency in significant increases across the facets, suggesting that it provides a balanced cultivation of mindfulness.

With the addition of the qualitative findings I conclude that the areas of growth experienced by the learners align with areas found by existing studies of the benefits of mindfulness. In a continuation of the retroduction process, these areas of growth will now be discussed and will be structured around the 5 facets of the FFMQ.

Table 8.2
Total pre- and post-course FFMQ rating scale averages for selected studies.

Study	Total pre-course rating scale average	Total post-course rating scale average	Difference
This study	2.73	3.29	+0.56
Hindman et al. (2015) – MSM**	3.21	3.77	+0.56
Hindman et al. (2015) – MSM-I***	3.10	3.45	+0.35
de Bruin, Bögels and Meppelink (2015)	3.13	3.28	+0.25
Ramler et al. (2016)	3.28	3.46	+0.18
Hanley et al. (2017)	3.31*	N/A	N/A

* = This study measured dispositional mindfulness without any intervention being conducted
** = Formal Mindfulness Stress Management intervention
*** = Informal mindfulness Stress Management intervention

Table 8.3
Rating scale average score increases for each facet of the FFMQ for selected studies.

Study	Observe	Describe	Aware	NonJudge	NonReact
This study	+0.58	+0.51	+0.55	+0.57	+0.56
Hindman et al. (2015) – MSM	+0.62	+0.33	+0.34	+0.74	+0.81
Hindman et al. (2015) – MSM-I	+0.40	-0.03*	+0.04*	+0.05	+0.53
de Bruin, Bögels and Meppelink (2015)	+0.10	+0.22	+0.07	+0.29	+0.13
Ramler et al. (2016)	+0.44	+0.17	-0.05*	-0.02*	+0.32

* = Non-significant difference

Growth in awareness

The results for the individual facets measured by the FFMQ show that the learners made most progress in terms of their general awareness and observation of their responses to internal or external stimuli (via the 'Observe' facet). When synergised with the qualitative findings the clear pattern emerges that <u>learners developed greater awareness</u> from participating in the course.

In the seminal publication for teaching mindfulness that forms part of the basis of the pedagogy of the course being studied, McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) discuss the spectrum of teaching intentions. In returning to them here I find it illuminating to witness the lived-out expressions of these intentions as they moved from theory to pedagogy to practice and then become internalised in the learners. The two intentions of 'Discovering Embodiment' and 'Cultivating Observation' are most directly concerned with the growth in this facet. In the MBSR curriculum and guidance documents (Santorelli et al., 2017; Santorelli, 2014) these intentions are actualised in the standard formal practices such as breathing mindfully, the Body Scan and sitting meditation. As these practices are foundational to the course being studied it can be inferred that these intentions were actualised and cultivated here also.

The attitudinal qualities of gentle curiosity and beginner's mind (see table 3.4) also support growth in awareness for the practitioner of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Cullen and Brito Pons, 2015; Baer et al., 2006). In the course being studied these attitudes feature explicitly and implicitly throughout. They feature in the standard formal and informal practices of the MBSR programme model, the theory and science of mindfulness (where relevant) and in some of the activities of the course (specifically in the 'Attitudinal qualities' the 'Visual illusions' and the 'Beginner's mind' activities).

Further illuminations of the underlying features and factors involved in the growth in awareness were found from the analysis of the learner reflective accounts and the learner survey. The parent theme of 'Greater awareness' from the learner reflective accounts was the most prevalent theme in them. From this the sub-theme of 'Greater awareness of self' was the most significant and supported previous findings that also found that self-awareness was a key growth area for those undertaking mindfulness course (e.g. Keane, 2014).

Interestingly, it appears that not only does the awareness and observation of one's own experiences and responses increase, but the learning of mindfulness also produces wider awareness too. For example, an awareness of the approach, theory and science of mindfulness was also found to increase. In cultivating greater awareness of these

aspects, AO-MBPs such as the course being studied serves the additional purposes of growing the knowledge base and understanding of mindfulness more generally. I have argued in this thesis that this is important to support the wider development of the field of mindfulness and that currently there appears to be a lack of critical self-analysis due to the domination of the Scientific discourse and its primarily clinical orientation.

The cultivation of knowledge and understanding through such critical self-analysis also supports those learners of MBPs who would like to apply what they have learned to support other people (either in a personal or professional manner). The results from this study show that this is a common motivation for many learners and that many had the expectation of developing their knowledge base and understanding of philosophical, theoretical and scientific-basis of mindfulness. The findings here suggest that this can be achieved at the undergraduate level and in a lifelong learning and/or embedded context.

Acting with awareness

The significant increases in the 'Act with awareness' facet of the FFMQ suggest that not only were the learners becoming generally more aware and observant as discussed above, they were also able to find and maintain their present-centred awareness in their actions. As such, it was found that <u>learners experienced a range of associated benefits</u> from engaging in the course.

In the early sessions of the course, the concept of mindlessness (Langer, 1989; 1997) is discussed. In the 'Benefits of mindfulness' theme from the analysis of the learner reflective accounts I found many instances where learners discuss this, with Zara giving a salient comment in which she had noticed the growth in this area:

> *"I've got to a stage where I can say it does make a difference. At times when my mind tends to wander, I take a pause and meditate. Not only is there a sense of composure to be achieved but also I do feel more clear headed."*

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In a demonstration of the personal journeying aspect of mindfulness, not all learners reported that they were able to act upon the greater awareness and observation that they had cultivated. In a most salient reflection, Daniel stated that:

"I still find this difficult as I do recognise when I am becoming stressed but I feel that I cannot halt the process." (Daniel)

In this statement Daniel suggests that his awareness and observation of his experience has increased (he does recognise when he is becoming stressed) and in this he has made advancements in this first step or arc of mindfulness. However, it is clear that he could not, at this stage, act with that awareness to bring a different response and experience. Slower progress in this facet is also evident in other studies too, such as in the Ramler et al. (2017) and Hindman et al. (2015) – MSM-I studies that reported no significant growth in this facet. I used such situations to reinforce the importance of the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness, in particular 'Non-judgement', 'Non-agenda' and 'Acceptance'. Here it is important that the learners view mindfulness as an emerging growth tendency in which increased awareness is the foundation from which change can be built, in accordance with the awareness-change approaches to mindfulness that are common in many cognitive-affective models (e.g. Jankowski and Holas, 2014; Shapiro, Carlson, Astin and Freednman, 2006).

In showing a deep level of understanding of this process (coded as 'Greater awareness of the mindfulness approach' from the learner reflective accounts), Neil commented that:

"I see mindfulness as a practice which relates to this strand of the change process, whereby the person can stand back from their habitual deadlock of unexamined, negative thinking and tune into a reflective space. Enabling this kind of detachment can bring the person into a new space to, review what they habitually do."

In this statement, Neil also mentions the importance of another of the teaching intentions – 'Experiencing new possibilities'. In discussing this, McCown, Reibel and

Micozzi (2010) claim that even from the initial experiences of an MBP, habits are "slightly destabilized" (p145) and throughout the course they are subject to attention, reflection and reconsideration. This destabilisation effect can be considered as a "disorienting dilemma" in Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow, 2006) and has been discussed in relation to the pedagogy of the course studied in the previous sub-section.

Growth in non-judgement

The shift away from judgemental responses that Carson and Langer (2006) discuss as being vitally important in mindfulness was also evident for the learners of the course being studied (primarily via the 'NonJudge' facet of the FFMQ). This demonstrates that the course supports the learners' growth in becoming less judgemental and more compassionate to their own thoughts and feelings. This is also a key ingredient in the philosophy and teaching of mindfulness, with 'Non-judgement' being one of the most significant attitudinal qualities of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Cullen and Brito Pons, 2015) and being a foundational teaching of the course being studied.

The findings that mindfulness increases self-compassion has led some to criticise it for being self-indulgent and lacking any consideration of the other or the outer world (O'Donnell, 2015; Comstock, 2015). McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010) counter this and claim that the MBSR cultivates internal compassion initially but that this emerges and is expressed externally with time. In doing this they concur with Hyde and La Prad (2015) and Comstock (2015) who claim that mindfulness produces socially and democratically active individuals. This inside-out process of compassion (and mindfulness generally) is something that is taught in the course being studied. McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010, p146) sum up the position that I advocate well when they state that learners:

 "… discover the potential impact of their individual transformation on their families, social circles, and work-places; their awareness of political, social, and environmental situations; and on their religious and spiritual lives."

According to McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (ibid), compassion is "implicit in the nonjudging attitude" but is not measured directly by the FFMQ. Neither was it measured directly in this study. Despite an increase in and correlation between mindfulness and compassion being found in other studies (e.g. Chiesa and Serretti, 2009; Bernie, Speca and Carlson, 2009), I found few specific references to compassion in the analysis of data here. One salient reference was made by Julie who reported an increased awareness of her heightened frustration with certain people but was also able to express compassion through an understanding that each person's journey in life is unique.

Interestingly, there was evidence in this study that suggests that many learners on the course being studied reach the stage where they have both a growing self- and others-focus. Indeed, many participants enrolled on the course for the dual purposes of helping themselves but also to learn techniques to help other people. It seems that the course is indeed effective in doing this, as was evident in Michael's salient comment from the learner survey regarding this.

"Changed my life and more importantly gave me the tools to change other peoples life and experience."

Lucy also expressed this with her comment that:

"Taking this mindfulness journey has allowed me to see how much there is to be gained from spending some time on personal growth. There are so many benefits to be gained from doing this, and I feel this is by far the biggest learning from undertaking this 10-week course. If we are to be in a position to help others, work efficiently and care for people in our lives, it is essential that we look after ourselves." (Lucy)

Growth in acceptance and control

Although there were significant increases made in the 'NonReact' facet, it was less than the other four when using the total average (increasing from 14.84 to 18.73) but not when using the average rating scale scores (an increase of +0.56). However, the learners sampled did produce significant increases in the ability to refrain from reacting to thoughts, feelings and experiences in a habitual manner. Increased pre- and post-course scores in this facet represented a deep and difficult to achieve area of growth and is related to the growth of the 'Non-judgement' and 'Acceptance' attitudinal qualities of mindfulness (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010).

Interestingly, one comment in the learner reflective account (coded in 'Greater awareness of the mindfulness approach') by Sian suggests that this view is a commonly shared one. She stated:

> *"However, reflecting on this after 8 weeks of classes and having a more holistic view of mindfulness I believe that the last 2 areas of the FFMQ, the non-judging and non-reactivity to be the key principles because they are the aspects which even experienced meditators I have met would say are the ones that require most time to understand within ourselves."*

The processes at work suggested by Carson and Langer (2006) seems well placed to explain the role that non-reactivity plays in producing the many benefits of mindfulness and why it is a long-term and difficult journey to cultivate it. Here, the interconnected growth of non-judgement, non-reactivity and acceptance allows the individual to focus more upon the features of the present-moment experience. In doing this, the ego (and particularly the self-referencing component of the ego – see Baime, 2011) is quietened and responses to the self, others and the surrounding environment can be more compassionate and authentic without the dominance of the ego defences.

This process certainly seems to explain the benefits from mindfulness reported in the growing evidence-base for clinical (e.g. Veehoff et al., 2016; Khoury et al., 2013b) and non-clinical areas (e.g. Chiesa and Serretti, 2009; Shapiro et al., 2011). For example, the

present-moment focus of a person experiencing a high mindful state would result in less rumination and worry, which in turn would reduce feelings of anxiety and stress in situations where there was no cause for such responses. The self-criticism and doubt associated with depression would also be reduced, as would the urge to comfort eat when experiencing a low mood. For non-clinical areas, the focus upon the present-moment without self-judgement or over analysis is a central component of the state of flow that has been associated with higher performance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Growth in the articulation of thoughts and feelings

The increased scores in the 'Describe' facet suggest that the learners are better able to articulate their thoughts and feelings by the post-course measurement. This supports previous research that has also found significant improvements in this facet (Hindman et al., 2015 – MSM; de Bruin, Bögels and Meppelink, 2015; Ramler et al., 2016). Disappointingly, there were no results that related to this greater articulation in the data collected and analysed from other sources and so no further understandings could be gained here. This is unfortunate and represented a weakness of the study and of methodological approaches that aim to collect organically-derived data. However, the fact that no data for this facet is present may actually show that it was implicit in nature and would need to be elicited explicitly to study it further.

From another perspective, the learner reflective accounts and other qualitative comments given in the study do represent the articulation of the learners' thoughts and feelings on the issues concerned. The spread of scores for the learner reflective accounts towards the higher grades and the insightful qualitative comments used for analysis suggest high levels in the ability to articulate thoughts and feelings. Whist this may be the case, I had no method of measuring the growth in this area other than the FFMQ.

Other salient findings

An interesting finding that supports the claim that an improvement in mindfulness is correlated with improvements in a range of other clinical construct emerged from two of the learners sampled in this study. Without any prompting and unbeknown to me, Tony and Kathy reported growth in other clinical measures and attributed this growth to their attendance of the course being studied. Tony saw improvements in weight and blood pressure for the duration of the course. Kathy reported improvements on two psychological measures. As these represent objective and standardised measures used in other studies of mindfulness (e.g. Solem et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2014; Piet et al., 2010), they provide substantial additional evidence of the effectiveness of the course even as a clinical intervention.

8.1.3 The tendency for the course to be an effective HE-based academic-oriented course

One of the key considerations in the judgement of the effectiveness of any HE-based course is whether the course is viable from an economic perspective. The course being studied here shows itself to be extremely viable as it ran for 11 consecutive iterations over a period of 4 years up to the end of the data collection period (see table 6.3).

Another consideration was the degree to which the pedagogical approach is appropriate for adult-based and lifelong learning courses. The constructivist nature of the pedagogy of the course and its ability to balance teacher-led and learner-led aspects of mindfulness has been discussed in section 8.1.1. The appropriateness of employing constructivist pedagogy in higher education has much support (Luxton-Reilly and Denny, 2010; Evans, 2013) and features in or aligns with many other pedagogical approaches, such as Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 2006), Transformative Teaching (Slavich and Zimbardo, 2012) and the adult-specific approach of Androgogy (Knowles, 1984, 1980, 1975). Therefore, I conclude that the pedagogical approach of the course was appropriate and allowed for the effective balance of the various demands of being and AO-MBP.

As has been outlined previously (section 6.1.1), an adapted version of Kirkpatrick's (1996) model was used to guide the evaluation of the effectiveness of the course as an HE-based, academic-oriented course. The analysis of the course in relation to the four levels of the model suggested that it was indeed extremely effective in this context.

Reaction

Despite there being specific concerns expressed by some learners, the patterns of events that <u>learners were highly satisfied with the course</u>, that <u>learners appreciated the course</u> and that <u>the course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of being and AO-MBP</u> demonstrate that the majority of learners had a positive reaction to the course. The ratings from the EOCE provided an overall satisfaction rating of 4.76 out of 5. As the ratings were given immediately following the conclusion of the course, I deem them to represent valid expressions. Qualitative analysis yielded supporting evidence that were triangulated from multiple data sources.

Learning

The pattern of events that <u>learners experienced significant growth in mindfulness as a distinct construct</u> demonstrates that there was a high degree of learning in relation to the learning outcomes (see section 3.2.1). There was much evidence from the patterns <u>the course was effectively organised and taught</u> and <u>the course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of the being an AO-MBP</u> that suggests that the academic aspects of these outcomes and of the curriculum supported the growth in mindfulness and in associated benefits (e.g. from the theme 'Greater awareness (of theory and science)').

Another source of evidence for this level emerged from the analysis of the learner reflective account grades (see figures 7.7 and 7.8). The average grade for the 18 accounts analysed was 73, a high upper second-class mark on the university marking scale. Whilst this demonstrates a high level of learning on the course, I do feel that there

was a moderating factor that could have impacted upon these findings. This is that the 18 accounts analysed were randomly sampled from those participants who had a) submitted and assignment and b) given their consent for their accounts to be analysed. Therefore, the sample may not be representative of the learning across the whole population of learners that have engaged in the course over the data collection period.

Behaviour/transfer

For this level there was much evidence that suggests that the knowledge, skills and practices of the course were applied outside of the classroom. In the pattern that <u>learners experienced a range of associated benefits</u> there were themes that related to the application of mindfulness to everyday life (see section 7.1.3). Whilst the vast majority of these applications were positive experiences, not all were successful. However, irrespective of the outcome, the evidence suggests that learners were indeed applying what they had learned on the course and many were experiencing benefits of doing so.

Results

The longitudinal benefits of the course being studied was evident in many patterns of events. The growth in mindfulness and its associated benefits have already been discussed here. From the pattern that <u>learners were highly satisfied with the course</u>, the overall satisfaction rating from the learner survey was 4.7 out of 5 and this demonstrates the lasting and reliable impression that course made in relation to the EOCE rating.

In section 7.2.3 patterns concerning the impact of the course were discussed. Key findings that support a positive longitudinal impact include that the majority learners continued to practise mindfulness and that many had <u>the desire to continue with both the learning and practise of mindfulness</u>.

8.1.4 The tendency for possible pedagogic developments

Despite positive answers to the research questions, there also emerged the tendency for possible pedagogic developments to the course being studied. These provide an answer to research question 3 and in that <u>there were diverse improvements to the pedagogy suggested</u> in the study.

Some of the suggested developments concern aspects of the increasingly standardised MBSR programme model and approach. As such they represent opportunities for the course being studied to journey towards greater fidelity with this programme model. Others concern the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness and represent opportunities for the course to journey towards greater integrity and authenticity in relation to the philosophy, approach, attitudes and practices of mindfulness itself.

Towards greater fidelity

The most prevalent and salient possible development that emerged from the data was the inclusion of a day retreat to the course being studied. As has been discussed previously (sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.5), a full day Zen Buddhist retreat forms part of the MBSR curriculum model (Santorelli, et al., 2017; Santorelli, 2014). Despite the barriers to including this in the course being studied, it is obviously an activity that appeals to the learners. As such, there exists the possibility to pursue this for future iterations of the course. If a day retreat were to be included in the course, it would increase the fidelity of the course with the standard MBSR programme model. However, in order to be faithful to the approach of constructivist pedagogy, mindfulness and my personal epistemology and beliefs, certain aspects would need to be considered.

Firstly, for the course being and studied and for AO-MBPs generally I feel that any retreat would need to be optional for the learners. This is because not all learners may be able to or wish to engage with this activity. Also, there would be addition time and financial requirements directed towards this activity. Further, those who may not wish to engage

in this activity should not be disadvantaged in any way from engaging with the course and/or achieving accreditation.

Secondly, the retreat would have to align with the wider open-access, pluralistic and spectrum-spanning nature of the course. As such, the venue for the course, the structure of the day and the activities and practices engaged with would all need to allow for this nature. Therefore, the retreat would not be a Zen retreat as it is in the MBSR programme model and so full fidelity would not be achieved regarding this. However, it would be based upon the standard formal and informal practices and the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness that it has been suggested here underpin growth in mindfulness.

Another possibility regarding retreats is that I coordinate with a range of external retreat centres and events and present these to the learners as optional activities. This would align with the nature of the course discussed above in allowing the learners to direct their own journey with mindfulness. This option becomes problematic in that there could be a difference in the setting, activities and quality between the course and the retreat centre. This may be of concern for the department and institution in which the course resides as there are often difficulties (including practical, marketing, health and safety, etc.) in working with external organisations.

Another feature of the standard MBSR programme model that the learners of the course being studied highlighted as a possible development was Yoga. This is another standard component of the MBSR programme model and features in the 'Authorized Curriculum Guide' document (Santorelli et al., 2017). Here Yoga practices are included in each session of the 8-week programme. As such, a large amount of class time is dedicated to it. It is also another teacher-led activity and so may contribute the tensions identified with this in mindfulness courses (Crane et al., 2015). The document prescribes that all MBSR teachers "actively demonstrate the yoga postures along with program participants" (Santorelli et al., p19). Thus, there is also a requirement for teachers to be well trained in Yoga and in teaching it.

Interestingly, instruction for Yoga activities do not feature in the MBI-TAC (Crane et al., 2012b) alongside instructions for the other formal and informal practices. Instructions for the MBSR floor practice from Hatha Yoga are given, however, in McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010, p201). Therefore, it appears that there is some confusion as to the role of Yoga in the teacher of the MBSR and its derivatives.

Whilst I agree that the teacher should co-journey with the learners whilst undertaking all activities and practices, I do not feel comfortable in including Yoga as a compulsory activity or in leading the practices myself. Therefore, If Yoga was to be included in the curriculum of the course being studied then it would also need to be optional. To achieve this, I could make MBSR-specific videos of the Yoga practices available to the learners on the course VLE and invite those that want to engage with it to do so as part of their personal journey.

Another complementary option would be to invite a Yoga teacher to one of the sessions of the course to lead the practices and I could co-journey with the learners in doing these. As with the possible inclusion of a retreat, this would result in the course moving toward greater fidelity with the MBSR programme model to some degree whilst remaining faithful to the constructivist nature of its pedagogy and the philosophy of mindfulness.

Towards greater integrity and authenticity

From the data a pattern emerged that <u>learners desired to continue their practise and study of mindfulness</u>. Some learners suggested experiential follow-on courses, such as the one I offer alongside the course being studied. Others suggested follow-on courses that were academic in orientation. The results of this study suggest that the AO-MBP format allows for both of these pathways to be explored simultaneously.

The development of further follow-on courses would facilitate the continuation of the personal, co- and lifelong journeying of mindfulness. It would also provide an opportunity for learners to develop their knowledge and understanding of mindfulness.

In addition, as I have argued for in this thesis, AO-MBPs could also support the field as it moves forward by developing the academic and critical analysis of itself at the undergraduate level and beyond.

Another area of interest in the study regards the assessment component of MBPs. Going forward, there was evidence in this study that learners would prefer greater choice and flexibility regarding the assignment question and the medium by which it is presented. Such developments would move this component toward greater authenticity in terms of constructivist pedagogy and the mindfulness approach.

Two clear patterns emerged regarding the exploration of the ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness. Regarding the latter it emerged that <u>learners had divided opinions of on the role of the exploration of the spiritual dimension in mindfulness</u>. For some this was an important part of their personal exploration of mindfulness. This seemed particularly valid for those who were already on a spiritual or faith-based journey. It was clear from the data that <u>learners preferred a learner-led, self-directed and value-free to ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness</u>. This finding is extremely interesting in light of many in the field advocating that mindfulness needs to lean back into its Buddhist roots to address these dimensions (e.g. O'Donnell, 2015; Monteiro, 2015). How mindfulness can explore them from within a constructivist-based pedagogical approach as preferred by the learners of the course being studied seems a major area of future development.

Aspects of communal constructivism (Holmes et al., 2001) studied in the learner survey support the possibility of pedagogical developments toward this approach. Opportunities to create and share mindfulness practices were favoured most and provides an interesting area for application and study. Interestingly, opportunities for learners to teach each other, a core component of constructivist pedagogy, was favoured least. This may have been due to the flaw in constructivist pedagogy highlighted by Dziubiniski (2015) that learners often do not possess or do not perceive themselves to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in this type of activity.

One promising development that may provide a method to develop both research and pedagogy in mindfulness is the Practice Quality-Mindfulness (PQ-M) instrument developed by Del Re et al., (2013). This is an instrument designed to be completed immediately following a mindfulness practice and contains 3 questions concerning attention, in terms of its orientation during the experience, and a further three concerning receptivity to the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness, such as non-judgement, acceptance, etc. In this type of activity, I recognise much opportunity to support the reflective activities that follow a mindfulness practice or activity on the course being studied.

Further, from a pedagogical perspective, such directed reflection may serve to facilitate the group discussions that are encouraged as part of the reflection activities. Interestingly, Del Re et al., (*ibid*) suggest that mobile technologies could be used to collate the reflections based upon the PQ-M. Although they discuss the possibilities of this in terms of empirical study, I also recognise the pedagogic opportunities here as this may provide a method for individuals to share their reflections anonymously, but the dynamic of the whole group responses could be displayed and used as a source of information for the reflective discussions.

Another method with considerable potential here is the Experience Sampling Method (ESM). In their advocacy of this method, Larson and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) discuss its use in collecting data from participants' everyday lives using new technologies that would alert and invite the completion of often shortened measurement instruments at either random or pre-defined times. I certainly feel that this method could be used to measure state mindfulness during a mindfulness course and that the data provided could illuminate the processes that underpin any growth. Further, I also feel that this could be collated and used to provide emerging feedback for the whole group in an anonymised manner that would offer information for reflective discussions and inter-learner support.

However, the ESM method is still in its infancy (particularly in relation to the use of new technologies) and requires further development going forward. As a method to collect data concerning in-the-moment experiences, I recognise that it holds considerable promise for the field of mindfulness. I also recognise the role that biological measures of mindfulness, such as heart-rate variability (HRV) used in HeartMath coaching that I undertake, could play in measuring state mindfulness.

The comments regarding the ending of the course are extremely interesting to me and represent possible developments that would aid the pedagogical nature of the course and the personal journeying aspect of mindfulness. Here, Angela suggested that a gap between the penultimate and final session would be beneficial for learners to consolidate their learning, continue to practise outside of the class environment before returning to discuss possible ways of overcoming any barriers experienced (see section 7.3.2).

One of the most salient findings of the study was that <u>the accommodation for the course was an area of concern</u>. Despite the difficulties of addressing this found in the teacher reflective account, this does represent an area which could improve the experience of the course. Finding a setting that is more conducive to the teaching and learning of mindfulness in its AO-MBP context represents a major challenge and further research is required that builds upon the mixed findings from studies into effective constructivist and adult-based learning environments (e.g. Gijbels et al., 2008; Kirshner, Sweller and Clark, 2006; Loyens and Gijbels, 2008).

8.2 Generative mechanisms

With the tendencies identified and thickly redescribed, the generative mechanisms that underpinned their expression in the course being studied can be theorised. These are categorised and discussed as:

1. Teacher factors

2. Course factors
3. Learner factors
4. Field factors.

Whilst I feel that an analysis of the relationships between these factors was beyond the scope of this study, they do represent an extremely important area of research going forward. Here they will be discussed individually and feature in **bold** text. As generative mechanisms they represented features of the course that I deem to contribute to the expression of the tendencies in a causal manner. As such, the changing of each feature would have an impact upon the expression of the tendencies found.

8.2.1 Teacher factors

One key generative mechanism that I infer to underpin the expression of the tendencies in the course being studied is **the pedagogic approach of the teacher**. In this thesis I have articulated my personal epistemology and constructivist-based pedagogic approach. Holding this approach allows me to recognise and effectively apply the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness to the course. Such effectiveness would be impacted by a teacher who did not hold this approach and I argue that such contextual features of the teacher of MBPs should be articulated in all studies of mindfulness.

The experience of the teacher is another generative mechanism inferred to be at play in the course. Here, my experience of teaching at many different levels of education and in applying constructivist-based pedagogies (such as PBL) provides me with the confidence and understanding to not only apply the approach effectively, but also to recognise its limitations and practical difficulties. An example of this emerged from the findings relating to the sharing of learner experiences, whereby I acknowledged the importance of such sharing but did not make it a requirement in any way. In doing this, I feel that I was being authentic to the approach of mindfulness itself, which recognises the personal and inside-out nature of its journey.

Another important aspect of the experience of the teacher relates to their experience as a practitioner of mindfulness. This, along with the degree to which the teacher embodies the mindfulness approach, has been found to be extremely important to the pedagogy and experiences of learners in MBPs (van Aalderen et al., 2012). Different experiences would undoubtedly impact upon the pedagogic expression of the course in terms of these areas.

A further teacher factor that can be theorised to underpin the expression of the tendencies is **the knowledge of the teacher**. Here, I feel that my knowledge of mindfulness and associated fields placed me in a strong position to be able to teach a course that aims to span the spectrums of mindfulness. Although the teacher acts as facilitator in constructivist-based pedagogies, the knowledge of the teacher is crucial for the preparation of learning experiences, for moments of teacher-learner inquiry and for the presentation of Homiletic content. A teacher with a different level of knowledge regarding the diverse and inter-disciplinary content of mindfulness may have greater or lesser confidence in teaching an AO-MBP that inherently seeks to allow the exploration of this content.

The final teacher factor that I infer to have a causal role is **the skill of the teacher**. In the analysis of the data for this study I found a key theme that referenced my skill as a teacher (see section 7.2.1). Whilst these were overwhelmingly positive, there were some experiences that both learners and I had in which my skill in handling situations could be improved. The main example from the results concern the disruptive student (see section 7.5.1) in one of the groups. Another teacher with different skills may have responded more or less effectively in this situation. Here, greater fidelity to the group contract aspect of the MBSR programme model, rather than the informal learner discussions regarding group behaviour in the course being studied, may be beneficial where appropriate.

8.2.2 Course factors

A generative mechanism here is **the nature of the pedagogical approach** of the course being studied. I also consider **the orientation of the course** and **the organisation of the course** to be related drivers in the expression of the tendencies. For these, the academic, adult, lifelong learning and spectrum spanning orientations of the course requires a constructivist-based pedagogy to allow for the learners to explore mindfulness in relation to their personal aims, intentions, interests and journeys. Whilst there are central components of the course that demonstrated high fidelity to the MBSR programme model and activities that were teacher-led, the pattern emerged that <u>the course was effective in balancing the different pedagogical demands of being an AO-MBP</u> within the wider constructivist-based pedagogical approach adopted. I feel that the pedagogical approach allowed for this balancing to a degree that other approaches may not have.

The adoption of different pedagogical approaches may well lead to the expression of different tendencies. Indeed, this may well be appropriate or desired for mindfulness courses with different orientations. For example, clinically-oriented MBPs may well adopt a more transmission-based pedagogy that aligns with that discourse. Creative, personal development or spiritually-oriented MBPs may align better with a pedagogical approach that leans even further into constructivism.

Indeed, mindfulness could well be fertile ground for the development of pedagogical approaches as it has such diverse range of MBPs. A critical realist pedagogical approach could be extremely fruitful in guiding learners to explore their personal journeys and, as has been demonstrated in this study, there is much synergy between this stance and the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes of mindfulness. A pedagogical approach based upon the transformative-emancipatory perspective (Shannon-Baker, 2016; Mertens, 2003) discussed in section 4.2. also appears to align well with mindfulness and could be used in MBPs for marginalised groups. For such developments to occur, however, I argue that the diversity in the MBP family needs to be encouraged and celebrated rather than restricted and instrumentalised (Van Dam et al, 2009).

I also infer that **the approach of the institution/department** in which the course resides serves as a causal mechanism. By working in a department that is focussed upon lifelong learning I was encouraged and supported in developing the course with its constructivist-based pedagogical approach. MBPs that reside in different departments may find that different pedagogical approaches are encouraged or expected, and a different set of tendencies, patterns and experiences may emerge from it.

8.2.3 Learner factors

That the learners of the course were **adult-learners** is deemed to be a causal factor in the expression of the tendencies in the course being studied. The similarities between the constructivist nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness and the adult specific theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1984, 1980, 1975) is a factor I have identified as contributing to the finding that <u>learners were highly satisfied with the course</u>. The growing number of MBPs used in compulsory education and with children (e.g. the Mindfulness in Schools Project, evaluated by Kuyken et al., 2013) may well need to adopt a different pedagogical approach. Indeed, how the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes are taught and engaged in at this level needs careful consideration.

Being **self-enrolled learners** is also inferred to be important in the course being studied. I feel that this allows for the exploration of mindfulness to be effective with its academic, lifelong learning and personal journeying orientations. MBPs in which attendance is compulsory, such as some workplace interventions and/or courses, would present different pedagogical challenges due to different levels of engagement and willingness. Indeed, the findings from this study that there were some negative experiences with the pedagogical approach and academic-orientation of the course provides evidence for this view. I feel that only having difficulties with one member of the groups over the 11 iterations of the course was a testament to the learners' willingness to explore mindfulness in the manner that the course presented it. The significant disruption of the one learner was salient for both me and other learners, however. Therefore, the risks of disruptive members of the group has the potential to increase if engagement

with an MBP is compulsory. This is a significant issue for mindfulness in compulsory education settings. How a teacher of mindfulness manages, and is trained to manage, disruptive and/or challenging behaviour is an important area for the field to consider going forward.

8.2.4 Field factors

The existing models, frameworks and literature in the field that relate to pedagogical aspects of mindfulness are also theorised to be causal factors in the expression of the tendencies in the course being studied. Although I have argued against the increasing attempts to standardised and instrumentalise mindfulness through the dominant MBSR programme model, I have also discussed how I used the models, frameworks and literature to create the course being studied. This was particularly the case where the drive for fidelity was aligned with my motivation for integrity and authenticity to the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes of mindfulness. This is evident in the curriculum content that is included from the MBSR programme model documentation (Santorelli et al, 2017; 2014). Indeed, it was found that <u>learners had a positive experience of the MBSR components of the course</u> and I have argued that these aspects contributed greatly to the growth in mindfulness and associated benefits experienced. Thus, the use and development of these models and frameworks, and their articulation and evaluation in peer-reviewed literature, are to be encouraged.

In addition, the majority of the pedagogical properties investigated in this research emerged from previous studies that were based upon existing MBPs (usually, but not univerally, MBSR). Therefore, their application and inclusion are important for any MBP that wants to lean into and draw from the growing evidence-base for mindfulness (as discussed in section 2.1), including AO-MBPs. Clearly, each MBP is modelled upon a different programme model to varying degrees and this has the potential to produce different experiences, patterns and tendencies than those found here. Whilst I argue for the importance of basing MBPs within existing programme models, I have also stated in this thesis my position that aligns with that of Dobkin and Hassed (2016). This position argues that teachers need to retain a degree of professional flexibility with the form of

any MBP to allow for greater contextual faithfulness to the philosophy of mindfulness itself.

I have also argued in this thesis that the academic field of mindfulness is an important element in the curriculum of AO-MBPs. In this study I infer that **the issues and debates** in the field also contribute to the expression of the tendencies found in this study. They provide the contemporary field-specific topics for learners to consider at the appropriate level for the course. The differing perspectives on these topics discussed in section 2.5 allow for the critical analysis of the field as a distinct learning objective of the course and to support the personal journeys of the learners. This is particularly important for the course being studied and for AO-MBPs going forward as <u>learners enrolled on the course for a variety of reasons and with a variety of expectations</u>. Indeed, the critical evaluation of the field, coupled with the MBSR-based content concerning the scientific, biological and psychological aspects of mindfulness, would have been particularly beneficial to the many learners who enrolled on the course because they wanted to apply or study mindfulness further in their current or future profession (see section 7.3.1 for individual themes and experiences).

In relation to the previous generative mechanism, I also deem **the inter-disciplinary nature of mindfulness** to be a causal factor at play in the findings. This is again important for personal journeying and allows for learner-led and self-directed learning to occur. As I noted in my teacher reflective account (see section 7.5), it was clear that different learners are more interested in certain aspects of the academic content of the course than others. Therefore, had the course not spanned the spectrums and the inter-disciplinary nature of mindfulness, the experiences, patterns and tendencies found may have appeared differently. As discussed preciously in this chapter, I feel that I have the knowledge and/or expertise to present the course in this manner. Other teachers may have more or less knowledge and/or expertise, and this would also impact upon the tendencies of the course. How the teachers of AO-MBPs are trained and supported to do this is a vital area of further research, development, and collaboration. The opportunities that I see in these areas will be discussed further in chapter 10.

8.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter the four tendencies that emerged from the data analysis have been discussed. In doing this the first four research questions have been answered. In essence, the course being studied was found to be effective as a mindfulness intervention and as a HE-based academic-oriented course. The constructivist-based pedagogical approach allows for the effective balancing of the competing demands of these two aims. Whilst the overwhelming number of experiences of the teacher and learners of the course were positive, a range of areas where pedagogical improvement could be developed were identified. Some of these would align the course more with the standard MBSR programme model and others with a greater expression of integrity and authenticity to the approach, philosophy, practices and attitudes of mindfulness itself.

With the tendencies illuminated the 13 generative mechanism that I feel underpin the expression of the them were presented. These causal factors were categorised as teacher factors, learner factors, course factors and field factors. The causal power of these mechanisms has been highlighted and research concerning such impacts is deemed to be vitally important for the development of AO-MBPs going forward, as is the investigation of the relationships between the factors.

With the identification of the generative mechanisms, tendencies, patterns of events and experiences I was able to address the final research question, being:

5. Based upon the findings of research questions 1 to 4, what recommendations and guidance can be provided for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of AO-MBPs?

The following chapter aims to answer this question through the development of an emerging guidance framework for AO-MBPs.

|Chapter 9: An emerging AO-MBP guidance framework

"Guiding future journeys"

In providing answers to research questions 1 to 4, the findings discussed in the previous chapter illuminated the generative mechanisms theorised to be at work in the course being studied. Through the process of retroduction the manifestations of these underpinnings were identified from the tendencies, patterns of events and individual experiences presented. It is from these findings that answers can be inferred for the final research question, being "What recommendations and guidance can be provided for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of AO-MBPs?".

The answers to this question are formulated into a guidance framework that can support the application and development of such programmes going forward. In line with the philosophy and approach of this study and mindfulness itself, this guidance framework is presented with an organic, flexible and ever-growing nature. In producing it I hope that others who work within the distinct AO-MBP approach will contribute to its co-construction. As such, it provides the first steps on a new pathway on which others can follow and/or lead ahead.

A summary of the framework of recommendations and guidance can be seen in table 9.1. In essence it concerns pedagogical, course and evaluation factors. These will be discussed in depth here based upon the findings from this study and supporting literature from relevant fields. Three examples of AO-MBPs designed to be embedded within other programme areas will then be presented in an illustration of the application of the framework.

9.1 Pedagogical factors

A central argument that I make in this thesis is that every programme of study should be constructed upon the theoretical basis in which it is grounded (McLoed, 2003). By adopting this approach, a high level of authenticity should manifest itself in the pedagogy of the course and in its teaching and learning experiences. From the critical

reflection and analysis of the course being studied here, such a pedagogical approach can be developed that intends to do this for mindfulness.

9.1.2 Pedagogical Approach

The AO-MBP approach is presented as one in which the disparate and often competing pedagogical demands of mindfulness can be accommodated, considered and cultivated. These demands emerge from the complex environment of the field of mindfulness and manifest themselves in the various perspectives, discourses and approaches to mindfulness (McCown, 2017, 2014; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). They also manifest themselves in the teaching of mindfulness as distinct subject (Crane et al., 2012; Crane et al; 2015; van Aalderen et al., 2012). Whereas an MBP with a specific orientation may be designed, developed, implemented and evaluative from within its corresponding discourse at the exclusion of other perspectives, the AO-MBP seeks a pedagogical position in which the varied spectrums of mindfulness may exist and be explored accordingly. Such spectrums concern the discourses of East/West and Scientific/Pedagogic, the varying contexts of MBPs and the range of aims, intentions (Crane, 2016), reasons, expectations and pathways (as found in this study) of the learners of mindfulness in HE settings.

To accommodate the pedagogical demands of teaching mindfulness as a distinct subject, it is suggested that an AO-MBP adopt a constructivist-based pedagogic approach. Doing this will allow for and promote the authentic expression of the philosophy, approach, practices and attitudes of mindfulness itself. This will facilitate the AO-MBP in being flexible enough to be contextually effective whilst also containing a degree of fidelity to standardised mindfulness programme models, such as the influential MBSR model.

Table 9.1

An overview of the AO-MBP guidance framework (continued overleaf).

Feature of course	Recommendations and guidance
Pedagogical approach	Constructivist-based, flexible, differentiated and inclusive – optional enrolment, no prerequisites, pre-course or introductory activities to identify learner personal journeys and experience of mindfulness
Title, description and advertising	Accurate and transparent - expressing pedagogical approach, curriculum content and assessment/accreditation approach
Aims, objectives and outcomes	Representing both the academic, interventionist and experiential nature, appropriate for level of study and subject-area context
Accommodation	A room that is conducive to both the practice and academic exploration of mindfulness, with limited distractions and suitable furniture – different rooms may be sought for practise and academic components
Length of course	8 – 10 weeks (short-course), full academic year (under/post-graduate module), recommended minimum of 2-hours per week but dependent upon context
Academic content	Contextualised for the subject-matter of the course, possible topics include the history, approach, theoretical-basis, evidence, specific applied areas, issues and debates of mindfulness
Mindfulness practices	Selected MBSR Standard formal and informal practices, additional contextualised practices – additional practises may also focus upon specific learner factors e.g. decision-making, time-management, exam performance, etc.
Attitudinal qualities	Standard MBSR – non-judgement, acceptance, non-agenda/non-striving, patience, trust, letting go/letting be, gentle curiosity, beginner's mind
Supporting activities	Focussed upon cultivating growth in the facets and attitudinal qualities of mindfulness, contextualised as appropriate
Measurement of growth	Modified FFMQ, MAAS or KIMS supported by additional quantitative and/or qualitative methods if desired – learners can be invited to include their personal growth data in the assessment component
Assessment	Contextualised, flexible, reflective, co-constructed, multi-modal, shared and optional as is appropriate – the assessment components could distinguish between the personal journeying and academic study of mindfulness

Feature of course	Recommendations and guidance
Assessment feedback	Cognitive and constructivist in nature, based upon learning objectives, institutional grading criteria and the personal journeying nature of mindfulness
Home practice	Present MBSR guidance but support flexible, learner-led approach – learners could be invited to include a critical reflection of their home practice as part of their assessment submission
Facilitating self-directed learning	Provide and/or signpost range of resources spanning spectrums of aims, intentions and pathways - the use of a VLE is advised to provide resources such as readings, video resources, forums, guided practices, etc.
Facilitating learner sharing	Utilise MBSR/MBI-TAC guidance, additional techniques (e.g. PQ-M, ESM, online forums, etc.) and purposeful groupings to facilitate sharing but without a requirement to do so
Facilitating teacher co-journeying	Teacher to engage with practices and activities where appropriate – this may also include the assessment component (particularly any personal reflection element)
Facilitating the exploration of moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions	Adopt a value-free, learner-led approach utilising existing religious and non-religious models as is appropriate - e.g. the Transformative Learning model, Buddhist perspectives, etc.
Facilitating consolidation	Consolidation week towards the end of the course (where appropriate)
Facilitating ongoing journeying	Offer follow-on courses (experiential and/or academic-oriented), retreats and signpost to other opportunities
Course evaluation	Use standardised measure for course as intervention (see measurement of growth above), adapted Kirkpatrick's (1996) model for academic-effectiveness
Teacher training	As per departmental/institutional requirements – optional training could include constructivist pedagogy training, inter-disciplinary teaching training, MBSR training, etc.
Teacher evaluation	Via departmental evaluation procedure and contextualised MBI-TAC (for external and/or self-evaluation) where appropriate
Teacher supervision	As per departmental/institutional requirements

It is suggested that the existing literature concerning these programme models and pedagogical aspects of mindfulness are consulted in the development of AO-MBPs (e.g. Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2005, 2011, 2013; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010; Crane et al., 2012; Santorelli, 2004, 2014; Crane, 2016; Santorelli et al., 2017).   Indeed, the programme model and 13 pedagogical properties chosen in this study provide useful (but not exhaustive) examples of this process.

The classic literature concerning constructivist pedagogy (e.g Yilmaz, 2008; Brooks and Brooks, 1999; Fosnot, 1996) is also readily available for the designer of an AO-MBP.   The characteristics and properties of this have been discussed at length and studied in detail in this study.   From these, suggestions for the implementation of selected pedagogical properties have emerged.

9.1.3 Facilitating selected pedagogical properties

Concerning the self-directed nature of constructivist pedagogy, the findings from this study suggest that this property is important to facilitating the personal journeying aspects of mindfulness in an AO-MBP.   Only by adopting a learner-led, active and contextualised approach can the spectrums that exists in mindfulness and its courses be explored and growth cultivated.   To facilitate this, I suggest that the AO-MBP makes extensive and effective use of VLEs.   Here, learners can be signposted, guided and supported in their personal exploration of mindfulness via resources that concern both the academic and experiential nature of the AO-MBP.   For example, theoretical and empirical resources can be offered alongside a range of guided practice resources.

The use of a VLE can also facilitate the sharing of learner experiences.   This could be achieved through such platforms as online forum's, discussion boards and/or blog entries.   As was found in this study, whilst learner appreciate the value of sharing their experiences with other learners there were some who found this difficult to do because of social anxieties.   Therefore, the VLE could provide an opportunity for learners who did not feel comfortable contributing in the class environment to still do so and, in the

process, enrich their learning journey and that of the other members of the group. It could also be used to facilitate a greater expression of the pedagogical approach in the assessment component. For example, from the discussions of the focus group in this study there emerged a preference for the use of a wider range of assessment methods and styles, such as ongoing reflective blogs.

A number of other activities could also be included to facilitate the sharing of learner experiences. For example, the PQ-M (Del Re et al., 2013) and ESM (Larson and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) techniques have been suggested in the previous chapter and could be implemented and investigated for their value.

The exploration of moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions in mindfulness has been discussed as an area of concern and competing perspectives (Monteiro, 2015; Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths, 2015). The findings from this study suggest that there is indeed a divide in the opinions of the importance of this amongst learners. Therefore, the learner-led, self-directed and value-free nature of the constructivist-based pedagogy of the AO-MBP is crucial to allow those learners who would like to explore these as part of their learning journey to do so. For those that wouldn't, there would be no requirement to do so.

An interesting finding from this study was that some learners suggested that there be a consolidation period towards the end of the course. The degree to which this is possible in an AO-MBP would of course be contextually dependent. However, many academic programmes, courses and modules include a reading week and a consolidation period may well be presented in a similar manner to the learners and to the department and/or institution in which the course resides. Such an inclusion may well allow learners to shape the content of the final session more and allow further questions about the continuation of the mindful journey to emerge for discussion.

A final specific pedagogic property for which this study yielded interesting findings is that of teacher co-journeying. This is an important factor in an MBP, both for the motivation of the teacher and for the learners and learning being guided in an embodied

manner by the teacher (van Aalderen et al., 2012). Despite this importance, the degree to which it can emerge and be effective in a course depends upon a number of factors. One factor is the pedagogical approach of the course. In adopting a socially constructed, co-journeying approach the AO-MBP would facilitate this process. Another factor is the approach of the teacher. For teacher co-journeying to occur the teacher must have a personal epistemology and skill set that facilitates it (with the latter requiring further research to uncover the skills that are relevant here and methods for developing them). Finally, there are a variety of learner factors that have an impact. As with the teacher, learners who recognise the importance and opportunity for this would facilitate it. As such, it may be something that the teacher and group discuss in the first session of the course.

9.2 Course factors

The findings from this study offers guidance concerning specific academic and HE-based aspects of the AO-MBP. These will be contextualised within the institution, department ad programme environment in which the AO-MBP is offered from. Generic guidance for the specific aspects will now be presented.

9.2.1 Title, description and marketing

As was found in this study and in previous research (Crane, 2016), prior information about the course provided to learners plays an important role in their enrolment and engagement. Here, the title of the course should accurately reflect its specific orientation and context. Its description in marketing information should express clearly the pedagogical approach, curriculum content and any assessment approach. Indeed, HE institutions in the UK are governed by Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) procedures regarding the accuracy of information provided to potential and/or existing learners (Competition and Markets Authority, 2015). Accordingly, the transparency and

accuracy of marketing material regarding courses is an essential aspect of these procedures.

9.2.2 Aims, objective and outcomes

The learning aims, objectives and outcomes for the AO-MBP need to effectively balance the demands of being an academic-oriented yet experience-based mindfulness course. They also need to consider the level of study and the academic-context or subject-area it is related to. For example, an AO-MBP with a psychological-orientation at undergraduate level would likely contain similar learning objectives to the course studied here in terms of the experiencing and practising of mindfulness. The academic objectives would likely be tailored to the specific psychological components, theories and studies of mindfulness chosen.

9.2.3 Accommodation

From this study there was a clear tendency that the accommodation had a negative impact upon the experience of learners. Again here, an effective balance needs to be found between a room that supports academic learning but also cultivates mindful experiences. From this study the careful consideration needs to be given to reducing possible distractions and to finding suitable furniture. Such a room may be difficult to find at an academic institution, but this is certainly an area to which AO-MBPS could contribute to existing research and knowledge concerning appropriate constructive-based learning environments.

A learning environment that itself represents the constructivist pedagogic approach would be ideal. This environment would be one that allows for flexibility in layout, furniture and use. It would facilitate the individual, group, teacher-led and learner-led aspects in a single room. For some AO-MBPs, however, it may be appropriate to use different rooms for the practise and academic study elements. For example, a seminar

or small-group room for the former and a lecture theatre or traditional classroom for the latter.

9.2.4 Length of course and facilitating ongoing journeying

Previous research has found that learners often consider the standard 8-week programme model as being too short (Finucane and Mercer, 2005). For the 10-week course studied here the learners tended to view the length as being appropriate. Whilst undergraduate and post-graduate academic-oriented courses exist that are longer, there is no data currently available concerning the impact or opinion of this. There is evidence for the effectiveness of course that are shorter than the 8-week model though (e.g. MacKenzie, Poulin and Seidman-Carlson, 2006). Therefore, it is advised here that an AO-MBP seeks to base itself upon the 8-week model but that this is contextualised to suit the subject-area, departmental and/or institutional influences that exist. Courses may be lengthened or shortened but the accommodation of certain curriculum components that have been associated with growth in mindfulness and its associated benefits is of paramount importance. In addition, the supporting of continuing the mindfulness journey could be made available through follow-on courses where appropriate.

9.2.5 Curriculum components

Based upon the findings of this study and from previous research, there appear to be certain curriculum components that cultivate the growth in mindfulness experienced by learners. As has been discussed in this thesis, some of these represent greater fidelity to the standard MBSR programme model and others greater flexibility.

It is advised here that any AO-MBP curriculum contains the standard formal and informal practices of the MBSR model (Santorelli et al., 2017; Santorelli, 2014). These practices can be amended and contextualised as is appropriate. It is advised that the standard attitudinal qualities of mindfulness are adopted and taught with a high level of

fidelity as it is inferred that these to underpin the growth cultivated through the practices. Any supporting individual or group activities should also be chosen for their ability to support the exploration and cultivation of these attitudinal qualities.

In terms of the academic content of the course it should include the standard MBSR-based information concerning the theory and science of mindfulness (Santorelli et al., 2017; Santorelli, 2014). I also suggest that the history, perspectives and issues and debates of mindfulness are also taught as these components allow for the development of academic-related knowledge, understanding and skills. The orientation of this academic-information should be context-specific to the aims and subject-area of the course.

Home practice has also been discussed as an important factor in this thesis (Parsons et al., 2017; Lloyd et al., 2017). Again, whilst there are rigid guidelines for this in the MBSR programme model (Santorelli et al., 2017), the authentic expression of the pedagogy of AO-MBPs necessitates a flexible approach here. I advise that the guidelines are given and discussed but that learners are encouraged to find a level of home practice that aligns with their personal journey and circumstances. The barriers to home practice could serve as an excellent discussion topic and could be considered a disorienting dilemma and explored using Mezirow's (2006) Transformative Learning model.

9.2.6 Accreditation, assessment and feedback

Where an AO-MBP carries accreditation the details, format and approach to the assessment component needs to be articulated clearly in the pre-course information. Where possible within each specific context of the course, the assessment component should be optional, reflective, co-constructed, multi-modal and shared. The use of learning technologies may facilitate this process.

Some AO-MBPs may choose to include one assessment assignment that has the elements mentioned above embedded within it, for example a critical reflective account

or the production of an artefact with a supporting document. Others may have different assignments for the personal journeying and the academic study components. In all cases the assessment component should seek to allow the learners to demonstrate the stated assessment outcomes through an assignment (or assignments) that embody elements of constructivist pedagogy.

The feedback for the assessment should be effectively balanced between the cognitive-orientation (usually relating to the departmental or institutional marking criteria) and constructive-orientation (Evans, 2013). The latter would serve to support the ongoing journeying of the learner and could take the form of comments on assignment work (as featured in this study) and/or other methods such as a post-assessment learning conversation.

9.3 Evaluation factors

As highly contextualised, organic and adaptive courses, each AO-MBP would need to demonstrate its effectiveness as a mindfulness intervention and as an academic programme of study. As has been discussed and implemented in this study, there exists a range of standardised measurement instruments and other approaches for the former (Grossman, 2011). This study has also proposed the use of an adapted evaluation framework developed by Kirkpatrick (1996) and applied to higher education (Praslova, 2010; Marks et al., 2017) to guide the latter. Both of these areas of evaluation also impact upon issues regarding the evaluation, training and supervision of AO-MPB teachers.

9.3.1 Measuring growth in mindfulness

To evaluate the course as a mindfulness intervention the growth in mindfulness of the learners could be measured at pre- and post-course intervals. For longer AO-MBPs, such

as undergraduate modules that span the academic year, there may be the opportunity for measurement at multiple points. There exist a range of quantitative instruments available for this and many have been discussed in this thesis. It is suggested here that one of the FFMQ, MAAS or KIMS is used due to the improvements made by Medvedev et al. (2016) to increase validity and reliability.

Whilst this study did not measure any factors that have been associated with a growth in mindfulness, the AO-MBP should seek to do this where appropriate and possible. However, in line with the philosophy and pedagogy of the AO-MBP approach, the course should not look to over-burden the learners or view them as object to study. New and developing approaches could be implemented here, such the ESM (Larson and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) or biofeedback measures (Carrol and Lustyk, 2018; Huanga et al., 2017).

To support and illuminate any quantitative growth in mindfulness the AO-MBP should also encourage learners to analyse their growth journeys using qualitative methods. In the course being studied here and in many other MBPs this is via a reflective journey and is often used as the assessment method. Whilst the reflective element seems suitable for mindfulness, the guidance regarding the assessment component given in this chapter should also be considered.

9.3.2 Course evaluation

In the course studied an adapted version of Kirkpatrick (1996) evaluation framework was employed. It is suggested here that this framework can be used for AO-MBPs as can accommodate any exiting EOCE's or other evaluation methods but allows for the consideration of other factors that have been increasingly considered as important in HE (Praslova, 2010; Marks et al., 2017). Table 3.7 of this thesis provides further information and sources of data for the application of this model to AO-MBPs.

9.3.3 Teacher/teaching evaluation

Finally, issues concerning the training, evaluation and supervision of mindfulness teachers have been discussed as attempts to standardise and professionalise the field. For the AO-MBP it is suggested that the teacher be evaluated using the standard departmental or intuitional methods. However, it is also suggested that the MBI-TAC may be contextualised and used for teacher self-evaluation (as in this study), for external assessment or both.

In terms of teacher training it is suggested that the departmental or institutional guidelines and requirement for teaching an academic course be followed. This can be supplemented by mindfulness-specific training that is relevant for the subject-area and for the level of expertise, experience and personal practice of the teacher. MBSR teacher training should not be a requirement but may be desirable for certain contexts (e.g. for a medical-related AO-MBP). Training in constructivist pedagogy and inter-disciplinary teaching would also be desirable and should be undertaken where possible.

Whereas a teacher of a clinical-oriented MBP requires ongoing clinical supervision, I argue that this is not necessary for the teacher of an AO-MBP. Rather, the teacher observation policy and procedures of the department or institution should be adopted and contextualised as necessary.

9.4 Examples of contextualised AO-MBPs

The course being studied here has been presented and evaluated as a short-course, stand-alone example of an AO-MBP. Using the AO-MBP guidance framework discussed in this chapter, further examples of AO-MBPs can be developed that are contextualised to other specific programme and/or subject areas. When considering the application of AO-MBPs to other programme areas I envisage that they could be offered where there exists a body of academic literature and empirical evidence that concerns mindfulness.

For example, a Business School department of a HE institution could offer a module concerning mindfulness and the workplace. Other areas could include Education, Medicine, Sociology, Social Work, Counselling and Psychology amongst many others.

For each programme and/or area the guidance framework could be applied to support its design, implementation, development and evaluation. The knowledge, experience, skill-set and approach of the teacher and the approach of the department would influence the course-orientation. With the characteristics of the learners, these factors would shape the context of the module. The main difference between such contextualised AO-MBP would be in relation to the academic content. However, a wide range of AO-MBPs could emerge from the application of the recommendation and guidance of the framework. Three examples will now be presented to demonstrate this range.

9.4.1 An AO-MBP for Education Studies

For this programme area an AO-MBP could be offered as an optional module at the undergraduate level. It could be titled 'Mindfulness in Education' and would contain the dual aims and objectives of developing personal learning and growth in mindfulness (and its associated benefits) alongside the academic study of mindfulness as applied to education. It could span the 3 terms of the academic year with and offer the appropriate amount of academic credit for such a module (e.g. 30 CATS). In spanning the three terms there would be naturally occurring consolidation periods at between terms 1 and 2, and terms 2 and 3. The assessment requirement could consist of a reflective account presentation of the learners' personal experience of mindfulness and a written critical evaluation of the application of mindfulness in either compulsory (primary or secondary) or post-compulsory education. The feedback for these would be both cognitive and constructive in nature and the blend would be appropriate to the assessment component.

In terms of the pedagogy, the module could take a blended learning approach in which the experiential elements of the course are undertaken in group sessions and the

academic content is accessed via a VLE. The group sessions could take place weekly in standard seminar rooms with a maximum of 20 learner in each group.   A pre-course online activity would introduce mindfulness, identify learner factors and also collect opinions regarding the standard formal and informal practices of the MBSR. From this information, selected practices will be explored in the group sessions alongside the standard attitudinal qualities. These could also include specific practices that may be beneficial for undergraduate students (e.g. stress-management, time-management, confidence, presentation skills, etc.). The module leader, having the required qualifications and/or experience deemed appropriate by the department or institution in which the module resided, would lead the guided practices and facilitate the discussions and activities. The VLE would provide additional resources to support home practice (via guided practices), opportunities to share experiences (via an online forum) and the further exploration of mindfulness (e.g. its history, issues and debates, moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions, etc.).

The VLE would also provide resources for the academic component of the module. This would include information (readings, videos, podcasts, etc.) concerning mindfulness as applied to primary, secondary and post-compulsory education (e.g. Kuyken et al., 2013; Hyland, 2012, 2015; Bright and Pokorny, 2013; Shapiro, Brown and Austin, 2011; Gold et al, 2009).   In an embodiment of the constructivist pedagogical approach, learners could choose one of these areas of education to focus upon for the academic assessment component.

The modified FFMQ could be used at pre-, mid- and post-course intervals and be available for the learner to use as part of their personal journey and/or assessment alongside being available to contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the course. The reflective accounts of the learners could also be used as qualitative data to for these purposes. The adapted Kirkpatrick (1996) model developed for this study could be applied as a framework for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the module.

To facilitate the sharing of learner experiences the module could make use of the PQ-R and live learner response software to collect anonymous feedback and to stimulate

discussion. The online forums contained in the VLE could also be used between each class-based session to allow for a continuous dialogue to which the learners and the teacher could contribute (thus facilitating teacher co-journeying). The VLE and forum could also be used to provide an ongoing platform for the learners to continue to explore mindfulness and share their journey beyond the module.

Finally, in order to lead and teach this module, the teacher could engage in constructivist-based, Blended Learning and VLE training as required. The teacher evaluation could be according to the departmental procedures for where the course resides with no additional supervision. Teacher self-reflection and evaluation that included the use of the MBI-TAC criteria could also feature.

9.4.2 An Inter-disciplinary AO-MBP

Another example of an AO-MBP could be as an optional interdisciplinary module offered to undergraduate students available across a broad (or even full) range of programme areas. As such, it would need to carry accreditation that was accepted by all of the programmes spanned. The module could be simply titled 'Mindfulness' and span the full academic year (benefitting from the naturally occurring consolidation periods).

The module leader, again having the required qualifications and/or experience deemed appropriate by the department or institution in which the module resided, would facilitate the small-group experiential sessions. These could be weekly 1-hour sessions in a standard seminar room. In the introductory session of the module mindfulness would be introduced and activities to identify learner factors and also collect opinions regarding the standard formal and informal practices of the MBSR would be undertaken. This information would shape the standard and additional practices explored in the experiential sessions. These could also include specific practices that may be beneficial for undergraduate students as in the previous example. The VLE would again provide additional resources to support home practice, opportunities to share experiences (and the further exploration of mindfulness.

The academic content of the module could be explored via weekly 2-hour lectures. These lectures could be co-taught by the module leader and specialist teachers from a range of disciplines where appropriate. The module leader could begin with several weeks of lectures exploring the definitions, history, approach, philosophy and attitudes of mindfulness before a cycling through of topics related to contemporary issues and debates in mindfulness discussed in this thesis (section 2.4). For example, a specialist teacher in Sociology could co-teach a session on the commodification of mindfulness and/or democracy and mindfulness. Other topics could concern neurological, clinical, psychological, philosophical (including ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions), religious and cultural aspects of mindfulness, along with specific application areas. For each of these a specialist would co-teach with the module leader (as a specialist in mindfulness) and further information signposted as references in the lectures and on the VLE area for the module. The literature discussed and referenced in chapter 2 of this thesis provides a good basis for the possible academic content of this module (e.g. Monteiro, 2015; O'Donnell, 2015; Hyland 2015; Comstock, 2015; Safran, 2014; Van Dam et al., 2009; Gethin, 2013).

The assessment component for the module could be the production of an assessment artefact with a written supporting document that contained a critical analysis of their own journey, a selected specialist area of mindfulness covered in the curriculum, and how these led to the production of the artefact. The mode of presentation for the artefact could be negotiated between the learner and the module leader, with the module outcomes being the key influence. The artefacts could be presented to other learners on the module (and even to a wider audience in a communal constructivist manner) at a showcasing event, with the supporting document being submitted for marking (with cognitive and constructive feedback given). To facilitate teacher co-journeying, the module leader could also contribute to the VLE forums and, where appropriate, even produce and present an artefact at the showcase event.

The modified FFMQ could again be used to collect quantitative growth data and the critical analysis of the journeys of the learners as qualitative data. Both could be used within the adapted Kirkpatrick (1996) framework for the evaluation of the effectiveness

of the module. Departmental procedures for teacher evaluation and supervision would again be sufficient. Training in interdisciplinary teaching and learning would also be beneficial for this module.

To facilitate the ongoing journey of mindfulness, the module could offer an optional yearly retreat gathering for previous learners. Here learners, the module leader and specialist teachers could explore, discuss and practise mindfulness together. This could be made available online for those who may not be able to attend in person.

9.4.4 An AO-MBP for Work Psychology

The final example presented is a proposed optional module for a postgraduate programme in Work Psychology. This would likely be a single term (10 week) accredited module with upon the dual aims of facilitating personal learning and growth in mindfulness (and its associated benefits) and the study of mindfulness as applied to the workplace.

As in common practice in postgraduate programmes in Work Psychology, a written case study analysis of a workplace scenario would constitute the assessment component. This could be weighted heavily (or fully) in the overall assessment approach to ensure the appropriate level of academic rigour for the postgraduate level and the subject area if necessary. It could be complimented by a weekly reflective account (e.g. blog entry or other negotiated method) requirement to consider the personal learning and growth aspect. These posts could be shared with the other learners in the group (and even beyond through negotiation) and could be available as data for the course evaluation.

With the 1 term schedule for the module a pre-course activity could be completed to introduce mindfulness and collect the information regarding practice preferences and the expectations and experiences of learners in relation to mindfulness. As with the other examples, a VLE could be used for this and also to provide further information, resources, opportunities to share experiences and to further explore mindfulness in a self-directed manner. It could also be used to facilitate home practice through the

availability of guided practice sessions and teacher co-journeying through an online forum or the weekly reflective account).

Alongside the blend of standard formal and informal practices constructed from the pre-course activity, the experiential element of the module could also explore practices and activities that have particular relevance for the workplace setting. These may include decision-making, planning, time-management, mindful communication, problem-solving, creativity and flow aspects amongst others.

The academic study of mindfulness could begin with the exploration of the definitions, history, approach, practices, attitudes and benefits of mindfulness before focussing upon specific aspects of mindfulness in the workplace. This study could be based upon the growing body of literature for this application. The MAPPG (2015) document contains a thorough review and discussion of the research and main opportunities and barriers in this area. This could be used as a basis of the academic content and be complimented by contemporary findings and commentary. Additionally, some of the issues and debates discussed in this thesis also relate to workplace and business topics (e.g. the commodification of mindfulness) and could be explored. The MAPPG (*ibid*) document also contains a series of case studies of attempts to apply mindfulness in different workplace settings. This information could be used to create the scenario(s) for the case analysis assessment component.

Unfortunately, due to the 1 term duration and the academic level of the module, a consolidation period might not be possible. A post-module follow-on retreat or gathering could be included, however. Here, reflections of the dual aspects of the module could be discussed and learner feedback regarding it collected in both quantitative (e.g. an EOCE) and qualitative (e.g. interviews or focus groups) formats. This data could contribute to the evaluation of the module from within the adapted Kirkpatrick (1996) framework. Requirements concerning teacher qualifications, training, evaluation and supervision would mirror those discussed in the previous examples.

9.5 Chapter summary

The guidance framework for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of AO-MBPs presented in this chapter provides an initial and flexible framework for those interested in providing such courses in HE settings. As such, it seeks to provide a greater degree of stability to the unstable ground of teaching mindfulness (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). It does this in a manner that actively seeks to align the constructivist-based nature of the pedagogy of mindfulness with its approach, philosophy, attitudes and practices. In leaning into both the existing programme models and literature of established mindfulness courses (particularly the MBSR) and the flexible, learner-centred and emergent nature of constructivism, it seeks to develop a new pathway on which both AO-MBPs and wider MBPs may travel. It offers a pathway towards greater fidelity, integrity *and* authenticity in mindfulness to mindfulness.

In addition to the course being studied here, three additional examples have been provided that illustrate how the framework could be used to design a range of AO-MBPs for differing programme areas. Each of these have the dual aims and objectives of facilitating personal learning and growth in mindfulness (and its associated benefits) alongside the academic study of it. The rationale for these aims and objectives rests upon the findings from this study that the AO-MBP approach can meet them in an effective manner.

|Chapter 10: Evaluations, applications, implications and

conclusions

"Looking back to move forward"

With the tendencies and generative mechanisms of the course inferred and used to answer the research questions, I proceed here to evaluate the study using the framework outlined in chapter 5. Direct applications to the development of the course being studied are discussed before a consideration of the wider possible applications of the AO-MBP approach. The implications of the study for the wider field of mindfulness and for research are also explored. This includes a statement of reflexivity in which I discuss my experiences and perspectives relating to the research process.

10.1 Evaluations

10.1.1 Revisiting the evaluation framework

The development of the evaluation framework for this study (table 5.2) was based upon its critical realism stance and mixed methods approach. As such, it includes considerations from a range of quantitative and qualitative evaluative approaches (Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2014; Shenton, 2004; Healy and Chad, 2000; Guba, 1981). Whilst these considerations have been discussed in previous chapters it seems important to return to these here in a holistic evaluation of the study.

As Shenton's (2004) model provided the most detailed approach by providing a set of provisions for effective research, it shall be used to frame the discussion. As has already been outlined, these provisions align with features of the other quantitative approaches and can be traced to quantitative criteria also. The exception to this is for Healy and Chad's (2000) 'ontological appropriateness' and Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado's (2014) 'Establish the concept validity of the research problem'. In chapter 5 I have argued that that these have been achieved in this study and are evident in the chapters in section one of this thesis. The multiple perspectives, discourses, spectrums and demands of the field of mindfulness have been discussed and their impact upon the pedagogy of mindfulness established using relevant and leading literature (e.g. Santorelli et al., 2017;

Crane, 2016; Santorelli, 2014, 2004; Crane et al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2013, 2011, 2005; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010).

The strength of the critical realist stance to frame the multi-dimensional environment of the research has also been articulated (chapter 4). The employment of this stance allowed me to investigate aspects of the course being studied that concerned issues of both fidelity to the standard MBSR-based programme model of mindfulness and of integrity to the philosophical and pedagogical nature of the mindfulness approach and practices. In sum, this involved the investigation of the effectiveness of the course as a mindfulness intervention and of its pedagogical nature, properties and possible development. The validity and value of research into these areas in mindfulness was also articulated and is shared by leading figures in the field (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010; Crane, 2016, Crane et al., 2015).

The mixed methods approach was employed within the critical realist stance to collect data from multiple sources in order to illicit themes, patterns of events and tendencies through the critical realist analytical process of retroduction. The appropriateness of mixed methods for use within the critical realist stance was also discussed and based upon established literature (Olsen, 2009; Symonds and Goddard, 2010). In addition, the other methodological approaches adopted (teacher-research, bricoleur and the adapted model for the evaluation of academic courses) were also justified within the overall framework of the critical realist stance. In doing this, I argue that the research meets Shenton's (2004) provision of adopting appropriate and recognised research methods.

In the detailed discussion of the different sources of data and the methods employed to collect and analyse the data I feel that the study allows for replication and scrutiny. Further it also meets the provisions of the 'Recognition of shortcomings in study's method and their potential effects' and 'Use of diagrams to demonstrate "audit trail"'.

In using multiple sources of data triangulation was achieved. This featured different methods and informants to reduce investigator bias and "compensates for their

individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits" (Shenton, 2004, p65). Further, the 'parallel-phase' mixed-methods design adopted for the study also allowed for the 'employment of "overlapping" methods' as each research question was answered using data from more than one source and method.

Where possible the study employed the random sampling technique to select participants in an attempt to increase the integrity of the sample (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). Unfortunately, this wasn't possible for all sources of data and this does represent a weakness of the study. However, the purposive sampling method was employed for the focus group participants and this yielded rich data from knowledgeable participants (Preissle et al., 2016) and represents an aspect of intra-participant member checking (Shenton, 2004). In another strength of the study, 'Negative case analysis' is achieved through the learner interviews as these were learners who either did not begin or did not complete the course.

The academic-reflective style of this thesis was also selected to meet provisions of Shenton's (2004) model and also to align with the ethical stance of the research and the personal journeying nature of mindfulness. In adopting this style, a reflective commentary is inherent throughout. In this the articulation and exploration of my own background, qualifications, experience, beliefs and assumptions have been made explicit and discussed in relation to the research. My experience and role as teacher-researcher at the institution in which the course being studied resided allows for the provision of 'Development of familiarity with culture of participating organisation' to be met. In detailing this familiarity and the context of the course being studied the provision of 'Background data to establish context of study' is also met.

The ontological, epistemological and methodological approach of the study required that there were 'Thick descriptions of phenomenon under scrutiny' and I feel that this provision has also met throughout the thesis. The critical realist analytical process of retroduction inherently contains processes in which there is the 'Examination of previous research to frame the findings' and that this involves 'member checks of data

collected and interpretations/theories formed'. For the latter, the focus group provided the opportunity for these participants to consider the findings from the other sources.

Finally, in terms of Shenton's (2004) provisions, the supervisory policy and procedures of the department in which this research was undertaken ensures that there were continual 'Debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors'.

In Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado's (2014) criteria model for mixed methods research they claim that a researcher should demonstrate 'Compliance with the validity criteria established in each research model'. In this study this has been achieved in the methods employed and in the style this thesis. The employment of statistical analysis and thematic analysis for the quantitative and qualitative data respectively represent standard and accepted approaches (Collins, 2016). I feel that the thesis managed to lean into the two forms of analysis well and that the critical realist stance and convergent parallel phase mixed methods design allowed for the effective integration and synthesis of the two forms in their contributions to the results and findings.

The employment of the standardised FFMQ instrument in the study ensures that the value judgement criteria were met for the main source of quantitative data (Baer et al., 2006). However, due to factors beyond the control of the study the adaptation and improvement of the FFMQ (using the procedure developed by Medvedev et al., 2016) was not be employed fully. As such, an adapted version had to be developed. Although I have argued that the adaptations were logical, this does represent an area of weakness in the study in which the validity of the FFMQ results can be questioned. If the FFMQ was the sole method used to measure growth in mindfulness, then this would represent a greater aspect of concern. However, as Shenton (2004) stated, the employment of mixed and multiple methods allows for the impact of such weaknesses to be reduced and I feel that this was the case in this study.

The evaluation framework on which the above evaluation was based was itself devised within an ethical stance that I adopted for the study. The research was planned and conducted with the aim of seeking transformation through exploration, explanation and

evaluation (Bryman, 2006). I feel that this was achieved in the study to a high degree and culminated in the production of the AO-MBP framework to guide the design, implementation, development and evaluation of such courses going forward. I have claimed that this provides a pathway to transform the pedagogy of mindfulness for my own teaching, other AO-MBPs and the wider field of mindfulness. In doing this I feel that the research contributed to all 3 levels of pedagogic research (personal, local and public) as suggested by Ashwin and Trigwell (2004).

I also feel that I approached the research and the writing of this thesis with a high degree of subjectivity, honesty and transparency (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007) and with an ethic of humility and fallibility. This is demonstrated in the reflective and reflexive components that weave throughout this thesis.

The ethic of fairness and balance was also achieved to a high degree in this research. The various methodological demands were approached and presented with balance and I feel that no one method was favoured over another. I also feel that the participants were treated fairly via the following of the institutional, departmental and BERA guidelines (BERA, 2011), along with my approach of performing research with people rather than on people (Greenwood, 2015). The balanced use of organically-occurring and novel data, coupled with not requiring additional clinical measures, meant that the participants were not over burdened by the research. I also demonstrate fairness to the institution in which the course resided by not identifying it specifically.

Rather than seeking generalisability for the findings of this research, I chose instead to seek relatability. Here, a value judgement is made upon the degree to which the findings from a study are applicable in other similar contexts (Dzakiria, 2012). Although every mindfulness course is considered unique (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010), there are various degrees of similarity between them. As such, I feel that the findings from this study are relatable to other mindfulness courses to varying degrees. I argue that the constructivist-based pedagogical approach adopted by the course being studied provides the most effective framework to hold all of the various perspectives and spectrums of mindfulness. The AO-MBP framework provides guidance for specific

pedagogical aspects of a course and these could be adopted, amended or applied for other mindfulness courses accordingly.

Overall, in relation to the evaluation framework employed in the study, I feel that this research demonstrates high levels of both compliance and integrity (Hinman, 2003). Compliance was shown to two established guidelines for conducting ethical research (BERA and the department in which this doctoral research was based). Integrity has been sought and demonstrated to a high level in the quality of scholarship, honesty and practices (Macfarlane, 2009). Using Collins' (2016) list of high-quality features of research, I feel that this study, its rationale and its methodological approach has been justified in this thesis. The processes involved in the research have been reported in a very transparent manner. The findings of the study and the production of the guidance framework are logical and defensible. The findings are applicable at many levels.

Despite my conclusion that this study represents high level research, I also acknowledge that there are several areas for improvement. These have been discussed as they have arisen in this thesis. The main weaknesses are the inability to apply Medvedev et al.'s (2016) improvements to the FFMQ faithfully and to obtain randomised samples for each of the sources of data. Other improvements could have been made by having a qualified MBI-TAC observer rate my teaching of the course and/or collecting feedback on issues related to teaching mindfulness specifically as part of the internal appraisal procedure of the department in which the course resided. Greater refinement of the learner survey would also have benefitted the study by providing more effective questions from which data with greater validity could emerge.

Another area of possible weakness in any research is that of confirmation bias. Confirmation bias, according to Nickerson (1998, p175), is the "seeking or interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectation, or a hypothesis in hand". The possibility of this occurring seems to me to be greater for the teacher-practitioner research undertaken in this study. My previous experiences of teaching the course being studied means that my perceptions of it were already well formed. These experiences and my perceptions are articulated in detail in this thesis in an attempt to

situate and embed the research within them in a transparent manner. The question that remains is how much did these experiences and perception influence the findings? To evaluate this, I lean upon Nickerson's (ibid) discussion of 3 manifestations of confirmation bias in research. These are:

1. **Looking only or primarily for positive cases** – referring to the researcher actively seeking information that confirms their beliefs or hypotheses
2. **Preferential treatment of evidence supporting existing beliefs** – referring to the tendency to give greater weight to information that is supportive of existing beliefs
3. **Overweighting positive confirmatory instances** - studies of social judgement tasks have demonstrated that people require less confirmatory information to accept a hypothesis than they do non-confirmatory information to reject it (Pyszczynski and Greenberg, 1987).

Based upon these manifestations I feel that confirmation bias did not have a significant impact upon this research. Although the majority of the findings from this research demonstrate the effectiveness of the pedagogy of the course being studied, weaknesses and improvements were actively sought in the learner survey, learner interviews and focus groups. These negative cases have been reported in a transparent manner in this thesis and their influences upon the emergent patterns of events and tendencies uncovered can be traced through the in-depth descriptions in the methodology, method, results and findings chapters.

The use of the standardised FFMQ instrument and statistical analysis for the data it provided ensures that there is no possibility of either of these manifestations for this aspect of the study. The course evaluation form also collected quantitative data in the form of objective ratings of aspects of the course. These, along with other quantitative-based responses in other sources of data, represent objective data in which the opportunity for bias was minimised.

For the qualitative data, the use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) well-established approach to thematic analysis was an attempt to minimise any bias in the analysis by following

their 6 steps in a transparent manner. To support this, I include examples of the thematic analysis for each of the qualitative sources to allow for scrutiny and evaluation (see appendices).

Another technique that I employed to minimise not only my own confirmation bias but that of the participants was through the focus group. This was used to provide intra-participant member checks of the data (Shenton, 2004) and act as a further mediating and validating procedure.

Finally, the critical realist process of retroduction requires that there is a clear and logical procedure for moving from experiences to patterns of events to tendencies. The theorising of generative mechanisms involves a cyclical process of checking and refinement by delving back into these findings. Overall, I feel that this process has been well adhered to and documented in this thesis.

10.1.2 Uniqueness and contribution

In the investigation of the varied but overlapping avenues of study this research was positioned to make significant and unique contributions to the development of AO-MBPs, other MBPs, the wider field of mindfulness and aspects of methodology.

By adopted a critical realist framework for the study this research uniquely set out to not only analyse the outcomes and experiences of an MBP, but also to examine and uncover the underlying causal mechanisms at play. At the point of writing this thesis, I could not find another study of mindfulness that sought to do this using this theoretical stance.

Through the production of the AO-MBP guidance framework (based upon the findings related to the research questions) the research makes a significant contribution to the development of a unique type of MBP. This framework can be applied directly to the

course being studied, to existing MBPs that share the features of the AO-MBP approach outlined in this thesis and to other AO-MBPs that may emerge in the future.

The guidance framework produced from this study can also be applied to existing and emerging non-academic MBPs where appropriate. Thus, it contributes to the small body of literature that seeks to offer guidance for the teacher of mindfulness courses regarding pedagogic aspects (e.g. Santorelli et al., 2017; Williams and Penman, 2011; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010).

By investigating its multi-faceted and complex environment this study also contributes to the critical evaluation of the wider field of mindfulness. In doing this the study uniquely focusses upon many aspects from the field that overlap and interact. These included:

1. The issues and debates in the field of mindfulness
2. The discourses, perspectives and approaches within mindfulness
3. The teacher of MBPs
4. The learners of MBPs
5. Pedagogical issues in mindfulness
6. Attempts to standardise and professionalise mindfulness
7. Research into mindfulness.

From my perspective and my position as a teacher of mindfulness, a deeper understanding of these complex areas is extremely valuable in supporting the field as it continues to develop.

By uniquely drawing upon aspects that sit within and also span the discourses this research allows for the employment of previously underused methodological approaches. The evaluation of such approaches is viewed to be extremely valuable as it may have the potential to facilitate more holistic and collaborative pathways for the study of mindfulness.

In addition, by focusing upon experiences (of the teacher and learners) and pedagogical development I feel that the study was authentic to the journeying and transformative nature of mindfulness itself. To facilitate the growth and development of the field in a direction that is more authentic to this nature is what I feel is the key contribution of this research.

10.2 Applications

This study has applications for both the course being studied and for the wider development and employment of AO-MBPs. The AO-MBP guidance framework provides a basis for both of these application areas.

10.2.1 To the course being studied

For the course being studied there are clear and direct applications offered by the guidance framework. Accommodating the course is a room that is more conducive to mindfulness seems to be a necessity. However, I have experienced barriers to this in previous attempts. Despite these, I will continue to seek to a solution to this issue.

In terms of the quantitative measurement of growth in mindfulness the improved FFMQ (Medvedev et al., 2015) could be used for the course going forward. In order to maintain the constructivist pedagogy of the course it would remain an option for the learners.

The assessment component of the course is an area in which there could be much improvement and possible research. To lean deeper into the constructivist pedagogy of the course the assessment component could be developed to be more flexible, learner-led and co-constructed. This could be in terms of the assessment question but also in terms of the assessment method and mode of presentation. There is also the possibility in the course to explore methods of communal constructivism, in which leaners share

their assessment submissions and/or other emergent contributions with other learners in the group and beyond (Holmes et al., 2001).

In terms of the practices included in the course, I could include more resources for MBSR-based Yoga practices and signpost these to learners better. This could be via the course VLE or by inviting an external leader to the sessions. To keep alignment with the constructivist pedagogy of the course this would be optional to the learners. The use of the VLE is better placed to achieve this but could be less effective for those who do want to engage with Yoga.

There are also applications from this study to the sharing of learner experiences in the course. Here I envisage the development, employment and studying of the PQ-M (Del Re et al., 2013). This will require collaboration with IT specialists to develop a mobile application via which learners can provide the required feedback. This feedback will then need to be collated and presented electronically. This could then be used in group discussions. The VLE forum could also be used more effectively with the weekly posting of a discussion topic. To align with the constructivist pedagogy of the course this could be learner-led. For example, purposeful groupings could be used to facilitate sharing and collaboration. Such groups could then be responsible for the posting of a question or comment each week.

The exploration of the moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness have been discussed as areas of difficulty for mindfulness generally. The application of the guidance framework suggestions to the course would require me to develop and signpost resources and activities that would facilitate these dimensions for those that wanted to explore them further. Such resources and activities could then be researched for their effectiveness. I envisage that they would be developed using aspects of Mezirow's Transformative Learning model (Mezirow, 2006), Transpersonal Psychology (Wilber, 1998; Buckler, 2013; Braud, 2006) and other models and approaches to these dimensions.

A final application from the guidance framework could be that an adapted MBI-TAC could be used to assess my teaching on the course. This could be used in conjunction with the external observation procedure of the department in which the course resides. A comparison between my self-assessment and an external assessment using this would also be a very interesting an area of future research.

10.2.2 To the development of AO-MBPs

The AO-MBP guidance presented in this thesis provides a stable but flexible framework for the application of AO-MBPs, both as stand-alone courses and as part of a wider academic programmes. Whereas the course studied provided an example of a short-course programme, other examples have also been presented to demonstrate the application of the framework. Future developments may also seek to produce a toolkit of specific teaching and learning activities and resources to compliment the framework in supporting those who wish to teach this variation of MBP.

The development of stand-alone or embedded AO-MBPs in HE settings would serve multiple purposes. Firstly, they would support the development of mindfulness as an academic field. This would be achieved via the critical analysis of mindfulness at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Secondly, they would allow mindfulness to develop in relation to the specific application and context to which the AO-MBP is positioned. Thirdly, the guidance framework produced for this research and other pedagogical developments could be implemented and studied in AO-MBPs. This is an area in which aspects of the 'contemplative turn' (Ergas, 2015, 2018) and the 'affective domain' (Hyland, 2014b) could be included (Ergas, 2018). Such implementations and research have a long history and an important role in HE teaching and learning. As I have argued is the case for this study, such findings will also have an impact upon the wider field of mindfulness itself. The fourth purpose would be to cultivate the development of higher order knowledge and skills for learners of AO-MBPs.

The final purpose also concerns the learners of mindfulness courses. This study demonstrates that the AO-MBP approach can cultivate academic development *and* growth in mindfulness and its related benefits. Therefore, through the wider application of AO-MBPs the benefits of mindfulness found in previous research concerning HE learners could be made available on a much wider scale than if clinical MBPs were offered as the only method of engaging with it. Thus, the benefits of the AO-MBP approach could span 'cognitive and academic performance', 'mental health and psychological wellbeing' and 'development of the whole person' as was found by Shapiro, Brown and Austin (2011).

10.2.3 To the wider HE environment

The potential benefits of AO-MBPs to HE learners discussed in the previous sub-section has macro and micro-level implications. Obviously, the benefits of mindfulness for HE learners found by Shapiro, Brown and Austin (2011) amongst others would be extremely useful to the learners themselves. In addition to this, AO-MBPs could also have significant benefits for HE institutions on a wider basis too.

Concern regarding student mental health in HE settings has grown in recent years. A recent publication as part of the WHO World Mental Health International College Students project (Auerbach et al., 2018) revealed the scale of the problem from over 13000 learners from 8 countries. Interestingly, whereas there was a clear finding that there were high levels of clinical mental health problems, they also reported that the prevalence of lower, sub- or pre- clinical levels of mental health problems were extremely high. Thus, whilst HE institutions have increased the availability of clinical services to meet the need at the clinical level, the AO-MBP approach offers a preventative pathway whereby learners with sub- or pre-clinical mental health issues could learn strategies and techniques to navigate these difficulties that is embedded in their academic programme. Such an approach could have significant wellbeing, performance and fiscal benefits for the institution.

Regehr, Glancy and Pitts (2013) discuss the preventative potential of mindfulness for university students in their meta-analysis of the benefits of cognitive, behavioural and mindfulness interventions. They conclude by stating that universities should make mindfulness-based programmes more widely available and, as was relevant in this study, develop courses that attract more male learners. With its dual purpose and embedded nature, the AO-MBP may be able to contribute to both of these in a significant manner. This could be through the development of stand-alone courses designed to meet the needs of male learners specifically and/or through the embedding of courses and modules within programme areas that have a significant proportion of males enrolled on them.

In a related area, issues regarding teacher mental health are becoming another area of concern (e.g. Gold et al., 2009). Although it represents an under-research area, teaching and other staff in HE institutions may also benefit from open-access AO-MBPs as was studied here. Indeed, over 65% of the learners who participated in the learner survey for this study were staff members at the HE institution at which the course was based. Thus, the AO-MBP approach has the potential to have benefits that span the whole HE institution environment. Hyland (2014b, p12) illustrates this holistic potential by stating that there is now "…evidence for the benefits of mindfulness strategies in diverse spheres of learning" including adult learners, traditional learners and in the workplace.

Alongside the increased awareness of student mental health issues in HE settings, there has also been a recent focus upon learner experiences more widely (Kember and Ginns, 2012). Accordingly, student satisfaction rates have become extremely important for institutions and in the United Kingdom (UK) these are measured in a standardised manner via the National Student Survey (Callender, Ramsden and Griggs, 2014). HE institutions are ranked according to the results of this survey and the findings are made available to the public (Ashby, Richardson and Woodley, 2011). Thus, programmes that receive high ratings of learner satisfaction become increasingly important to an institution. AO-MBPs, as suggested by the findings of this study, seem well placed to provide such learning experiences.

Another area that AO-MBPs seem well placed to contribute to is the widening participation (WP) agenda. As an adult-based, open access course residing in a department focussed upon lifelong learning, the course studied here demonstrates the potential of AO-MBPs to attract and support a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional learners. The constructivist-based pedagogy and spectrum-spanning and personal journeying orientation of this course is seen to be central to its ability to do this in an effective manner.

As has been mentioned in this thesis, such a spectrum-spanning approach to teaching mindfulness requires an interdisciplinary approach to frame the broad range of subjects and fields that mindfulness is related to. Interdisciplinary approaches are seen to be important to HE and are predicted to increase in the foreseeable future (Lyall et al., 2015). The interdisciplinary nature of the spectrum-spanning AO-MBP could be an important part of this increase. From my perspective and experience, AO-MBPs would need to be offered to the broadest range of learners as possible rather than being restricted to departments or programme areas (unless the contextual nature of the programme required or resulted in this). Leaning into the interdisciplinary nature of it could provide a pathway for such an offering.

As has been discussed in chapter 2, mindfulness has been strongly linked with contemplative pedagogy (Ergas, 2018) and has often been used and found to be the primary approach here (Keye and Pidgeon, 2013; Zajonc, 2013). As the AO-MBP seeks to integrate and embed mindfulness within the curriculum of the academic study of itself, it represents contemplative pedagogy. Whereas the guidance framework was produced from the findings of this study of mindfulness, other contemplative practices could adopt a similar approach. The inclusion of multiple programme offerings that sought to serve the dual purposes of increasing wellbeing and developing academic knowledge and skills would move a HE institution towards being more of a mindful, contemplative, healthy and high performing setting. The Institute for Transpersonal Education (Buckler, 2013) has led the development of such an institution and could serve as a framework for such developments whereby the programme content, pedagogical approaches and ethos are authentically aligned (Braud, 2006).

10.3 Implications

Along with the applications discussed above, this research also has many implications for the wider field of mindfulness and for research methodology.

10.3.1 For the wider field of mindfulness

The field of mindfulness has been presented in this thesis as one on which there are a range of often disparate and competing perspectives, approaches and discourses (Ie, Ngnoumen and Langer, 2014; Djikic, 2014; McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). The pedagogical demands that emerge from this complex environment create the "unstable ground" of teaching mindfulness proposed by McCown, Reibel and Micozzi (2010, p244). In essence these demands can be summarised as pressures to conform to standardised programme models in the drive for fidelity and pressures to authentically express the philosophy, approach and practices of mindfulness in its pedagogy.

The findings of this study have demonstrated that the AO-MBP approach offers the field a new pathway in which mindfulness can travel towards increased fidelity, integrity *and* authenticity. It offers the possibility of cultivating personal transformation whilst accommodating the Eastern, Western, Scientific and Pedagogic discourses.   It allows growth in clinical and non-clinical aspects that span the spectrum of reasons, expectation aims, intentions and pathways of learners that was discovered in this study and proposed by Crane (2016). Further, it allows for ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness to be explored by those learners for whom these are part of their personal journeying.

The pathway that the AO-MBP encourages may not be an easy one to travel on for the field. It requires the gatekeepers from the dominant Scientific discourse to adopt a different perspective - one of being 'flexible with the form but faithful to the philosophy' of mindfulness (Dobkin and Hassed, 2016). As I have argued in this thesis, the direction of travel for the field is towards greater standardisation, fidelity, quantification and

professionalisation. All of these lead to less flexibility but also less faithfulness and authenticity to the philosophy, approach, practices and pedagogy of mindfulness.

It appears then that the only basis for which the field of mindfulness can accommodate and cultivate its varied and complex characteristics in its teaching and learning is from a constructivist-based pedagogical approach. From this basis the characteristics of constructivist pedagogy (Yilmaz, 2008, Fosnot, 1996, Brooks and Brooks, 1999) can provide the flexible framework to allow learners to explore the varieties and complexities of mindfulness. In doing this the genuinely transformative potential of mindfulness can emerge in a personal manner.

The course being studied in this research demonstrates that a constructivist-based pedagogic approach can be the basis of an MBP that is effective as a mindfulness intervention and as an academic course. It also provides areas of development that could lead to greater fidelity and greater integrity and authenticity. The AO-MBP guidance framework developed from the findings provides a flexible framework from which to explore this new pathway.

10.3.2 For research

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of the critical realist stance and mixed methods approach for the study of mindfulness. These allow for research that spans the various discourses, perspectives and spectrums in mindfulness. As has been argued in this thesis, each mindfulness course should seek to demonstrate its outcome-effectiveness and also explore the pedagogical underpinnings that support the outcomes (Crane, 2016). Such a theoretical and methodological approach would allow for both clinical and pedagogic, and quantitative and qualitative research to be performed concurrently and coherently. Here the established and developing measurement instruments and qualitative methods could be employed.

This study also suggests that collecting data from a wide variety of sources in mindfulness research can provide can allow for holistic and triangulated findings to emerge. The critical realist process of retroduction is ideally placed to provide an analytical framework for such research. By being authentic to the co-journeying aspect of teaching mindfulness, research can adopt an ethic of research with people rather than on them (Greenwood, 2015). An important aspect of this is that the experiences and perspective of the teacher become an important source of data for any study of mindfulness. Doing this would allow for reflective commentary and reflectivity to provide thick descriptions of the unique context of any mindfulness course studied. It would also allow for the pedagogical approach of the course, and its expression through pedagogical properties, to be included as part of the study.

The AO-MBP guidance framework produced in this study provides many areas of future research for mindfulness course that are of an academic-orientation and those that are not. The suggested features of the framework could be implemented in various ways in mindfulness courses and their impact studied. Again, I suggest that both the outcome-effectiveness and experiential impact of such features become the focus of the study.

Not only does this research offer and support new pathways for research in the field of mindfulness, it also demonstrated that methodologies and methods exist to better study the varied and complex environments. The critical realist stance emerged to be effective for framing the complexities of this study. It also demonstrated effective alignment with the mixed method in support of previous commentaries (Olsen, 2009). Other environments that share such complexities could also apply the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted here.

This study also contributed to attempts to incorporate the fullness of the researcher into the research process (e.g. Bearance and Holmes, 2013; Luca, 2009; Bentz and Shapiro, 1998). Further, it demonstrated a pathway in which there can be an authentic expression of the philosophy, approach and epistemology of the researcher(s), the topic of study and the theoretical and methodological approach employed. This seems

particularly important in teacher-practitioner research due to the central role of the researcher and their influence upon the outcome of the learning process.

10.3.3 For myself (a reflexive commentary)

The academic-reflective style of this thesis was chosen in order to allow me to weave in and make transparent my personal experiences and perspectives of the issues under study. In this sub-section I aim to provide a reflexive commentary on my personal journey in undertaking this research.

One of the biggest challenges of the research was in completing it alongside my working role and commitments. Taking the form of practitioner-research, the data for the study did emerge organically from my teaching of the course being studied. However, this wasn't my only teaching commitment during the study period and I also had other commitments and responsibilities relating to my role.   The balancing of these commitments with the completion of this research and thesis was at times very difficult and does highlight one of the key difficulties of performing practitioner research more widely.

As discussed in chapter 3, I embarked upon this research with a wealth of knowledge, qualifications and experience concerning mindfulness, education and research. With this I felt confident that I could undertake a complex study into the multi-faceted aspects of mindfulness and its pedagogy. However, I did often feel daunted by the enormity of this approach as the research advanced. The different topics, perspectives, discourses and spectrums at play required extensive literature reviews.   In addition, the employment of the mixed-methods, multiple data source, practitioner-based methodological approach also required significant study to craft the research appropriately and effectively. Not only did this approach place high demands in terms of time, it also created difficulties in terms of the production and size of this thesis. As a result, I was concerned that it would lack the required depth and/or clarity in certain sections. I was also concerned about the growing pace of publications in the field of

mindfulness (Black, 2017) and the impact upon the relevance and contribution of this research. For example, the authorised MBSR curriculum (Santorelli et al., 2017) was published mid-way through the research.

I feel that my understanding of the research process and methodological issues improved significantly from performing this study. Much of this is due to the ambitious approach to study the complexities at play. The importance of the consideration and alignment of ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives has become very apparent to me. How these then manifest themselves in the methods of data collection and analysis employed was something that many researchers also report to be extremely important and often absent in research publications (Shannon-Baker, 2016; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

One of the specific issues of methodology that did cause me great concern was the omission of the quantitative measurement of associated benefits of mindfulness that is found in many other studies of mindfulness (e.g. Gotink et al., 2015; Lenz, Hall and Smith, 2015). From the Scientific discourse perspective this represents a significant weakness of the study, alongside the lack of any control group or randomisation of conditions that are the hallmarks of high-quality quantitative research (MAPPG, 2015). In accepting these weaknesses, I feel that the mixed-methods approach provides sufficient balance and is appropriate for the discourse-spanning nature of the research.

A further concern for me in the research was that I was adopting a perspective that was critical of the increasing attempts to standardise and professionalise mindfulness through the MBSR programme model. In not having undertaken any specific training in MBSR I did worry that I was using this as a 'straw man' that did not express these attempts in the manner that I perceived them to. However, I remain confident that the attempts mentioned do represent a journeying towards greater standardisation. I also feel that the analysis of associated fields that have also travelled towards greater standardisation and professionalisation provide further evidence of this journeying for mindfulness. It would be wise to consult such fields going forward regarding these.

In a related issue, I was also concerned that the AO-MBP guidance framework produced from the findings of this research could itself be seen as an attempt to increase standardisation in the field. However, I present it as an emerging and flexible guidance framework rather than as a set of authorised prescriptions. In basing it in a constructivist-based pedagogy I feel confident that learner-centred contextualisation would guide the development of AO-MBPs going forward. Such inclusive development could well guide other MBPs and would provide balance to the increasing attempts at standardisation through exclusion.

Despite the concerns and difficulties of the research, I feel that it was a very positive experience in which I learned a significant amount about myself as a person, educator, researcher, mindfulness-practitioner and mindfulness teacher. Indeed, I have argued in this thesis that the person of the teacher is a significant factor in the pedagogy and learning experiences of mindfulness. I have also advocated for the increased articulation, consideration and study of teacher factors going forward. For me, this represents an exciting area of study for the field and one in which it could make significant contributions to other fields too.

Indeed, many exciting areas of possible future research have emerged from this study. The generative mechanisms identified, and the factors contained in the AO-MBP guidance framework, are ripe for empirical investigation. The study of these could also serve as a vehicle for the further development and application of theoretical and methodological approaches such as those employed here. In terms of my own research I recognise the potential of the Action Research approach (Davis et al., 2014) in developing the pedagogy of mindfulness in a manner that would allow for the authentic alignment of my personal epistemology, constructivism and the approach, philosophy, attitudes and practices of mindfulness. I look forward exploring these areas in future research.

10.4 Summary and conclusions

This research demonstrated the efficacy and feasibility of an AO-MBP course within the Lifelong Learning and HE environments. The academic-orientation of the course approach consisted of the learning and practising of standard and non-standard mindfulness content alongside the academic critical analysis of the wider field of mindfulness. Accreditation was offered for successful completion of the assessment component of the course.

The study of the course was positioned within the varied and complex environment of the developing field of mindfulness. Of major influence was the disparate and often competing discourses of the Eastern, Western, Scientific and Pedagogic perspectives (McCown, 2017; 2014). From within this environment there has emerged a number of issues that I used as the content for the critical analysis component of the course being studied. These included debates concerning the role of ethical, morals and spirituality in mindfulness (Monteiro, 2016; Shonin, Van Gordon and Griffiths, 2015); the position of mindfulness in relation to social action and democracy (Comstock, 2015; Hyde and LaPrad, 2015); the commodification of mindfulness (Safran, 2014); increasing movements towards greater secularisation, standardisation and professionalisation in mindfulness (Santorelli et al., 2017; O'Donnell, 2015; Gethin, 2013).

I have argued in this thesis that these issues and debates, along with the discourses, create pedagogical demands that have led to the teaching of mindfulness being described as "unstable ground" (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010, p3). In addition, each mindfulness teacher, leaner, course and setting are unique and exist within an environment that actively seeks to cultivate organic and emergent moment-to-moment awareness. The demands emerging from the drive towards greater fidelity to standardised teaching models and the associated supporting and dissenting perspectives have been discussed. I have also claimed that the drive for greater pedagogic integrity and authentic expression of the philosophy, approach and practices of mindfulness in its pedagogy has brought its own demands and pressures.

Through the employment of a convergent parallel phase mixed methods design within a critical realist framework data was collected from a range of quantitative and qualitative sources to evaluate the effectiveness and pedagogical nature of the course being studied. This was conducted in relation to 5 research questions.

Research question 1 was specifically concerned with whether the course being studied was effective as a mindfulness intervention. One aspect of this was the testing of growth in mindfulness using the standardised and improved FFMQ instrument. Data from other sources further illuminated the findings in relation to the learning, application and benefits of experiencing the course. The demonstration of the outcome effectiveness was a vital element of establishing a rationale for the overall AO-MBP approach.

The second research question concerned whether the course being studied was effective as a HE-based academic course. This was also a vital component of establishing the rationale of the AO-MBP approach, for it would need to demonstrate that its dual aims of facilitating personal learning and growth in mindfulness *and* the effective academic study of it could be met.

Research question 3 concerned the effectiveness of the pedagogical approach of the course in balancing the various demands that emerged from the dual aims. For this, the pedagogical approach was articulated, specific properties identified and data concerning learner and teacher reflections were analysed. This was to identify the underpinning mechanisms of the pedagogy that influenced the outcomes of the course in relation to the dual aims of it.

Research question 4 related directly to the analysis of the pedagogy of the course for research question 3. Here, possible pedagogic developments were sought from the data emerging from both the learners and teacher. The purpose of this was to answer research question 5, which concerned the development of a framework for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of AO-MBPs. I envisaged that this

framework could be applied to improve the course being studied and also to guide the development of other AO-MBPs going forward.

In total, seven sources of data emerged from myself as teacher of the course, previous learners of the course and course documentation. The study was conducted within an ethic of compliance, subjectivity, integrity, fairness, and transparency in the pursuit of producing high quality research (Collins, 2016; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007). An evaluation framework was devised to judge the quality of the research. This framework was based upon a number of established models for both the quantitative and qualitative components (Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado, 2014; Shenton, 2004; Healy and Chad, 2000; Guba, 1985).

Through the critical realist process of retroduction four tendencies emerged from the statistical and thematic analysis of the data collected. At this stage the transitive elements of the 'Empirical' and 'Actual' domains were being uncovered (Bhaskar, 2008). The four tendencies related to the first 4 research questions and were:

1. That the course is grounded in a constructivist pedagogical approach that allowed for an effective balance of the demands of it (RQ3)
2. That the learners of the course experience significant growth in mindfulness (RQ1)
3. That the course is effective as a HE-based academic-oriented course (RQ2)
4. That there are possible pedagogic improvements that would move the course towards greater fidelity, integrity and authenticity (RQ4)

To complete the process of retroduction and to illuminate the domain of the 'Real', I theorised the generative or causal mechanisms that underpinned the expression of these tendencies in the course being studied. They included factors relating to the teacher, course, learners and wider field of mindfulness. Changes in these factors would likely produce different experiences, patterns of events and tendencies to varying degrees. These changes, and their impact, represents a significant area of future research.

Through these findings this research made a significant contribution, not only to the outcome-focussed evidence-base for MBPs, but also in terms of illuminating the pedagogical processes that underpin such outcomes. Such findings are acknowledged to important in the field (Crane et al., 2015). However, the most significant contribution of this research was the production of the framework of guidance for the design, implementation, development and evaluation of AO-MBPs from the findings (RQ5). This was presented as the beginnings of flexible and ever-growing framework that could guide the application and research of pedagogical properties in academic-oriented mindfulness courses and beyond. As it emerged from genuine pedagogic research it has applications at the personal (for the course being studied), local (for other AO-MBPs) and public (for non-AO-MBP courses and courses that sought to combine academic learning with experiential practices) levels (Ashwin and Trigwell, 2004). The research also had implications for the study of mindfulness and for wider methodological concerns.

Overall, this research demonstrated that there are pathways for the field of mindfulness that journey towards increased fidelity, integrity *and* authenticity. There are pathways in which the disorienting dilemma and identity crisis that the field faces from the multiple discourses, perspectives, demands and debates can be transformed. The key to this transformation lies in the acceptance and cultivation of the multi-faceted nature of mindfulness and its courses, teachers, learners and settings. It lies in the authentic expression of the fundamental elements of mindfulness in its pedagogy. Such an expression would be based upon a foundation of present-moment awareness, acceptance, non-judgement, non-agenda, gentle curiosity, beginner's mind, trust and patience.

I have argued here that the best approach to support this transformation is to adopt and develop constructivism as the foundational pedagogical approach to mindfulness. Only from within this approach can personal, learner-led, organic and emergent learner journeys be supported. Its flexibility allows for the wide range of perspectives, discourses, practices and spectrums to be included in a course and selectively explored by learners in accordance to their own journeys.

The AO-MBP approach also supports the transformational journey by inviting learners to critically explore the field, including its evidence-base and debates. Further, this critical analysis of the field is crucial to the development of the field itself and is currently lacking at the undergraduate level. This study has also demonstrated that such an approach can be viable and effective in developing HE related skills at this level. It also supports learners who which to apply mindfulness concepts and/or practices in their current or future professions.

The constructivist-based pedagogical approach examined in this study and suggested in the emerging guidance framework would allow the field to be flexible with the form of mindfulness but remain faithful to, and authentically express, its philosophy (Dobkin and Hassed, 2016). The framework presented here gives many areas of guidance to achieve this but also contains numerous areas for future research in which both the outcome effectiveness of MBPs and the pedagogical approach and properties that underpin them could be uncovered. The critical realist stance and mixed methods approach has been shown to be extremely effective for such an endeavour.

Despite the many opportunities for the field of mindfulness express in this research, I do recognise that there may be significant barriers to the development of the new pathways. The presentation of the field in relation to discourses (McCown, 2017; 2014) allows us to recognise current barriers and predict future ones. The power to shape the discourse of mindfulness lies with those gatekeepers from the dominant Western and Scientific discourses (Hall, 1997). I have argued that there is existing evidence of coercion and surveillance in relation to prescribed and increasingly standardised norms (the MBSR-based programme model and the MBI-TAC), as proposed by Armstrong (2013) regarding discourses. These have been strengthened by increasing attempts to standardise teacher training routes and to develop the field as a profession.

By analysing similar fields that are further along the professionalisation process than mindfulness I predict that the gatekeepers of the field will continue to move towards the control of training, the regulation of standards and the admission (or not) of

individuals into the profession as described by Wilensky (1964). Further, in the debate concerning the commodification of mindfulness I found evidence of the field being shaped by market forces that seek "short-term, cost-effective interventions" and "evidence-based practice" that Lane, Stetler and Stour-Rostron (2014, p382) found in the field of coaching. From Hawkins' (2008) analysis of the same field I unfortunately predict that the gatekeepers of mindfulness will move to protect their status by restricting innovation and insisting upon formulaic accreditation and monitoring systems. As such, it is in danger of progressing towards being self-serving, insular and actually de-professionalised (Seddon and Brown, 1997).

Despite these bleak predictions, I do have hope that mindfulness will develop along different pathways. The existing variety of perspectives, approaches, practices and spectrums suggests that there will always be a diverse range of 'forms' of mindfulness based upon its foundation philosophy, approach and practices. For some this may be toward greater fidelity, secularisation, standardisation and professionalism. For others it may be a journey towards the Eastern, Contemplative and/or Buddhist bases of mindfulness. Others may wish to explore clinical, person development and/or spiritual dimensions. The academic-orientation pathway of this study represents yet another direction, but one in which all of the above are accepted and cultivated in support of genuinely transformative personal journeys.

The teacher of a mindfulness course is also on a personal journey that is shared with each learner and group. I argue here that teachers of mindfulness deserve more empirical attention. The articulation of the beliefs, experiences and perspectives of the teacher are essential to provide contextual information for the study of each course. When the teacher is also the researcher, as in this study, issues concerning the dual role of practitioner-teacher research in mindfulness need further investigation. Beyond this though, it is also important to consider how the journey of the teacher is influenced by teaching mindfulness and by the issues concerning the wider field.

As I have previously stated (section 1.1), I have witnessed genuinely transformative mindfulness-based journeys in myself and many clients and learners. Unfortunately, I

have to concur with critics of the current direction of the field of mindfulness who claim that it is in danger of reducing its transformative power due to increased secularisation, standardisation, instrumentalisation and professionalisation (Hyland, 2015; O'Donnell, 2015, Van Dam et al., 2009).   The constructivist-based AO-MBP approach offers a pathway in which the field of mindfulness and its teaching can embark upon a journey that could transform it from the inside-out. Such transformation is exactly the process that the philosophy, approach, attitudes and practices of mindfulness aims to cultivate. By travelling this path mindfulness can move towards greater fidelity, integrity and authenticity of itself. This pathway is defined by inclusion, not exclusion. It is defined by a flexibility of form but faithfulness of philosophy. It views mindfulness as a vehicle on which those onboard (learners, teachers and others) can travel in different directions whilst sharing the journey to the degree to which they do.

As with all journeys, when one part comes to an end, another part is usually just beginning. For this research, the course being studied, the development of the AO-MBP approach and myself, I hope that this end here marks the beginning of the next part of the never-ending journey of discovery.

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|Appendices

Appendix 1: A copy of the learner survey

Mindfulness for Everyday Living Course Survey

Edit this form 🔍 | View recent submissions 🔍

SECTION 1/4 – ABOUT YOU

How would you describe your gender?	○ Male ○ Female ○ Other
If other, please specify if you would like to:	
What age range do you belong to?	[-- -- ▾]
When did you attend the course?	[-- -- ▾]
What type of learner were you?	[-- -- ▾]
What were your reasons for enrolling on the course?	
What were your expectations upon beginning the course?	
Did you...	[-- -- ▾]
How often have you practiced mindfulness since you attended the course?	[-- -- ▾]

Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience of the course?

From your reflections of the course, how would you rate the effectiveness of the following?	1 (Extremely ineffective)	2 (Fairly ineffective)	3 (Neither effective nor ineffective)	4 (Fairly effective)	5 (Extremely effective)
The sharing of experiences	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for self-directed learning	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for learner participation	○	○	○	○	○
The teaching of mindfulness-related theory	○	○	○	○	○
The teaching of mindfulness practices	○	○	○	○	○
The promotion of personal confidence and control	○	○	○	○	○
Assessment (reflective account)	○	○	○	○	○
Sensitive teacher responses to learner contributions	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher acceptance and non-judgement	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher commitment to the mindfulness journey	○	○	○	○	○
The exploration of changes to behaviour	○	○	○	○	○
The exploration of ethics and morals	○	○	○	○	○
The exploration of spirituality	○	○	○	○	○

What are your thoughts on the length of the course (10 weeks)

Do you feel that the physical environment was conducive to the learning of mindfulness?

Please give any comments that you may have about your reflections of the course.

Do you have any suggestions for how to develop the course for the future?

SECTION 3/4 – YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT MINDFULNESS COURSES IN GENERAL

How important do you think the following are to mindfulness courses in general?	1 (Extremely unimportant)	2 (Fairly unimportant)	3 (Neither important nor unimportant)	4 (Fairly important)	5 (Extremely important)
The sharing of experiences	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for self-directed learning	○	○	○	○	○
Opportunities for learner participation	○	○	○	○	○
The teaching of mindfulness theory	○	○	○	○	○
The teaching of mindfulness practices	○	○	○	○	○
The promotion of personal confidence and control	○	○	○	○	○
Assessment	○	○	○	○	○
Sensitive teacher responses to learner contributions	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher acceptance and non-judgement	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher commitment to the mindfulness journey	○	○	○	○	○
The exploration of changes to behaviour	○	○	○	○	○
The exploration of ethics and morals	○	○	○	○	○
The exploration of spirituality	○	○	○	○	○

Please tick which of the following features you think would enhance the teaching and learning of a mindfulness course (tick as many as you wish).

☐ Opportunities for learners to teach each other

☐ Opportunities for learners to create and share their own guided mindfulness practices

☐ Opportunities for learners to communicate and share with learners of other mindfulness courses

☐ Online mindfulness courses

☐ Blended learning mindfulness courses

☐ Yoga practices

☐ Day retreats

☐ Longer retreats

☐ Links with other health and wellbeing courses

☐ A follow-on taught course

☐ A follow-on experiential course

Please add any addition features here.

SECTION 4/4 – FINAL THOUGHTS

Finally, do you have any further comments about the course or the teaching and learning of mindfulness generally?

Privacy statement

Your responses to the questions in this survey are anonymous and confidential.

Submit

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THIS INTERVIEW CONCERNS THE [COURSE BEING STUDIED] AND IS PART OF A RESEARCH PROJECT THAT IS INTERESTED IN PEOPLES EXPERIENCES OF THE COURSE. OF PARTICLUAR INTEREST ARE THE VIEWS OF THOSE WHO SIGNED UP TO THE COURSE AND EITHER DID NOT ATTEND OR LEFT PART WAY THROUGH.

MY RECORDS SHOW THAT YOU [EITHER DID NOT ATTEND (NS) OR ATTENDED ONLY A FEW SESSION (D)].

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO DISCUSS THIS IN MORE DETAIL NOW?

ALL RESPONSES WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL AND ANANYMOUS. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO REFRAIN FROM ANSWERING A QUESTION IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO.

ARE YOU HAPPY TO CONTINUE?

Q = Question, P = Prompt or probe

PART ONE – About you

Q: Can you tell me about your reasons for enrolling on the course and your understanding and experience of mindfulness before the course started?

P: Reasons, understanding and experience. Ask them whether they were members of staff, a student on another course at Warwick or a member of the community.

PART TWO – About the course

Q: What were your expectations of the course?

P: Link to previous question.

*Q: Can you tell me why you didn't attend or complete the course fully?

If (D):

Q: What are your reflections upon your experiences of the course for the sessions that you did attend?

P: Ask them to consider the following if they don't come up naturally in the response:

Sharing of learner experiences

Teacher responses to learner contributions
Learner empowerment
Self-directed learning
Learner participation
Teacher embodiment
Teacher acceptance and non-reactivity
Structure and content of course
Structure and activities of sessions
Assessment
Exploration of changes in behaviour
Exploration of moral and ethical dimensions
Exploration of spiritual dimension

ALL:

Q: What do you feel are important components of a mindfulness course and teacher?

P: Use table above.

PART THREE – Your learning preferences

Q: How would you describe the way in which you prefer to be taught, and to learn?

P: Use table above.

PART FOUR – Developments to the course

Q: Do you have any suggestions for the development of the Mindfulness for Everyday Living course and its teaching specifically?

PART FIVE – Finally

 Q: Do you have any other comments about the teacher, course or mindfulness in general?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS AT ALL TIMES. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO WITHDRAW YOUR INFORMATION FROM THE STUDY AT ANY TIME BEFORE IT GETS REPORTED PLEASE CONTACT THE RESEARCHER VIA THE ORIGINAL EMAIL THAT YOU RECEIVED REGARDING THIS RESEARCH.

Appendix 3: The focus group instructions

<u>Instructions</u>

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group concerning some of the contemporary issues in the teaching and learning of mindfulness. Your views are appreciated and will be an important source of data for my PhD project.

Please select a member of the group to act as a coordinator. Their role will be to keep the conversation flowing, introduce new topics and ensure sure that everyone who wants to contribute can do so.

Once you have selected the coordinator can they please read the rest of these instruction and take the pack of topic cards? These can be spread out on the floor in the middle of the chairs. Once the members have had a chance to look over the topic headings, the coordinator can then ask the group if anyone has a topic that they would like to discuss. That member can then pick up the topic card and read the further information on the back of the card to the group. The group can then discuss this topic, giving their views on it.

Once the coordinator feels it is time to move on, they can invite any member to select the next topic and so on until all of the topics have been discussed. When this has happened can the coordinator please ask for any other comments on any of the topics discussed or about wider topics related to mindfulness?

Once the group feel that they have made the comments that they would like to, the coordinator can bring the session to a close.

I will then return and manage the audio recorder.

Many thanks.

Dean.

ASSESSMENT IN MINDFULNESS COURSES

For mindfulness courses that are held at universities and colleges (and that are not specifically clinical), accreditation is often offered, which requires some form of assessment activity to be undertaken. This is usually in the form of a reflective essay (such as in the Mindfulness for Everyday Living course).

However, there may be scope for the assessment activity to be more authentic to the organic nature of mindfulness itself. Suggestions to do this include:

- The assessment (and, therefore, the accreditation) being optional
- learners selecting their own assessment question
- learners selecting their own presentation method (e.g. essay, painting, poetry, blog, photographs, etc.)
- learners selecting their preferred feedback method (e.g. written, oral, peer, etc.)
- the storing and sharing of assessment presentations to support the journey of other/future learners (with permission)

What thoughts do you have on these issues?

THE EXPLORATION OF ETHICS AND MORALS IN MINDFULNESS

This is one of the most popular issues in mindfulness at the moment. Early mindfulness courses were very secular and the exploration of morals and ethics were implicit (i.e. they were embedded in the ethos of the mindful approach) and discussed as an individual conception. Some later mindfulness courses discussed these in a more explicit way and often leaned back into Buddhism for the framework to do this.

Without the Buddhist framework, some say mindfulness is diluted. By leaning back into the Buddhist framework, some say mindfulness is "Buddhism through the back door" and fear that it may make some people less likely to engage with it.

What thoughts do you have on these issues?

THE EXPLORATION OF SPIRITUALITY IN MINDFULNESS

As modern mindfulness developed from 1979, it became very secular and clinical in nature. Some say that this represents a reduction of the original purpose and philosophy of mindfulness, saying that it is essentially a spiritual and transcendent practice.

To counter this, some have developed courses that explore the spiritual and transcendent aspects more. However, in doing so they have returned to the Buddhist roots of mindfulness. This leaves a large number of people who are not Buddhist (or are not religious at all) who would like to explore spirituality with mindfulness. As yet, mindfulness hasn't found a way to cater for such people. So, the question of how best to facilitate these people in a mindfulness course remains.

What thoughts do you have on these issues?

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness courses involve activities that are teacher-led (e.g. guided practices and theory information) and learner-led (e.g. discussions and reflective activities). Some in the field are trying to standardise the way in which mindfulness is taught and learned. Others criticise this and say that it goes against the organic and emergent philosophy of mindfulness. Further, some argue that mindfulness should become even more learner-led. Research has shown that even when the teacher prepares learner-led activities, the learners themselves often prefer a teacher-led approach (particularly in evening courses). So, there is a debate about whether an increase in learner-led activities is needed and, indeed, wanted by learners. If they are, exactly how to do this is yet to be understood.

Other questions here include how best to support self-directed learning and encourage home practice in mindfulness courses? The role of online resources is often discussed in relation to these.

What thoughts do you have on these issues?

CONTUNUING THE MINDFULNESS JOURNEY

Some have criticised the standard 8-week model of a mindfulness course for being too short and shallow, considering that mindfulness is a lifelong journey. At present, there aren't many follow-on courses. Those that are available are usually masters level programmes exploring the academic side of mindfulness or are teacher training programmes.

Few courses exist that are experiential and designed to support the personal and shared journey. Two popular ideas to do this from my research include regular meet-up retreats and follow-on courses that are associated with mindfulness (e.g. Yoga, wellbeing, art and creativity, etc.).

What thoughts do you have about ways to support people on a longer journey with mindfulness?

ENVIRONMENT AND ACCOMODATION

Mindfulness courses that are held in medical centres are often criticised for being too cold and clinical in terms of the room and environment. Mindfulness courses held at venues that are more authentic for mindfulness are often religious environments (even if the course itself isn't).

When held at an education institution, problems can occur with the academic-feel of the environment and with distractions from other courses, events and activities in nearby rooms. Further, some argue that a mindfulness room should allow for people to lie down or sit on cushions if they would like to. Others that a mindfulness group should always sit in a circle. So, the features of an environment that is conducive for mindfulness are hotly contested.

What thoughts do you have on these?

Appendix 4: Selected thematic analysis from the course evaluation form

Appendix 5: Selected thematic analysis from the learner survey

Appendix 6: Selected thematic analysis from the course documentation

Theme (sub-theme)	Prevalence
Positive comment	141
Tutor reflection or comment	79
Tutor question	52
Link to marking scheme	40
Link to personal journey	23
Link to content	22
Suggested improvement	5

Theme (sub-theme)	Prevalence
Link to marking scheme	93
Link to assignment content	54
Link to learner engagement	18
Link to future engagement	18
Link to uniqueness of journey	9

Appendix 7: Selected thematic analysis from the learner reflective account

Theme (sub-theme)	Prevalence
Greater awareness (of self)	69
Benefits of mindfulness	41
Application in everyday life (positive)	32
Greater awareness (of the mindful approach)	30
Greater awareness (of theory and science)	24
FFMQ	20
Standard Formal Practice (positive)	20
Embedding of practice in everyday life	18
Future (desire to continue)	15
Additional practice (positive)	13
Session activities (positive)	13
Standard Formal Practice (negative)	13
Greater awareness (of the challenge of mindfulness)	11
Sharing of learner experiences	11
Reasons for enrolment (personal)	9
Future (hope)	8
Link to religion	8
Uniqueness of journey	8
Prior awareness of mindfulness (high)	7
Alteration of time perception	5
Link to spirituality	5
Greater awareness (of others)	4
Reasons for enrolment (clinical)	4
Reasons for enrolment (work)	4
Standard Informal Practice (positive)	4
Additional practice (negative)	2

Appendix 8: Selected thematic analysis from the teacher reflective account

Theme (sub-theme)	Prevalence
Pedagogy	28
Stewardship of the group	26
Session (activities)	19
Session (practices)	19
Motivation	13
Homiletics 1 – Theory information	12
Sharing of learner experiences	12
Session (content)	9
Personal journeying	5
Co-journey	4
Course improvements	3
Session (structure)	3
The field of mindfulness	3
Accommodation	3
Assessment	3

Appendix 9: Selected thematic analysis from the learner interviews

Appendix 10: Selected thematic analysis from the focus group