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**Mindfulness in the classroom:
An exploration of
teachers' perceptions of well-being
in relation to
mindfulness-based classroom practices**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
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Abstract

The intersection between mindfulness and well-being is particularly salient, given a nascent field of international study has grown out of interest in what mindfulness can offer to enhance human well-being. Despite well-being forming an integral part of the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand curriculum, there is a surprising paucity of current research into teacher well-being in New Zealand, and an even greater scarcity of New Zealand based research into the potential impact of mindfulness-based practices on teacher and student well-being. This thesis aims to address this significant gap by exploring teachers' perceptions of well-being in relation to mindfulness-based practices.

Drawing upon hermeneutic phenomenology as a method of inquiry, this study reveals the essence of the ontological experiences of a group of nine New Zealand primary (elementary) school teachers as they explored the notion of well-being, considered the mindfulness construct in relation to their personal and professional well-being, interpreted and ultimately applied mindfulness principles to their classroom programmes. Data were collected in two phases over a 10 week period by way of teacher focus group meetings, in-class observations, de-briefings, and student focus group meetings. Researcher reflexivity is acknowledged through the use of autobiographical diary entries, woven throughout, as the super-ordinate themes of well-being and mindfulness are explored in relation to identity, authenticity, autonomy and 'Being'.

The findings have implications for educational theory, policy and practice. A key finding points to the development of a theory signifying the paradoxical nature of well-being as both an *experience* and a *state* of 'Being', and not necessarily as the result of being well. A second theory introduces the concept of *authenonomy*, suggesting the continuous interplay between authenticity and autonomy, when acknowledged and acted upon, may heighten teacher well-being. Finally, three broadly based categorisations of mindfulness classroom activities are presented, resulting in a framework created to assist teachers in implementing practices into their short and long term planning in manageable and creative ways. However, any such practices are not homogeneous, and need to be responsive to particular social and cultural contexts, and the character of students and schools.

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Dedication

My eternal love and gratefulness beyond measure is reserved for my husband, to whom this thesis is dedicated:

Richard John Davies

(October 1, 1954 – November 11, 2010).

Richard, I thank God for the transcendent power of love.

Near or far, your beautiful spirit resides with me,
and all that I am, rests forever with you.

Your love brought this thesis to life –
you are in every word.

This is for you,

Richie.

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Chapter ONE

Introduction

Background

My interest in the mindfulness phenomenon developed over several years, and although it is something I ‘learned’, I believe it is something I have always ‘known’. Perhaps that is why I found myself so drawn towards the works of contemporary spiritual philosopher Eckhart Tolle (2001/2009; 2004/2008; 2005) whose writings encompass a number of spiritual traditions including Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. Coming from a predominantly Christian background, Tolle’s philosophic spiritual mix was new to me, and I found myself absorbed in his meditations concerning present moment awareness and what he terms the only true happiness – the joy of Being (Tolle, 2005). Tolle’s commentaries on the ego, the pain body, consciousness and the power of ‘now’ seemed to trigger a responsiveness from within to something so profound, yet so utterly simple, that it required nothing from me other than to be aware. Later, the writings of spiritual leaders, contemplatives and compelling philosophers such as Deepak Chopra, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Anthony de Mello, Elizabeth Lesser, Wayne Dyer and Thich Nhat Hanh heightened my awareness of what appears to be a common, over-riding theme: “When you make the present moment, instead of past and future, the focal point of your life, your ability to enjoy what you do – and with it the quality of your life – increases dramatically. Joy is a dynamic aspect of Being” (Tolle, 2005, p. 297). Thus, although my familiarity with the mindfulness construct developed over several years, it seems as though its underlying principles had always been embedded in my ‘inner being’.

Mindfulness has been described as the awareness which arises from paying attention in a sustained way, on purpose, in the present moment to things as they are (Kabat-Zinn, 2009, 2012; Kaiser-Greenland, 2010; Nhat Hanh, 1987; Schoeberlein, 2009; Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn, 2007). It is not necessarily about paying *more* attention, but paying attention *more wisely*, using the full resources of the body and its senses. This includes self-observation – an awareness of what we are doing, saying, and thinking, at all times, so life becomes far less “mechanical” (de Mello, 1992, p. 67). It is the awareness of

thinking, according to Kabat-Zinn (2012) which can provide balance and perspective so our thoughts do not rule our lives. He adds that while we are trained at school in a foundation of critical thinking and analytical reasoning, we seldom receive any systematic attention or training in the faculty of awareness.

However, mindfulness appears as both an outcome (mindful awareness) and a process (mindful practice). If mindfulness were to remain only a concept its value in our lives is said to be questionable. When it is learned and used, it supposedly can become a tool to enable us to tap into our inner resources. Kabat-Zinn (2009) explains:

Mindfulness ... is the antidote to addictive preoccupations and indeed, preoccupations of all kinds that carry us away from the actuality of the present moment. When we start to pay attention in an intentional and non-judgemental way, as we do when we cultivate mindfulness, and thus bring ourselves back into the present moment, we are tapping into the very deep natural resources of strength, creativity, balance, and yes, wisdom – interior resources that we may never have realized we possess. (p. xiii)

A burgeoning field of study has grown out of interest in what mindfulness can offer to enhance well-being. Shapiro (2009) writes that two decades of empirical research have generated considerable evidence supporting the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions across a wide range of both clinical and non-clinical populations. From its initial applications in medicine, mindfulness training has spread into several fields including education. Yet according to Burke (2010), and Meiklejohn et al. (2012), despite a mounting interest in applications of mindfulness-based approaches with children and adolescents, the research is still in its infancy. Although the current research base provides support for the feasibility of mindfulness-based interventions with some student populations, there is no comprehensive empirical evidence of the efficacy of these interventions. Studies undertaken tend to rely on teacher-rated pre and post-tests, which in themselves may increase the potential for teacher bias (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010).

In their review of research on mindfulness training for teachers, Meiklejohn et al. (2012) suggest personal training in mindfulness skills can increase teachers' sense

of well-being, self-efficacy, and their ability to manage classroom behaviour and establish and maintain supportive relationships with their students. Similarly, in their study of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with primary school teachers, Gold et al. (2010) report benefits may accrue across some areas such as the enhanced ability to cope with teaching demands, a reduction in mental health difficulties and the achievement of personally relevant goals. However, Gold et al. (2010) point out that studies that rely on self-report measures suffer the limitations of most self-report measures in that participants may have a vested interest in seeing themselves as more mindful, given their investment of time and effort in their mindfulness training.

In a recent systematic meta-analysis review of mindfulness-based interventions in schools, Zenner, Herrnleben and Walach (2014) conclude that the diversity of programmes and outcome measures, coupled with the pilot-nature of most studies makes it difficult to obtain a general impression of the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions in schools, and directions for further research cannot be easily derived. They write:

At this point the inclusion of unpublished literature, such as doctoral theses, would enrich the discussion, as these often contain supplementary information that could be valued and could introduce new approaches to this specific research field, such as, for example, the choice of measures. Also, little is known about the feasibility of integrating MBI's [mindfulness-based interventions] into school routine, for example, the acceptability of different programme elements. (p. 3)

This research project is not concerned with measuring the effectiveness of mindfulness-based practices through assessment scales or tests. Where it does aim to contribute new knowledge is through its hermeneutic phenomenological exploration of teacher well-being in relation to mindfulness-based practices in the New Zealand primary classroom. Despite well-being forming an integral part of the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand curriculum, there is a scarcity of current research into teacher well-being in New Zealand, and an even greater scarcity of New Zealand based research into mindfulness-based practices and teacher well-being. Thus, this thesis intends to address a significant gap in the awareness of teacher well-being both in New Zealand and

internationally, and add to a growing body of research concerning the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions with students and teachers in primary school settings.

The mindfulness path: A personal journey

In *The Power of Now* (2004/2008) Tolle writes of a process of dis-identification with what he terms ‘the pain body’ that is, the unconscious self which is completely identified with some mental or emotional pattern to the point of obscuring the “deepest self, your true nature” (p. 13). He then adds:

The process that I have just described is profoundly powerful yet simple. It could be taught to a child, and hopefully one day it will be one of the first things children learn in school. Once you have understood the basic principle of being present as the watcher of what happens inside you – and you “understand” it by experiencing it – you have at your disposal the most potent transformational tool. (p. 41)

Tolle’s reference to the basic principle of being present as the watcher of what happens inside you, and his explanation of this being such a simple concept that it could be taught to school children, stirred within me both a deep responsibility and a curiosity, and a myriad of questions ensued. Can mindfulness be taught to school children? Can it be learned? How and where would it fit into mainstream education? Would it align with the curriculum? How would teachers teach it and why would they want to? I pinpoint that particular instance as the seed from which this thesis has come to fruition.

In July, 2010, I met with my chief supervisor Deborah Fraser for the first time, and the thesis structure began to unfold. The following month my mother, who had lived with my husband and me for 22 years, passed away. I was deeply affected by my mother’s passing; we had enjoyed an extremely close bond all my life, and the assumed permanence I had always felt as her daughter was no longer there. However, the profound grief I experienced with my mother’s death could in no way prepare me for, nor compare with, what I was about to endure less than three months later, with the sudden unexpected passing of my husband, Richard.

Richard and I shared an intensity of connection, which I assume to be experienced

by couples who marry young and ‘grow up’ together. What started out as very separate entities in the early days somehow slowly transmuted and after 35 years, it was impossible to be anything other than ‘us’, as this entry from my personal journal suggests:

... With Richard gone, I am gone – or at least massively large chunks of me are gone, simply because they were so fused with him. Simply put, I don't know where I start and where he ends. It would be like trying separate two pieces of paper glued fast; you could try, but you would irreparably damage each piece of paper... (PJ: 02.12.10)

Although Richard survived the initial quad bike accident on our farm, he passed away less than two weeks later in hospital. I think back on those two weeks as a gift, as for the most part, he was lucid and communicative and although I did not realise it at the time, offered me what I have come to know as a prophetic message for my own well-being.

During my last visit with Richard, he asked me what I had been doing that day (a rather odd question, I thought, given I had been so busy tending to many matters at home and on the farm). He then told me to “get on with my work” [my research]. I have revisited that conversation many times since, and can only surmise that from somewhere above and beyond his rational self, Richard ‘knew’ the process of writing this thesis would be what I would need if I were to negotiate the path before me. In the most ironic twist of fate, the very subject matter of this thesis became my life; it was as if I was researching mindfulness and well-being from the inside out. Both were experienced in ways I could never have foreseen.

I became the ‘accidental farmer’, tending to our dry stock farm, something I previously had had nothing to do with. And it was here I found an aspect of my well-being, referred to in this thesis as ‘the invisible string’, in a most unexpected way:

I have come to love the farm. Tolle says that nature is a portal to presence. That is so true. Where a few months ago I cursed the farm and the time and energy it required, I now bless it, and have come to think of it as a huge parcel where each time I go out I get

to unwrap another gorgeous layer! And even more than that, I have come to see Richard in ways I never had before. It's like I walk where he walked and think what he thought and see what he saw and get to know my husband of 35 years in a completely new way. He was a gifted engineer and problem solver and manager of this farm. Imagine – I am falling in love with him in a new way, even after he has gone! What an extraordinary gift he has left me! (PJ: 16.05.11)

Kumar (2005) writes that in grief, when you seek an understanding of what you are experiencing, you actively reconstruct your world to accommodate the changes you have experienced and continue to go through: “The empowerment that comes from realising just how active a role you play in the construction of your world is the vehicle for harnessing the transformative power of grief” (p. 83). So began the gradual, constructive process that comes with any rebuild.

After a year of farming, I returned to my research. The following journal entry written nearly a year and a half after Richard's passing, although extremely personal, is included here as an authentic expression of the great paradox of my life at that time: the very agony of loss would somehow lead to the ecstasy of creation, and it was possible to hold both simultaneously, without judgement. I like to think Richard ‘knew’ that when he told me to get on with my work:

I've been so low lately – it's such a damp, dark, cold place. I feel as if all my suffering compounds into one bitter pill and there's a hateful, shadowy figure standing over me saying “swallow it”. This ingesting of grief, consumption of pain seems never ending. When it is bad, it is really, really bad. I bawl. I caught a glimpse of my face in the mirror yesterday and it was contorted and twisted and writhing in pain. I thought then this is what Nancy [my sister] must have witnessed in me just after Richie died. My face was so pathetic – the image so disturbing even to me, that I wondered how those who loved me endured it then.

But I endure it now, alone. This is my cross, my crucifixion. I can do it – I know I can. My ‘new kind of normal’ is taking on substance. It has form. I am finding little acts of kindness to ‘me’ make it bearable. I like coffee in bed. I wear makeup every day now because somehow it makes me feel attractive. I just discovered leaving the radio on makes me less lonely. And I study.

My supervisor Deborah suggested I look at my PhD as my companion not a nemesis. I have been blaming it for so much of my mood, but really, it is a neutral, innocuous little piece of work that wishes me no harm. So since I have started seeing it that way, it has suddenly become a friend, a companion, something to lean on when standing alone becomes so tough. I've decided to give my PhD its due respect, and love it for what it is – a creation of mine, birthed through great labour, but so worthwhile when I finally get to hold it in my hands! (PJ: 06.04.12)

Thus, it is my life-world experience that it is indeed possible to inhabit a sense of well-being, to experience, as Kabat-Zinn (2012) suggests, a profound sense of flourishing or eudaemonia in any given moment, even in the most traumatic of circumstances. But is this the same lived experience for everyone? Are there universal elements of well-being common to all? Is well-being a constant? How it is that some people appear able to not only endure, but flourish during times of great distress? These are just some of the many matters the participants in this research contemplated as they considered their own well-being in relation to mindfulness-based practices.

Mindfulness and well-being: The New Zealand context

As an educator of more than 20 years working predominantly in the primary sector, I was familiar with the various virtues and values programmes which appeared in schools, all aimed at developing citizens who are able to “live together and thrive” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 10). And while such programmes and practices can and do provide focus and direction for classroom teachers aimed at developing moral principles, mindfulness is distinct from this. Mindfulness emphasises present moment awareness and non-judgemental acceptance; this is a concept I had not encountered in any of these programmes. If present moment awareness meant tapping into the deep inner resources of what I valued most in my personal well-being, then I began to wonder if such practices could be absorbed into the busyness of the everyday classroom, by both teachers and students, without becoming an added ‘extra’. I was curious to understand the effects these practices would have on teachers’ perceptions of their own identity, their practices and their beliefs, and indeed, how mindfulness-based practices might influence the teacher/student relationship. Two main questions comprised the nature of this inquiry: *What is the nature of the lived experience of*

mindfulness in relation to well-being for teachers? and How do teachers' perceptions of mindfulness and well-being influence their identity, practices and beliefs? Critically, however, how would these practices align with the New Zealand curriculum?

The health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) identifies four underlying and interdependent concepts at its heart: hauora, attitudes and values, the socio-ecological perspective, and health promotion. Specifically, the Māori philosophy of hauora (well-being) includes taha wairua (spiritual well-being), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional well-being), taha tinana (physical well-being) and taha whanau (social well-being). Taha wairua, or spiritual well-being is defined as “the values and beliefs that determine the way people live, the search for meaning and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness (for some individuals and communities, spiritual well-being is linked to a particular religion; for others, it is not.)” (Ministry of Education, p. 31). A more poignant expression is offered by Te Roopu Awhina O Tokanui (1987), by way of a conceptual sketch, and as Egan (2000) suggests, seems to exemplify the centrality of taha wairua to Māori life (see Appendix A).

Given the all-encompassing nature of such definitions, I considered any research into mindfulness-based practices and well-being would align with the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand curriculum (2007) and possibly situate alongside the concept of taha wairua or spiritual well-being. Yet, as Fraser (2004a) and Fraser and Grootenboer (2005) point out, spiritual well-being is not positioned as a subject to be taught, rather as a ‘strand’ to be woven throughout learning programmes. As such, the spiritual well-being dimension could be considered as deeply entrenched within the values component of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) which states: “Values are deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable ... expressed through the ways in which people think and act” (p. 10). Equally, however, it is feasible mindfulness-based practices could be considered alongside taha hinengaro, or mental and emotional well-being, given the increasingly popular application of such practices in the field of mental health. For this reason, I thought it prudent not to link mindfulness-based practices with any particular ‘type’ of well-being,

as I was acutely aware any such association might taint my participants' views of mindfulness. In keeping with the phenomenological methodology of this research, I preferred instead to seek and interpret the ontological experiences of my participants, as they explored such practices in relation to *their own* notions of well-being.

Few studies relating to teacher well-being in New Zealand have been undertaken, and those that have tend to focus largely on the psychological well-being of teachers in relation to stress (Beckley, 2011; Manthei & Solman, 1988; Manthei, Gilmore, Tuck & Adair, 1996; Whitehead & Ryba, 1995); burnout (Whitehead, Ryba & O'Driscoll, 2000; Milfont, Denny, Ameratunga, Robinson & Merry, 2008); and well-being and stress amongst principals (Hodgen & Wylie, 2005).

New Zealand based mindfulness research within the primary education setting is limited. Bernay (2012) introduced mindfulness practices to a cohort of training teachers, following five of them throughout their first year of teaching and into the beginning of their second teaching year, focussing on their lived professional experiences. Mapel (2012) researched students' experiences of learning mindfulness within a tertiary setting. Whitehead (2009) explored 'spiritual' activities that could be used within early childhood centres, and although not termed 'mindful' as such, do appear to embody many elements of mindfulness-based practices. In 2013, the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand reportedly delivered an eight week mindfulness programme to primary aged children across five New Zealand Schools (Rix, 2014). According to Rix (2014), "Preliminary results suggest improved calmness, enhanced self-awareness, increased focus and attention, improvements in conflict resolution skills, the development of positive relationships, and reduced stress" (n.p.).

This thesis intends to address a significant gap in the literature by researching both teacher well-being, and exploring the effects of mindfulness-based practices on teachers and their students in the New Zealand primary school setting. A guiding premise of this thesis is that of the 'reciprocity' of classroom well-being. Intrator (2005) argues that available, energized and soulful teachers offer opportunities for children to thrive, because teacher well-being directly affects their instructional performance, which in turn affects student motivation (see also

Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke & Baumert, 2008). Therefore, it seemed clear that any investigation into practices potentially affecting teacher well-being would, by definition, need to consider the experiences of the students – such is the intricate nature of the teacher/student relationship. Consequently, classroom observations and student focus group meetings form part of the data collection methods of this study, as the lived experiences of students are considered alongside their teachers.

While I was curious to investigate whether mindfulness-based practices could be considered a conduit towards well-being as identified by the New Zealand curriculum, I remained acutely aware of the risk of such practices being reduced to a series of short lessons, without the full extent of the underlying philosophy being ‘lived’ by the teachers delivering these practices. It would not be enough to describe my participants’ experiences; rather I sought to interpret their descriptions of their experiences. To this end, I chose a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, as phenomenology becomes hermeneutic when its method is said to be interpretative rather than purely descriptive (van Manen, 2011). As suggested by Wonjar and Swanson (2007), I aimed to express the nuances, differences, ambiguity and uniqueness in the contextualised life experience of my participants.

There was yet an added consideration as to the choice of methodology – it had to ‘feel’ a comfortable fit alongside my own life-world. The recent, sudden loss of Richard left me seeking a connection of sorts with the *essence* of loss. I became far less concerned with finding the answers to the ‘why’ questions of my husband’s sudden passing, as I was with experiencing my loss and seeking to express my loss awareness. My choice of expression became a written journal – a free flowing stream of consciousness, a depot for all my discoveries, insights and musings, which acted textually to mediate my meanings. Although I was unaware of it at the time I began my personal journal, I had, in fact, been engaging in a type of hermeneutic phenomenology by interpreting the awareness and essence of my loss, expressively, through my poetry and prose. Clearly, the methodology was defined not only by the phenomenon being studied and my pre-assumptions and experiences with the mindfulness phenomenon, but by my own centrality in

the research and penchant for written expression, some of which forms the data set in this study. Interpretative phenomenology deems the researcher is as much a part of the research as the participant, because the interpretation of the data is reliant on the researcher's prior disposition, knowledge, understandings and judgments (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). In this way, I am positioned both 'within' and 'outside' the data.

Thesis chapter outline

A summary of the five chapters compiling this thesis is as follows:

Chapter One introduces the background to this thesis, by presenting an outline of the research aims and a rationale for this study. This chapter briefly outlines the methodology and draws attention to the 'fit' between subject matter, methodology and the centrality of the researcher in the study. My own personal trajectory leading to the compilation of this thesis is offered, highlighting the role of the reflexive researcher in the research process.

The second chapter examines the literature in the field of mindfulness from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on historical and current descriptions. It outlines a growing body of research concerning mindfulness-based interventions in various populations and settings, including primary (elementary) schools. As a nascent field of study has grown out of interest in what mindfulness can offer to enhance well-being, this section examines the literature concerning differing 'types' of well-being. Research relating to the value of mindfulness-based interventions and their effects on teacher well-being specifically, is presented. Issues and gaps are identified that promote a rationale and justification for this study.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology of this research project by providing a brief social constructivist theoretical perspective, and an explanation as to how hermeneutic phenomenology aligns with both the mindfulness phenomenon and my own lived experience. Descriptions of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology are offered, and the resulting distinctions serve to qualify the appropriateness of a hermeneutic methodology for this project. The role of the

phenomenological researcher as ‘being in the research’ is explored through the concepts of hermeneutic circling and reflexivity. This chapter details the method of this study, specifically the recruitment process and the two phase data collection design. An overview of the data collection methods is provided, including teacher and student focus group meetings, observations and teacher debriefings, which were conducted at the conclusion of each lesson observed. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) process is explained as a data analysis method, and issues relating to credibility and ethical considerations are addressed.

Chapter Four presents the findings and discussion by way of three main sections, relating to the three super-ordinate themes. Section One considers teachers’ personal beliefs regarding the nature and characteristics of well-being. Section Two explores a distinction between personal and professional well-being, and the final section seeks to capture the essence of the teachers’ lived experiences in relation to well-being, primarily as evidenced through their classroom practices. Each particular section of findings is followed by its own discussion.

The final chapter presents an overview of the main findings of the study. This chapter considers key contributions to knowledge by way of new theories relating to well-being, authenticity and autonomy, and offers suggestions for further research. The chapter concludes with implications for mindfulness-based classroom practices and the significance of such practices for educational policy makers, principals, teachers and students.

Chapter TWO

The Literature Review

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the mindfulness phenomenon as both an outcome (mindful awareness) and a process (mindful practice), highlighting how a burgeoning field of study has grown out of the interest in what mindfulness can offer to enhance well-being. As this thesis is an exploration of teachers' perceptions of well-being in relation to mindfulness based practices, the intersection between mindfulness and well-being is particularly salient. However, mindfulness does not necessarily equate with wellness, and perhaps even more confounding is the suggestion that well-being is not inevitably the result of being well. Thus, this review examines both the mindfulness and well-being phenomena separately, while at the same time, points to a junction between the two.

Section One examines the literature from an interdisciplinary understanding of mindfulness, drawing from historical, philosophical, psychological, neuroscientific, and educational perspectives. It begins by defining the present day, secular construct of mindfulness, and makes distinctions between mindfulness as a concept and mindfulness as a practice. The relationship between mindfulness and 'calm' and 'insight' meditations is drawn, explaining how these meditative practices influence the modern day application of mindfulness in the fields of psychological health and well-being, and education.

Section Two outlines the growing body of research examining the effects of mindfulness-based approaches in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). Particular emphasis is given to Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, and their application within various populations and settings. The neurobiological effect of mindfulness meditation is reviewed within the emerging field of neuroscience and mindfulness.

Section Three identifies the elements of mindfulness-based programmes and practices within the primary (elementary) school setting. Emphasis is largely placed on studies from within the United States, as the greatest volume of

research on this topic is generated from within that country. Issues and gaps are identified that promote a rationale and justification for this study.

Section Four examines the literature pertaining to well-being from both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. It explores the concept of post-traumatic growth and highlights a suggested relationship between trauma and eudaimonic well-being. The notion of ‘connectedness’ is presented as a highly significant factor in teacher well-being. The section concludes by outlining some current mindfulness-based programmes for teachers in operation in North America, and presents a critique of the literature relating to such programmes.

Section One

Mindfulness – the concept

Mindfulness appears to be a contested concept, its meanings ranging from a cognitive construct, such as that advanced by Langer (2009), which emphasises attentiveness to the intentional, non-judgemental awareness of the present (Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn, 2007). Indeed, Harrington and Pickles (2009) argue mindfulness is a “confused concept, which attempts to combine psychological processes, religious values, and CBT [Cognitive Behaviour Therapy] techniques” (p. 335), challenging the idea there is a secular state that can even be conceptualised as mindfulness:

... mindfulness is characterized by difficulties of definitions and inherent contradictions. We are told mindfulness is a state – a set of attention skills, and also a group of attitudes. We are informed that mindfulness is fundamentally a non-judgmental stance, but at the same time one that involves making judgments. It is considered a secular concept, but one that is based on a stance seemingly inseparable from Buddhist values ... (p. 335)

Thus, the definitions and applications of mindfulness within the community of researchers, clinicians and teachers who are engaged in mindfulness-based work are many and varied. This review, however, presents secular ‘working definitions’ of mindfulness, focusing on non-religious practices and concepts, in accordance with my focus on state education, while at the same time, recognising the Buddhist philosophy that seems to underpin the mindfulness concept.

Williams, Teasdale, Segal and Kabat-Zinn (2007) offer what appears to be the most widely quoted mindfulness definition in the literature, as “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are” (p. 47). The claim is that with this kind of attention comes a greater awareness, clarity and acceptance of the present moment, so that the present, rather than the past or future is the focus. Of vital importance is the non-judgemental nature of mindfulness, that is, the present moment is accepted; it is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong, important or not (Fodor & Hooker, 2008). Moreover, according to Kumar (2005), mindfulness creates a safe space in which to feel, without judgement, criticism, or conditions. By allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go, by witnessing their ebb and flow, he suggests we build self-trust – essential in negotiating life’s unpredictable pathways. Yet, the task of witnessing passing moments is not an easy one, as according to Kumar (2005), “We are more comfortable living on autopilot, missing the passing scenery as we run from one place to the next, mentally and physically” (p. 25).

Kabat-Zinn (1994) contends mindfulness is a fundamentally simple concept, but one which is not necessarily easily attained. It requires effort and discipline, simply because the forces that work against our being mindful, that is, our habitual unawareness and automaticity, are exceptionally tenacious. Therefore, mindfulness necessitates “intentionally turning off the autopilot mode in which we operate so much of the time – brooding about the past ... or worrying about the future ... it means knowing that our thoughts are passing mental events, not reality itself ...” (Williams, et al., 2007, p. 54). Correspondingly, Kabat-Zinn (2006) suggests that mindfulness is not about shutting down our thinking, as it is in the nature of the mind to think; it is about not identifying with our thinking to the extent that we ‘become’ our thoughts. According to Tolle (2004/2008), our thoughts are our greatest obstacle to reality. Tolle claims it is the identification with the mind, which causes thoughts to become compulsive, and this incessant mental noise prevents us from finding “that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from Being” (p. 15).

That phenomenon of incessant mental noise appearing to directly influence our state of well-being has been dramatically exemplified by neuroanatomist Jill Bolte

Taylor. In her book *My Stroke of Insight* (2009) Bolte Taylor graphically recounts the process of her own stroke in which a major left hemisphere brain haemorrhage left her unable to walk, talk, read, write or recall her life, within the space of four hours. Bolte Taylor writes of her eight year rehabilitation, and her conscious choice not to allow portions of her left hemisphere to dominate once recovered. She suggests that the left hemisphere is very good at manufacturing stories and running loops of thought patterns whereby we find ourselves habitually imagining unpleasant, even devastating possibilities:

The portion of my left mind that I chose not to recover was the part of my left hemisphere character that had the potential to be mean, worry incessantly, or be verbally abusive to either myself or others ... I wanted to leave behind my old emotional circuits that automatically simulated that instant replay of painful memories ... I have consciously chosen to recover my left mind's ego centre without giving renewed life to some of those old circuits. (pp. 144-145)

Hence, mindfulness may be defined as a totally intentional awareness, in complete contrast to rumination, which is tantamount to unawareness, and being lost in thought (Williams et al., 2007). As de Mello (1992) suggests mindfulness is not necessarily about paying *more* attention, but paying attention *more wisely*, using the full resources of the body and its senses. This includes self-observation – an awareness of what we are doing, saying, thinking, and acting at all times, so life becomes far less “mechanical” (p. 67).

A somewhat different model of mindfulness is offered by Langer (2009) who describes it as “the simple process of actively drawing distinctions” (p. 182). Mindfulness, she explains, is all about finding something new in what we think we may already know. In so doing, we find ourselves in the present, and more aware of the context and perspective, ready to take advantage of opportunities that we would otherwise miss. Langer contends that actively noticing something new is literally and figuratively enlivening. For example, with regards to our health, by being mindful, she says that we attune to our bodies, thus gathering information that will help us view ourselves along a continuum of health, rather than seeing ourselves as healthy or sick. Such attentiveness, according to Langer (2009), can result in general health improvements just as much as the contemplative practice of meditation. Langer's definition however, has been

referred to as a more cognitive (Baer, 2003), social-psychological construct (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), and according to Baer (2003), Langer's interventions often involve working with material external to the participants, such as information to be learned, involving goal-orientated cognitive tasks, such as problem solving. This deviates from the more traditional mindfulness approaches directed towards the inner self, which emphasise less goal-orientation and more non-judgemental observation of thoughts and emotions.

Mindfulness, then, can be said to be both an outcome (mindful awareness) and a process (mindful practice). Nevertheless, if it remains only a concept its value in our lives is said to be questionable. When it is learned and *used*, suggests Chosen Bays (2009), it can become a powerful tool which may allow us to 'awaken' by developing an awareness of what is happening "both inside yourself – in your body, heart, and mind, – and outside yourself, in your environment ... without judgment or criticism" (p. 2).

Mindfulness – the practice

According to Shapiro, Carlson, Astin and Freedman (2006) mindfulness has its roots in Eastern contemplative traditions and is often associated with ancient practices of meditation, particularly, but not exclusively, in the Buddhist tradition. Indeed, the ancient Chinese philosophy of the Tao Te Ching, which first appeared over 2,000 years ago (Bebell & Fera, 2000) seems to incorporate many elements of what is associated with mindfulness, such as present moment awareness and non-judgemental acceptance. The Tao Te Ching describes the 'ideal spiritual pathway' as a life lived from the soul rather than from society's norms and expectations. It is a call to live authentically and spontaneously, without pretence and artificiality – a simple, natural and congruent way of being, allowing life to take its natural course (Ferguson, 2010). This philosophy, according to Bebell and Fera (2000) has been assimilated into different religious foundations, one of which is Buddhism.

The contribution of Buddhist traditions has been to emphasise simple and effective ways to cultivate and refine the inherent capacity of attention and bring it into all aspects of our lives (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). And while the most highly

developed articulations of mindfulness throughout history come from the Buddhist tradition, according to Kabat-Zinn (2003, 2006; 2012), the Buddha himself was not Buddhist. The term Buddhist was not established until the 18th century, a word used by European religious scholars who had little understanding of what the statues sitting on the altars in the temples actually denoted (what they did and do represent, notes Kabat-Zinn, (2006) is a state of mind that the Buddha himself spoke of as being awake or aware – universal capacities shared by us all, but apparently seldom put to use). Therefore, Kabat-Zinn (2003) argues that mindfulness, being about attention, is an inherent human quality, and not necessarily Buddhist.

Although mindfulness can be practiced through meditation, it is not to be confused with the act of meditation, for, as Foder and Hooker (2008) assert, the goal of mindfulness is not to achieve a higher state of consciousness, or to distance oneself from the present, but rather to increase one's awareness of the present. Nor, is the goal of mindfulness to become more relaxed (although a more relaxed mental state may occur), but to be aware of and accepting of whatever state the mind and body are in. Hence, mindfulness practices are not fundamentally 'religious' or abstruse in nature; they can be incorporated into everyday experiences, such as mindful walking, mindful driving, mindful eating or any other commonplace occurrence. This is, as Kabat-Zinn (2012) terms, the act of 'awarenessing'.

One such commonly cited example of a simple 'awarenessing' exercise is that of eating a raisin (Chozen Bays, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2012; Kaiser Greenland, 2010). The holding, seeing, touching, smelling, tasting and swallowing of the raisin in a slow, deliberate manner is said to demonstrate the vividness of the experience, and exemplify the transformative power of being fully present and *knowing* we are eating. Apparently, it is the halting of an otherwise automatic behaviour to create a gap between thought and action which affords the opportunity for choice (Chozen Bays, 2009). In a similar way, Williams et al. (2007) believe the patterns of the mind that entrap us in unhappiness and depression are over-learned and habitual – extracted from memory when we are not fully present. This is said to lead to conditions in which subconscious mechanisms operate freely, and why the

shift to mindfulness requires *intention* as well as *practice* – because by being aware, Williams et al. (2007) argue, we have control and choice in determining our behaviour.

Awareness then may be seen as a crucial component of mindfulness; potentially it can afford us choice, control and power over our thinking and actions. However, it is not the only component. Wallace (2008) argues that although the cultivation of attention is valuable in many ways, it is incorrect to connect mindfulness solely with ‘bare’ attention:

When mindfulness is equated with bare attention, it can easily lead to the misconception that the cultivation of mindfulness has nothing to do with ethics or the cultivation of wholesome states of mind and the attenuation of unwholesome states. Nothing could be further from the truth. (Wallace, 2008, p. 61)

Kabat-Zinn (2011) elucidates this point stating that in all Asian languages the words for mind and heart are the same. Therefore, mindfulness includes a compassionate, affectionate, openhearted quality within the attending, so that “when you hear the word mindfulness you have to hear the word heartfulness, or you’ll misunderstand it as simply one more cognitive exercise and it’s not” (n.p.). Indeed, Hart (2014a) identifies the heart as one of four virtues, along with presence, wisdom and creation, as directions or powers that can be used for knowing and navigating our way in the world. He suggests to have heart, or to love, is recognised throughout all great traditions as both a path and the goal of a life well lived. Empathy, compassion, feeling and belonging, are the qualities of heart, described as “that energy source for the *good*, a fundamental and universal ethic for engaging with the world” (Hart, 2014a, p. xxviii).

However, some, such as Claxton (1998) and McCrary-Sullivan (2000) recognise the non-judgemental and observant aspects of awareness, without any explicit ethical dimensions. Claxton (1998) suggests it is an ‘art’ to be able to stay open to ideas, to be aware of and to trust one’s intuition, and not feel the need to interpret, jump to conclusions or find solutions to problems. To cultivate this kind of awareness, Claxton (1998) suggests, “In the gloaming mind, if one is quiet and watchful, one can observe precursors of conscious intelligence at play, and in so

doing may be lucky enough to catch the gleam of an original or useful thought” (p. 81). He advises the discovery of contexts and moods in which we feel most creative and receptive, and to make time for these in our lives. This does not appear dissimilar to Langer’s (2009) more cognitive definition of mindfulness, as previously discussed, which advances mindfulness as being all about finding something new in what we think we may already know, thereby becoming more aware of the context and perspective, ready to take advantage of opportunities that we would otherwise miss.

In a similar vein, McCrary-Sullivan (2000) explored the sensory and emotional aspects of attending through poetry and prose with what she terms “keen eyes and fine sensibilities” (p. 212). She argues that as a society we have not been taught how to attend to art, or how to ‘read’ aesthetic forms, and that by staring and pondering, we may “arrive at an understanding not only of what the forms contain, but also of how form informs us” (p. 223). Such attending to what she terms ‘exteriors’ can help develop an awareness of the complex ‘interiors’ of others. Fraser (2004b) explains such attention as, “The close focus on another person, the holding of one’s thoughts in abeyance, the effort to understand another from the inside and the insights gained suggest a form of connection through focus and perception” (p. 263). Yet can such examples of focus, attention, awareness and perception be termed mindfulness? Not according to Gunaratana (2002) who like Kabat-Zinn (2011), proposes without loving friendliness, the practice of mindfulness can never fully develop, and the practice of mindfulness, in turn, is a necessary basis for developing loving friendliness. Gunaratana (2002) stresses we are born with the capacity for loving friendliness, yet only in a mind which is calm, free from anger, greed and jealousy, can loving friendliness be cultivated. Hence, while such power of attending does certainly overlap with the awareness aspects of mindfulness, Claxton (1998), McCrary-Sullivan (2000), and Langer (2009) advance a form of attention and awareness which gives the impression of being ethically and morally neutral: mindfulness, by definition, appears to be values laden.

Beyond present moment awareness: heartfulness

Wallace (2008) utilises a simple illustration to explain the all-important ethical

component of mindfulness: a sniper hiding in the grass may be quietly aware of whatever arises in each passing moment. Yet the intention is to kill; therefore the sniper is practising bare attention, but without the ethical component. The important point is this: mindfulness is more than simply ethically neutral ‘bare attention’. The ethical foundation of mindfulness is what Kabat-Zinn (2012) refers to as generosity, compassion and openness or ‘loving-kindness’. The Buddhist term for this is *metta* - ‘loving-friendliness’ (Gunaratana, 2002) or ‘unconditional friendliness’ (Lesser, 2005). The assumption is that each of us is born with the capacity for loving-friendliness, yet “only in a calm mind, a mind free from greed, and jealousy, can the seeds of loving friendliness develop ...” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 177). The *attitude* with which we undertake the practice of mindfulness, can be seen as the all-important ‘soil’ in which we cultivate our ability to calm the mind and to relax the body, to concentrate and to see more clearly (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

It is here that distinctions between two major types of Buddhist meditative practices, *calm* and *insight* can be drawn. Although the secular literature does not make overt distinctions, a fundamental awareness of their individual characteristics assists in understanding how these practices have influenced the modern application of mindfulness-based practices in the fields of health and well-being, medicine and education. These two differing types of meditations represent different mental skills or modes of functioning; different “qualities of consciousness” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 3). In Theravada (the oldest, most orthodox form of Buddhism) they are called *samatha* (calm or concentrative) and *vipassana* (insight). These are briefly explained, as follows.

Mindfulness and meditation

Samatha (calm or concentrative meditation)

Most systems of meditation emphasise the samatha component, whereby the mind focuses on one item, such as a prayer, chant, religious image, or the breath (Dhiman, 2008; Gunaratana, 2002). According to Dhiman (2008), the meditation practice most respected by Buddhists is called ‘mindfulness of breathing’ because the breath provides the conscious connection between our body and mind. The aim of calm meditation is to make the mind serene, stable and strong, serving as

the foundation to vipassana meditation (Dhiman, 2008). In the traditional Buddhist practice, samatha meditation is often learned first. When attention is developed and stabilised, then vipassana or insight meditation is practiced (Rubin, 1999).

Vipassana (insight meditation)

Vipassana is the oldest of the Buddhist meditation practices. Gunaratana (2002) explains that vipassana is a gentle technique; an ancient codified system of training the mind to become more aware of our life experiences:

... we train ourselves to see reality exactly as it is and we call this special mode of perception, mindfulness ... we usually do not see what is in front of us. We see life through a screen of thoughts and concepts, and we mistake those mental objects for reality. We get so caught up in this endless thought-stream that reality flows by unnoticed ... Meanwhile, the real world experience flows by untouched and untasted. In vipassana meditation we train ourselves to ignore the constant impulses to be more comfortable, and we dive into reality instead ... (p. 33)

Vipassana teaches the central life concept of arising and passing away by taking notice of the continuous changes that occur in our bodies (Dhiman, 2008; Marques, 2008). Once we become attuned with the physical manifestation of continuous change, according to Marques (2008), we are then more able to accept our subjection to constant change and in so doing, become less 'attached'. Non-attachment is, according to Kabat-Zinn (2005, 2012) one of the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness, alongside non-judging; patience; beginner's mind; trust; non-striving; acceptance; awareness and letting go.

Summary

While mindfulness can be said to be a contested concept, Williams, Teasdale, Segal and Kabat-Zinn (2007) offer what appears to be the most widely quoted definition in the literature, as "paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are" (p. 47). The claim is that with this kind of attention comes a greater awareness, clarity and acceptance of the present moment, so that the present, rather than the past or future is the focus. According to Shapiro, Carlson, Astin and Freedman (2006), mindfulness has its

roots in Eastern contemplative traditions and is often associated with ancient practices of meditation, particularly, but not exclusively, the Buddhist tradition. However, Kabat-Zinn (2003) argues that mindfulness, being about attention, is an inherent human quality, and not necessarily Buddhist. Although the ‘bare attention’ or the concentration aspect of mindfulness is important in many ways, it is generally considered incorrect to connect mindfulness solely with bare attention. The ethical foundation of mindfulness appears to be heartfulness – generosity, compassion, openness and ‘loving-kindness’, which is said to be all important in cultivating the ability to calm the mind, relax the body, and ultimately, to gain insight (Kabat-Zinn, 2012).

Section Two

Mindfulness-based approaches in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

A burgeoning field of study has grown out of the interest in what mindfulness can offer to enhance well-being. Shapiro (2009) writes that as the field of psychology expands and evolves, so too does the integration of mindfulness into psychological theory and practice. Studies relating to mood disorders such as depression (Ma & Teasdale, 2004), anxiety (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992), chronic pain (Pradhan et al., 2007) and the effects of mindfulness training on social relationships (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell & Rogge, 2007; Carson, Carson, Gil & Baucom, 2004; Singh et al., 2006; Singh, et al., 2007) offer some indication of what appears to be the clinical worth of mindfulness-based interventions. The claims are large and the research abundant, as indicated by the *American Mindfulness Research Association* (2015), a comprehensive electronic resource and publication database comprising research publications, measurement tools to assess mindfulness, research reviews, meta-analyses, and programmes.

However, this thesis is concerned with teachers’ perceptions of mindfulness-based practices in relation to well-being, and as such, it is not within the realms of this review to examine the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions in a clinical sense. This section does, however, offer a background into some prominent approaches using mindfulness-based practices to promote psychological and physiological well-being, as many of their fundamental principles appear to

inform current mindfulness-based programmes in education. This is followed by a section examining the neurobiological effects of mindfulness as again, some mindfulness-based educational programmes claim to be grounded in cognitive neuroscience.

One of the basic precepts of traditional Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is to directly challenge an individual's irrational thinking that leads to maladaptive behaviour (Singh, Lanciono, Wahler, Winton & Singh, 2008). *Decentring* or *distancing* is said to assist clients in recognising negative thoughts as mental phenomena rather than facts, and is an important step in changing the content of thoughts (Baer & Sauer, 2009). While distancing or decentring is a central component in mindfulness practice, the definition of decentring, according to Baer and Sauer (2009) applies to a broader range of experiences, including sensations and emotions, and cultivates an open, accepting and welcoming attitude towards them. Some newer approaches to CBT focus far less on challenging irrational thoughts or negative thinking, and more on changing one's *relationship* to thoughts and feelings, as characterised by Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). This approach advances the cultivation of a very different relationship to thinking, which allows thoughts simply to be there, without the need to analyse them, or try to discern where they came from, or try to get rid of them:

In awareness, we see them [thoughts] immediately for what they are: constrictions, mysterious creations of the mind, mental events that may or may not accurately reflect reality. We come to realize that our thoughts are not facts. Nor are they really "mine" or "me". (Williams, et al., 2007, p. 164)

One study that appears to exemplify the effectiveness of accepting rather than changing one's thinking, investigated the potential of mindfulness-based interventions on individuals who experienced food cravings (Alberts, Mulkens, Smeets & Thewissen, 2010). The 19 participants all received the same dietary treatments in the way of weekly meetings to teach healthy food choices, and physical exercise training. But the experimental group also received a seven week manual-based training, which aimed to teach regulation of cravings by acceptance. They were given a portable MP3 player, which contained instructions on how to perform a body scan meditation (a MBSR technique), and deal with

food cravings or thoughts about food cravings in an accepting manner. They also received daily emails containing quotes about acceptance-based craving regulation. This group reported considerably lower food cravings compared to the control group. Alberts et al. (2010) believe this finding is interesting from a theoretical perspective, because acceptance requires one *not* to control cravings, which ironically, led to higher levels of perceived control. They explain that since acceptance does not require reaching a goal state, goal frustration (i.e., not reaching the goal) was less likely to occur. Through practice, the participants seemed to learn to disengage with ruminative or obsessive processing by observing their thoughts, rather than accepting them as personal or true. In this way, the participants could be said to have engaged with some of the primary elements of mindfulness, such as awareness and non-judgemental acceptance, core components of the MBSR programmes.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

The most prominent approaches teaching mindfulness skills to promote psychological well-being, according to Burke (2010) include MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction), MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy), DBT (Dialectic Behaviour Therapy), and ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy). Fundamentally, these approaches focus on developing mindfulness, yet MBSR and MBCT use regular mindfulness meditation practices to develop mindfulness skills (Burke, 2010). As such, both MBSR and MBCT are included in this review primarily because their distinguishing features inform much of the central curriculum of mindfulness-based approaches with children and adolescents.

The MBSR programme was started by Jon Kabat-Zinn, at the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre, in 1979 (University of Massachusetts, 2014a; Kabat-Zinn, 2012). It is a form of participatory medicine, offered in a group setting, where participants experientially learn about stress, stress reactivity, and how to respond to life's challenges. MBSR has reportedly been shown to be an effective compliment to a wide array of medical and psychological conditions, such as anxiety, asthma, cancer, chronic pain, diabetes, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, heart disease, HIV, hot flashes,

hypertension, major depression, mood disorders, sleep disturbances and stress disorders (University of Massachusetts, 2014c).

The programme is offered in a group setting, and consists of eight weekly classes and one day-long class on a weekend, which cover:

- Guided instruction in mindfulness meditation practices
 - Gentle stretching and mindful yoga
 - Group dialogue and discussions aimed at enhancing awareness in everyday life
 - Individually tailored instruction
 - Daily home assignments
 - Four home practice CDs and a home practice manual.
- (University of Massachusetts, 2014b)

The core curriculum of formal mindfulness practices includes body scan, sitting, movement and walking meditations, and informal practices, where awareness is brought to everyday events, such as shopping, eating and gardening (Burke, 2010). Through the group sessions and home practices, participants are said to develop the skills and attitudes conversant with the primary elements of mindfulness, such as awareness and non-judgemental acceptance, or as Shapiro et al. (2006) propose, *attitudes*, *attention* and *intention*. These “axioms of mindfulness” (p. 375) are not separate stages, rather three interwoven aspects of a cyclic process, which occur simultaneously, moment to moment:

- “On purpose” or intention
- “Paying attention” or attention
- “In a particular way” or attitude (mindfulness qualities, such as kindness, curiosity and open awareness).

This process is aimed at allowing the development of a de-centred, non-judgemental, objective stance, potentially leading to disengagement with habitual, reactive mind states (Burke, 2010; Shapiro, 2006). The direct benefit is said to be one of greater joy for the simple things in life, through living in the moment, with awareness, instead of ‘on automatic pilot’ or solely in the past or future (University of Massachusetts, 2014c).

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

This class-based programme was designed to assist people who suffer from

recurrent bouts of depression and chronic unhappiness (Burke, 2010; Kenny & Williams, 2007; Williams et al., 2007). It aims to teach participants to observe their thoughts and feelings, becoming familiar with the modes of mind that often characterise mood disorders, and to develop a new relationship; a non-judgemental acceptance towards whatever is present (Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy, 2007). In this respect it replicates MBSR, and the MBSR core curriculum has been incorporated into MBCT. Yet MBCT includes additional psycho-education and specific exercises for depression (Burke, 2010), particularly at the point when mood begins to plummet. The ‘tool’ used at this point is a mini-meditation called the “three minute breathing space” (Williams et al., 2007, p. 183). According to Williams et al. (2007), participants in the MBCT programme have singled out this practice as the most useful feature of the course. During the initial phase of the breathing space, participants are encouraged to practice restraint in their tendency to ‘fix’ what the mind thinks needs fixing, and to bring awareness to the present moment. From here, the second step involves focussing on breathing, enabling an opportunity to steady the mind. Finally, the awareness is expanded beyond the breath, to whole body awareness, because “sometimes just acknowledging what’s actually going on instead of dwelling on what “should” be happening is all that is needed to transform our experience” (Williams, et al., 2007. p. 189).

Where MBCT differs from standard CBT is that it does not focus on changing the content or specific meanings of negative, automatic thoughts, rather it focuses on cultivating thought awareness, so training can occur in remitted states using every day experiences (Teasdale, Williams, Ridgeway, Soulsby & Lau, 2000). Henry (2006) describes this as “redirecting attention and refining the instrument of perception” (p. 125) thereby focussing on the here and now to view the world in a more encompassing manner. According to Henry (2006) such approaches offer a strategy that bypasses the usual Western psychological focus on problems and goals, allowing the mind to work in a ‘better way’ through the aid of practices such a mindfulness and meditation. In doing so, an individual is able to identify when negative and ruminative responses are being triggered, and decentre, seeing them as mental events, not necessarily legitimate reflections of reality (Kenny & Williams, 2007).

Like MBSR, the programme is taught over eight weekly, two hour classes, plus a one day session between weeks five and seven. The programme relies on a home-work component, using CDs with guided meditations. Each class is structured around a theme, which is explored through group inquiry and mindfulness practice:

- Class 1: Automatic Pilot
 - Class 2: Dealing with Barriers
 - Class 3: Mindfulness of the Breath
 - Class 4: Staying Present
 - Class 5: Allowing and Letting Be
 - Class 5: Thoughts are Not Facts
 - Class 7: How Can I Best Take Care of Myself?
 - Class 8: Using What's Been Learned to Deal with Future Moods.
- (Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy, n.d.)

Although originally intended for people with recurrent depression, MBCT is now being researched and used to treat various other conditions, such as chronic fatigue, suicidal tendencies and cancer (Crane, Kuyken, Hastings, Rothwell & Williams, 2010). It is claimed that MBCT can reduce relapse from 78% to 36% in patients with three or more previous depressive episodes (Ma & Teasdale, 2004) and is now recommended by the United Kingdom's best practice advisory board for the National Health Service – the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) as a treatment of choice for preventing further depression in individuals who have experienced three or more episodes (Crane et al., 2010).

To summarise, this section has explored some of the basic precepts of Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy. Such approaches centre far less on changing irrational thinking and negative thoughts (as in traditional CBT), and focus more on changing an individual's relationship to thoughts and feelings. It is a form of participatory medicine, offered in a group setting, where participants experientially learn about stress, stress reactivity, and how to respond to life's challenges, through skills and attitudes conversant with the philosophy of mindfulness, such as awareness and non-judgemental acceptance. The MBSR core curriculum is incorporated in MBCT, and is designed to assist individuals who experience recurring bouts of depression and chronic unhappiness by teaching them to observe their thoughts and feelings, becoming familiar with the

modes of mind which often characterise mood disorders, and to develop a new relationship; a non-judgement acceptance towards whatever is present (Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy, n.d.).

Neurobiological effects of mindfulness meditation

The previous section drew attention to therapies that focus on the relationship between our thoughts and our feelings, the principle being where our thoughts go, our emotions will follow (Kabat-Zinn, 20012; Williams, et al., 2007; Tolle, 2004/2008; 2005). The question then arises, is it possible to actually alter the physical structure of the brain through some mindfulness-based practices, such as certain types of meditation? The general rationale for using mindfulness meditations is that through such practices patients will develop a mode of mind that assists in forestalling maladaptive thought processes, producing lasting effects on psychological functioning and brain activity (Barnhofer, Chittka, Nightingale, Visser & Crane, 2010). This section examines the evidence of the neurobiological effect of mindfulness meditation.

Studies involving experienced meditators appear to indicate that mindfulness meditation can not only train the mind, but reshape the structure and neural patterns of the brain (Chiesa & Serretti, 2010). In a 2005 study, Lazar et al. used magnetic resonance imaging to assess the cerebral cortex of 20 Buddhist meditators, who practiced 'insight' meditation, that is, the cultivation of attention and non-judgemental awareness of stimuli (as opposed to chanting meditation). The participants had an average of 9.1 years of experience, and averaged 6.2 hours of insight meditation per week. The control group comprised 15 participants with no meditation or yoga experience. The researchers hypothesised that meditation practice might be associated with changes in the brain's physical structure. The results indicated that the brain regions associated with sensory, cognitive and emotional processing in the long-term meditators were thicker than in the matched controls, particularly in the older participants. According to Lazar et al. (2005), this suggests meditation may help to slow or off-set age related cortical thinning.

In a second study, Lutz, Brefczynski-Lewis, Johnston and Davidson (2008) compared the brain circuitry used during a meditative state of 'loving-kindness' in

16 experienced Buddhist meditators (those with 10,000 hours of practice), and 16 age and gender matched ‘novices’ (those interested in learning to meditate but with no experience). Researchers measured how the regions of the brain responsible for emotions and feelings would respond to varying positive or negative stimuli, such as the sound of a distressed woman or a baby laughing. Reported results indicated that the more advanced meditators showed a heightened activation in the areas of the brain that detect emotional cues. According to Lutz et al. (2008) the results indicate that cultivating the *intent* to be compassionate and kind can enhance empathetic responses to social stimuli.

Yet not all studies involve experienced meditators. In a seminal study, Davidson et al. (2003) report even a short training programme of mindfulness meditation (MBSR) effects brain and immune functions. Brain electrical activity was measured before and immediately following an eight week MBSR course. At the end of the course the 25 subjects and 16 control participants were vaccinated with the influenza vaccine. The results apparently indicated increased activation in the area of the brain associated with positive affect, and significantly, evidence that their immune system was far more robust than the control group up to eight weeks post vaccination as compared to the control group. The changes endured, according to Davidson et al. (2003), for up to four months, indicating a short course in meditation may change the brain and immune functions in positive ways.

Similarly, Barnhofer et al. (2010) investigated the effects of mindfulness meditation comparing two groups of meditators – eight of whom were randomised to simple ‘breathing’ meditation and seven of whom were randomised to guided ‘loving kindness’ meditation. The researchers hypothesized that previously depressed participants practicing ‘loving kindness’ meditation, a direct way of cultivating positive affect, would display greater left prefrontal activity (said to be related to stronger tendencies towards positive affect, as opposed to right prefrontal activations, associated with negative affect), than those practicing ‘breathing’ meditation. Participants had to have had a history of at least one previous depressive episode, and be in recovery for at least eight weeks, and be naïve to meditation. Meditations for both groups lasted 15 minutes each.

Contrary to their hypothesis, the previously depressed participants who practiced the loving kindness meditation did not show stronger changes in prefrontal activity; rather, both groups produced equally positive effects. According to Barnhofer et al. (2010) this shows that even in patients new to meditation, brief guided meditation techniques can result in significant changes in the underlying affective state of the brain.

It is evident that study of the interaction between contemplative traditions such as mindfulness and neuroscience is intensifying, and neurobiological findings seem to suggest that mindfulness meditative practices are associated with changes in specific brain areas, such as brain prefrontal activity, as well as neural patterns and even changes in immune system response. It appears that more experienced meditators do produce heightened activation in the areas of the brain that detect emotional cues, but even brief meditation sessions by novice meditators can produce changes in brain processes related to the affective state.

However, Chiesa and Serretti (2010) and Chiesa, Serretti and Jakobsen (2013) raise concerns regarding the nature of such studies. First, small sample sizes and in some instances lack of control groups make it difficult to generalise observed findings and to draw definite conclusions. Additionally, cross-sectional design does not account for any pre-existing differences between meditators and the controls. For instance, thicker cortical or subcortical areas could be a distinctive marker of people more *inclined* to meditate. Moreover, as many adapted group based interventions such as MBSR and MBCT combine mindfulness practices with cognitive behavioural changes, the authors suggest because of this admixture of different techniques, it is not possible to understand for certain whether mindfulness itself is the ‘active ingredient’ of mindfulness meditations. Chiesa and Serretti (2010) suggest a dismantling design, that is, designing studies so as to assess the efficacy of the different components of mindfulness meditative practices. Finally, Chiesa and Serretti (2010) identify the difficulty of conducting meditation studies in a double-blind condition as a major limitation. They suggest this could be partially overcome by the use of a single-blind design where the evaluator not the meditator is blind to the intervention.

Summary

It is contended that traditional Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) challenges an individual's irrational thinking that leads to maladaptive behaviour (Singh, Lanciono, Wahler, Winton & Singh, 2008). Through *decentring* or *distancing* clients are said to recognise negative thoughts as mental phenomena rather than facts, an important step in changing the content of thoughts (Baer & Sauer, 2009). However, some 'newer' approaches to CBT focus far less on challenging irrational thoughts or negative thinking, and focus more on changing one's *relationship* to thoughts and feelings, as characterised by Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). While distancing or decentring is a central component in mindfulness practice, the definition of decentring, according to Baer and Sauer (2009) applies to a broader range of experiences, including sensations and emotions, and cultivates an open, accepting and welcoming attitude towards them.

The general rationale for using mindfulness meditations is that through such practices patients will develop a mode of mind that assists in forestalling maladaptive thought processes, producing lasting effects on psychological functioning and brain activity (Barnhofer, Chittka, Nightingale, Visser & Crane, 2010). Although it appears possible to reshape the structure and neural patterns of the brain, the existence of many variables in the neurobiological studies undertaken makes it difficult to conclude with any real certainty enduring neurobiological effects resulting from mindfulness meditative practices.

Section Three

Mindfulness-based approaches within education

The following section presents a selection of some mindfulness-based programmes used within school settings. The list is by no means exhaustive, and numerous programmes are internationally in operation (see Garrison Institute n.d.-b, for a Contemplative Education Programmes database). These examples have been limited for the most part to research evaluated programmes operating within the primary (elementary) mainstream education setting, the majority of which are located in the United States. Two exceptions are the United Kingdom based Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) and the Australian based Meditation Capsules (n.d.)

Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP)

MiSP (Mindfulness in Schools Project, 2014a) was established by a group of teachers, who in collaboration with the Oxford Mindfulness Centre (a centre within the University's Department of Psychiatry) and the Well-being Institute of Cambridge University, developed a mindfulness curriculum known as .b [dot-be] (Mindfulness in Schools Project, 2014b). The programme is based on the core principles of MBSR and MBCT and taught to 11-18 year olds over an eight week period. The curriculum consists of nine scripted lessons, tailored to secondary schools, and supported by tailored teacher training (Kuyken et al., 2013). In 2012, a control trial was carried out with 522 students in 12 secondary schools to assess the efficacy and acceptability of the .b school-based programme to enhance mental health and well-being (Kuyken et al., 2013). In total 256 students participated in the MiSP curriculum (266 students were recruited into the control group). According to its authors, the study provides preliminary evidence that the programme ameliorates low-grade depressive symptoms immediately and at a three month follow-up. Kuyken et al. (2013) propose this to be a significant finding given low-grade depressive symptoms are said to impair functioning but also, are seen as a powerful risk factor in adolescents and adults. One of the strengths of this study, according to Kuyken et al. (2013) was a design that enabled the intervention schools to be compared with schools matched on key variables, such as measurement time points, which enabled the intervention's effects to be assessed immediately following the intervention and during a particularly stressful time for many students. However, one major limitation of this research was its use of a small set of self-report measures, and the authors advise that future studies should broaden to look at a range of other measures, including classroom-based observations and biobehavioural measures. Critically, interviews with the students themselves, either individually or in small focus groups, may have offered a much more comprehensive analysis of the programme.

Meditation Capsules

Mindfulness in Australian Schools, founder Etty-Leal (n.d.-a) developed Meditation Capsules for Schools, programmes for children aged three to 18 years

The programme is presented in a text book together with an accompanying CD, in a lesson style format, and is a combination of Etty-Leal's personal practice of mind-body wellness modalities, such as Tai Chi, yoga and meditation, combined with several years establishing mindfulness programmes in government and non-government schools (Albrecht, Albrecht & Cohen, 2012). The course for primary school children includes:

- Identifying the difference between relaxation and meditation
- Getting to know the body: Posture, Breathing, Nervous System
- Getting to know the brain: Neo-cortex and Limbic System
- Understanding the concepts of personal balance and energy management
- Stress Awareness: Personal Triggers and Responses
- Awareness of Words and their emotional links
- Awareness of the Senses: Developing Self Awareness
- Creative Approaches to Meditation: Visualisation and Imagery
- Stillness Meditation: Deepening Concentration. (Etty-Leal, n.d.-b)

A pilot study undertaken in two Australian schools investigated whether the Meditation Capsules programme, implemented by classroom teachers, would be associated with improvements in the mental health in students aged 10 to 13 years (Albrecht, Albrecht & Cohen, 2012; Joyce, Etty-Leal, Zazryn & Hamilton, 2010). The course content was sequentially designed to enable students to cultivate the skills of mindfulness, and develop a personal meditation practice (Joyce et al., 2010). A descriptive rather than prescriptive approach was used, which according to the authors, allowed teachers flexibility in delivering their programmes (Joyce et al., 2010). Although the programme was structured around 10 lessons of 45 minutes each, teachers were encouraged to teach the material in a way which best suited their class and timetables. The teachers received instruction on how to deliver the programme by the designer, and a total of nine classes participated, with the average participant age being 11.4 years.

The evaluation for this pilot project included a mixed methods design, using pre-post assessment along with qualitative feedback from the teachers involved. The results suggest meditation practices can be easily learnt and can influence anxiety and depression among children. Some of the benefits reported were that students appeared more relaxed, settled and able to use the breathing strategies regularly.

Although four teachers commented that some children had difficulty taking the lessons seriously, the overall response was that students enjoyed and responded positively to the programme. Of particular interest however, were factors facilitating successful implementation, which teachers identified as teaching the programme with colleagues, having administrative and parental support, creating the ‘right’ classroom environment (some children enjoyed changing the room with candles and music), students’ enthusiasm, and being able to relate these skills to their own lives. The authors identified the reliance on self-report measures as the main source of data as one of the limitations of the study. This raises the issue as to why student interviews or student focus group interviews appear to have been overlooked as sources of rich, descriptive, qualitative data. Such data collection methods may have proved insightful, particularly with reference to the students who reportedly had difficulty taking the programme seriously.

Inner Kids Programme

Kaiser Greenland (2013) co-founded The Inner Kids Foundation in 2000 as a way of taking mindful-based programmes to underserved schools in Los Angeles. She then developed the Inner Kids awareness programme, labelling it “The New ABCs: Attention, Balance and Compassion” (Kaiser Greenland, 2010, p. 17). The programme teaches relaxation and calming, refined awareness, friendly awareness, sensory awareness, and “emotional freedom” (p. viii) through a variety of activities and games. In 2013, Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus and Davidson conducted a randomised control study of 64 second and third grade children aged seven to nine years to assess the effects of Kaiser Greenland’s programme on executive functioning from the two broad categories of metacognition and behavioural regulation (e.g., working memory, planning and organising, and emotional control). The programme was modelled on classical mindfulness training for adults, and was taught for 30 minutes, twice a week, for eight weeks. Teacher and parent reports were used to evaluate children on an 86 item three point scale indicating whether each behaviour occurred ‘never’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’, over a one month period. The questionnaire was completed prior and immediately following the programme. Analysis of individual subscales report improvement in children’s abilities to shift, initiate, and monitor, which according

to Flook et al. (2013) are central skills practiced in mindfulness exercises, such as bringing attention to the breath (initiate), watching and noticing whether attention wandered (monitor) and when the mind does wander, bringing it back to the breath again (shift). However, one major drawback of this study is the instrument used to evaluate the programme, as arguably, there are limits as to how far three point report scales can indicate nuances of individual experiences. Although the authors do suggest that conducting interviews with teachers would provide a rich source of information that standardised instruments cannot assess, surely the children themselves cannot be overlooked as arguably the most valuable source of feedback concerning the effectiveness of the programme.

MindUp

Developed by the Hawn Foundation (2011-2015a) in the United States, MindUp is a social and emotional literacy training programme which claims to be built upon neuroscience, positive psychology, mindful awareness training and optimism (Hawn Foundation, 2011-2015b). The core practice of MindUp is mindful breathing, which is ideally done three times a day for a few minutes each time (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010) conducted research into an earlier and different version of MindUp called Mindfulness Education, with the purpose of examining its effectiveness on pre and early adolescents' functioning in the domains of optimism, self-concept, positive affect and social-emotional functioning in school. Participants were drawn from 4th to 7th grade public education classrooms in 12 schools located in a large urban school district in a western Canadian city. In total 246 children participated (139 intervention, 107 control). They were administered questionnaires at both pre and post-test on a series of instruments designed to assess dimensions of their social and emotional understanding (emotional awareness, reflection and rumination), mindful awareness, optimism, and self-concept. Teachers also rated children at pre-test and post-test on dimensions of social and emotional and aggressive behaviours. The four key components of the programme included:

1. Quieting the mind - listening to a resonating instrument (chime) and focusing on the breath.
2. Mindful attention - mindful of sensation, thoughts, and feelings.
3. Managing negative emotions and negative thinking.

4. Acknowledgment of self and others.

After the 10 lessons, results reportedly indicated that children who participated in the MindUp programme, compared to children who did not, showed significant improvements on all four dimensions, including attentional control, aggression, behavioural dysregulation and social competence. Additionally, those children in the intervention group evidenced significant improvements in their positive emotions, namely optimism. However, the authors accept a limitation of this study is the use of teacher behavioural ratings, rather than direct observations of student behaviour; teacher bias is a consideration, particularly when ratings are collected from teachers who also deliver the programme. The authors also acknowledge longitudinal research is needed to determine whether or not the positive impacts of the programme are sustainable.

Mindful Schools Programme

The Mindful Schools project began in 2007 after a visiting therapist to Park Day School, California, commented that the children were in “tremendous turmoil” (Mindful Schools, 2010-14). Park Day’s response was to immediately instigate a five week pilot-run mindfulness programme for children and their teachers. Encouraged by the results, the programme was established in a nearby school, and currently, Mindful Schools claims to have globally served more than 200,000 youth.

A pilot study by Biegel and Brown (2010) into the effectiveness of the Mindful Schools programme sought to assess whether the programme would result in increased academic achievement, attention capacities, academic engagement, social relatedness, teacher self-efficacy, and decreased behaviour problems among 79 school-age children in 2nd and 3rd grades. The students received training in the following mindfulness-based activities: listening, breathing, movement, walking, eating, seeing, emotions, test taking, activities of daily living, and lessons on the promotion of kindness and caring. All of these activities continually emphasised attention to, and awareness of, the present moment. The effectiveness of this programme was measured by a variety of quantitative measures (e.g., child self-report, teacher report on each child, and a child attention task on the computer) at three time points during the study. Although the results

indicate an increase in attention and teacher-rated social skills, Biegel and Brown (2010) claim one weakness in this study was the lack of a control school, which would have assisted in quantifying the degree to which the findings were directly attributable to the Mindful School intervention. However, this is debatable, given the intervention school was not blind to the intervention, and as such, may have had a vested interest in seeing themselves as more mindful, given the time and effort devoted to the mindfulness programme. The use of interviews with the students may have proved a more insightful measure. The authors themselves were tentative about the findings, stating, “As the field of mindfulness in education matures, more stringent research methods must be employed to improve the internal validity, replicability, and generalizability of findings ... However, evidence from this pilot study and other similar studies demonstrates that mindfulness may have a multitude of beneficial outcomes for children” (Biegel & Brown, 2010, p. 7).

Still Quiet Place

The primary intention of this course, according to Saltzman and Goldin (2008) is to offer children an experience of the Still Quiet Place (within themselves) enabling them to use mindfulness to respond rather than react to everyday events in their daily lives. Saltzman and Goldin (2008) conducted research with children and their parents based on their modified version of the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme for children. The course was offered to 24 families (31 children and 27 parents) and ran for eight sessions (usually one a week) of about 40 to 90 minutes in length. Among their intentions, they set out to discern whether children benefit from mindfulness training in measurable and meaningful ways. The course training consisted of both formal practice (including body scan, sitting, eating, and walking exercises) and informal practice (focusing attention, attending to the present moment, choosing responses to everyday events) and additional in-class exercises to enhance mindful awareness, artistic expression, and verbal communication. Participants were also expected to complete home-based exercises to complement those taught in class.

Saltzman and Goldin (2008) used a battery of self-report questionnaires (child and adult versions) and computer-administered cognitive-affective tasks to measure

functioning from pre to post-mindfulness training. Their results, both quantitative and qualitative reportedly indicated that the mindfulness-based curriculum benefited children and their parents. Participants were said to have demonstrated increased ability to direct their attention in the presence of distractions that usually induced conflict; they demonstrated significantly less negative emotion in response to physical and social threat scenarios; and in the domain of metacognitive functioning, children and their parents both reported improvement regarding self-judgement and self-compassion. After the training, children were reported to be more compassionate and less judgemental with themselves, and their parents more compassionate and less depressed, anxious, and judgmental with themselves.

As encouraging as these results appear to be, issues arise as to the validity of these findings in terms of measurement. Exactly how are ‘more compassionate’ and ‘less judgemental’ measured? In fact, how are more or less of any trait or state of being reliably measured? Other limitations of this particular study include the small sample size, parents as self-referred co-participants (potential for parents to be influenced by expectations of positive outcomes), the use of few objective measures, and no third party (e.g., teachers) blind reports of outcome measures (Burke, 2010).

Attention Academy Programme

Napoli, Krech and Holley (2005) investigated whether students participating in a mindfulness-training programme, the Attention Academy Programme (AAP) would increase their ability to maintain attention, stating:

In order for children to learn in the classroom, they must be able to focus their attention ... Mindfulness training thus is one strategy that has the potential to assist students to alleviate the negative effects of environmental stressors by focussing their attention on the moment so they can fully focus on classroom activities. If students develop their attention skills, teaching and learning can become more meaningful. (p. 106)

The Attention Academy Programme (AAP) was aimed at assisting students to improve their quality of life. The mindfulness-based practices were designed to increase student attention to the present, approach each experience in a non-judgemental manner, and view each experience as novel, with a ‘beginner’s eye’.

The classes (nine classrooms within two elementary schools in the South-Western United States) met for 45 minutes bi-monthly during students' regular physical education class (Napoli, et al., 2005). The AAP included sitting and movement exercises, body scan mindfulness meditations, and relaxation, and was facilitated by trained, experienced mindfulness instructors. The findings reportedly indicated a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups as assessed by the measures, particularly in the areas of selective attention (the ability to choose to pay attention) and a reduction in test anxiety (Napoli et al., 2005). Burke (2010) states that Napoli et al.'s use of the randomised control trial design, the reasonable sample size, and the objective use of measures of attention add strength to the methodology. As with previously mentioned classroom-based studies, limitations include the potential for bias in the teacher ratings.

Mindfulness-based approaches within New Zealand educational settings

The literature pertaining to mindfulness-based practices within New Zealand primary schools is far from profuse, and for that reason, the following section includes programmes and practices undertaken within other educational settings, such as pre-school, high-school and tertiary institutions.

Whitehead (2009; 2011) encourages early childhood teachers and parents of young children to practice mindfulness, pointing out that *Te Whariki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, positions spirituality as part of a holistic early childhood curriculum¹. Whitehead (2009) argues the present early childhood education system, despite identifying 'holistic development' as one of the main strands in its curriculum, tends to emphasise more 'secular' tasks, activities and learning opportunities for children. She undertook a study where a variety of spiritual/holistic activities were used with young children in order to ascertain which practices would be suitable for an early childhood age group. Seven children, ranging in age from five to seven years participated in weekly one hour sessions, which included meditation, visualisations, guided imagery, yoga and art. Whitehead (2009) concluded early childhood teachers have an ideal opportunity to deepen their relationships with children, and to "transform children in a

¹ Similarly, the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) identifies an aspect of the Māori philosophy of well-being as *taha wairua* – the spiritual dimension.

multiple of ways” (p. 20), although the precise nature or outcome of this ‘transformation’ is not clear. Through a range of activities, such as those described above, Whitehead (2009) claims that a range of ‘learning styles’ can be supported, and the sessions can be integrated into any class, and undertaken at any time. She suggests other spiritual practices particularly relevant to the New Zealand setting are Māori practices, such as waiata (songs) and karakia (prayer), which can honour diversity and promote inclusiveness.

Mapel (2012) taught tertiary students what he refers to as “basic mindfulness skills” (p. 23) in their weekly two hour tutorials and lectures. Each class began with a five to seven minute guided meditation encouraging students to be present, to take notice of thoughts and feelings in an accepting manner, and to breathe and relax. In total, students had 28 lessons in which they were provided mindfulness instruction and given the opportunity to practise mindfulness. Mapel (2012) reports the results from both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that given the choice of having a few minutes of mindfulness before the start of each class, 71.4 % replied in the affirmative, 14.3% in the negative, and 14.3% were uncertain. Clearly, mindfulness practices of this nature are not welcomed by everyone, but Mapel maintains a significant majority of students were positive about the experience, and found it to be conducive to their learning, and generally beneficial to their lives.

A hermeneutic phenomenological New Zealand based study featured mindfulness training with pre-service teachers. Bernay (2012) introduced mindfulness practices to a cohort of pre-service teachers and then followed five of them through their first year of teaching, focussing on their lived professional experiences. The teachers in this study had each developed personal mindfulness meditations in order to increase their awareness in the present moment with more compassion, which were based on exercises initially introduced during their pre-service training, such as mindful eating, breath awareness, body scan, sitting meditation, and walking meditation (Bernay, 2014). Several of the participants did not, however, engage in formal mindfulness practices until the end of the second term when they felt overwhelmed by stress. Bernay (2014) reports that a variety of practices were used by different participants, but all participants

regularly engaged with body scan and breath focus. The participants reported that although it was not easy to engage in regular mindfulness practices (and they did continue to experience stress), many were able to respond to stress differently. All participants were reported to be positive about the effects mindfulness had on them both personally and professionally, and claimed their ability to focus on and be aware of the needs of their students had improved (Bernay, 2012).

The previously discussed MiSP .b programme, was taught at Saint Kentigern Girls' School in Auckland, in 2014 (Saint Kentigern Independent Presbyterian Education, 2012). The nine lesson programme was taught to senior school students in years seven and eight once a week for one hour, led by a .b qualified instructor, but apart from the school's website containing a rationale for the programme, no other literature could be located relating to the evaluation of the programme.

In 2013, the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand reportedly delivered an eight week mindfulness programme to primary aged children across five New Zealand Schools (Rix, 2014). The programme is said to have aligned with the New Zealand curriculum and a Māori model of hauora (well-being) is incorporated as a core component. Rix (2014) states the programme was expanded in 2014 to an increased number of schools, and advises two studies in partnership with the University of Auckland and the Auckland University of Technology, one a randomised control trial with an active control group, are forthcoming (Rix, personal communication, 02.09.14).

During the second half of 2013, a junior school in Auckland trialled Etty-Leal's *Meditation Capsules: A Mindfulness Program for Children* (Ager, Bucu, Albrecht & Cohen, 2014). Eighteen students ranging in age from six to seven years, and 20 pupils ranging in age from nine to 10 years participated in the programme (see previous section for Etty-Leal's (n.d.-b) description of the programme). The purpose of the research project was to gain an understanding of students' and teachers' experiences and perspectives of learning and teaching the programme. Unlike the Meditation Capsules study reported in the previous section (Joyce et al., 2010) this programme was delivered by the school's counsellor and well-

being director, with the general classroom teachers participating in some activities. During the course students completed age appropriate journals where they were able to record their thoughts and feelings about the programme. The journals were then analysed to reveal prominent themes associated with their perceptions of learning mindfulness. For example, students identified mindful walking, mindful eating and mindful breathing among their favourite activities. The authors concluded mindfulness programmes such as Meditation Capsules can have a positive impact on the well-being of both staff and students. The programme has reportedly been shown to reduce stress, support the development of core character traits such as empathy and awareness of self and others, and improve happiness and well-being of teachers and students (Ager et. al., 2014). Among the recommendations, it was noted mindfulness practice could be implemented through a 10 week programme such as Meditation Capsules or alternatively, be integrated into daily classroom routine by classroom teachers, not solely school counsellors. Ager et. al. (2014) advise “Effective implementation of mindfulness practice should have flexibility and enable teachers, and students to trust their intuition and to go with the flow” (p. 15).

Yet despite the growth in interest in mindfulness programmes for students and teachers, it is not without its detractors. A proposed mindfulness programme at Riversdale School in Southland, New Zealand resulted in five parental complaints made to the Ministry of Education regarding the introduction of the programme, by parents distrustful of its Buddhist origins (Harding, 2014a; 2014b). In some respects it is surprising that there are not more concerns of this kind given the different and varied beliefs systems held by diverse groups in society. For instance, some conservative commentators argue that such practices are meddling in the inner life of the child and should be embedded within a theological context, rather than what Irwin (1999) views as inappropriate secular control of spirituality. On the other hand, the growing widespread popularity of Tolle’s books and the increasingly popular practice of mindfulness seems to be gaining mainstream acceptance. It is interesting to note that despite opposition, however, it was decided Riversdale School would teach mindfulness to the pupils for numerous reasons, including “to help with their concentration and focus, and to curb bullying” (Harding, 2014c).

Summary

This section has offered an overview of some mindfulness-based programmes used within school settings. As stated, the list is by no means exhaustive, but provides an overview of some of the mindfulness principles embedded in the programmes, many of which are adapted from MBSR and MBCT.

As promising as these studies appear in terms of improving student behaviour, decreasing anxiety, increasing attention and decreasing negative emotion, Singh et al. (2008) state several critical variables are often missing or incomplete in mindfulness studies, some of which include construct validity (e.g., the nature of the underlying mindfulness construct is still amorphous); criterion validity (e.g., the absence of objective measurement against which self-ratings can be compared); demographic variables of participants; treatment settings; and whether the effects of mindfulness are being measured for immediate, short or long term effects. Greenberg and Harris (2012) conclude that interventions that nurture mindfulness may be feasible and effective in building resilience in universal populations of children and youth, and in the treatment of some clinical disorders, but enthusiasm for the promotion of such practices outweighs current evidence supporting them. They argue well-designed and carefully reported experimental studies measuring multiple indicators of change over time would greatly add to this field of research.

Perhaps most importantly, however, is the often notable absence of qualitative measures such as interviews with teacher and student participants, which may provide rich, ethnographic descriptions. Additionally, qualitative inquiries such as case studies and phenomenological investigations could highlight the nuances and subtleties of the lived experiences of participants in ways, for example, self-report rating scales could not, thereby adding an extra critical dimension to the findings.

In their systematic review and meta-analysis of mindfulness-based interventions in schools, Zenner et al. (2014) note several limitations of current studies, but state the major limitation as:

The heterogeneity of the studies is considerable, and hence the estimates of effect sizes, including their significance, can only have an orientating function. It is plausible that school-background, social background, and how a program is accepted within a particular school context influence its effects, yet we do not have the information necessary to explore these effects or those of other potential moderators. (p. 13)

In addition, Zenner et al. (2014) regard many studies as small and ‘underpowered’, with a notable absence of strong, active controls, resulting in tentative findings, with the need to be supported by larger, more robust evaluations. Importantly, they argue that the precise role the mindfulness element plays is really unknown, as the extent of the effect could be attributed to non-specific intervention factors, such as group support, the novelty of the intervention, or even the generic resting and relaxing. Among their recommendations, Zenner et al. (2014) note the need for larger, randomised studies; longer follow up measures; less exclusive reliance on self-report data; the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data; and manuals of the interventions studied made available. Finally, they recommend teachers themselves are trained in mindfulness, thus promoting mindfulness in their pupils through teaching mindfully, for if mindfulness is to be established in a school-based framework, they suggest teachers will have to be the agents for change.

Accordingly, if as Zenner et al. (2014) suggest, teachers are the most likely ambassadors for mindfulness-based practices, we return full circle to the two foundational questions on which this thesis is based, specifically, *what is the nature of the mindfulness experience in relation to well-being for teachers?* And *how do teachers’ perceptions of mindfulness and well-being influence their identity, practices and beliefs?* The following section seeks to address these questions by first exploring the notion of well-being, and subsequently, examining the literature relating to teacher well-being in particular. The section concludes with a review of mindfulness-based training approaches and programmes designed for educators.

Section Four

Defining well-being: The challenge

Exactly how well-being should be defined, measured, or even spelt remains largely undecided. While there is no universal agreement on a definition of well-being, Diener (2012) argues that social support and the fulfilment of basic needs are worldwide predictors of subjective well-being. Similarly, Henry (2006) reports many of the strategies people find most useful in developing well-being are in line with the key principles and practices advocated by positive psychology², such as engaging with the world, being socially embedded, and in some instances, building a positive attitude, finding purpose, and orientating toward the future. Most researchers agree that well-being is a multifaceted construct which includes emotional, social and functional components (Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern & Seligman, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 2013, 2014; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

The whole notion of well-being as a multidimensional construct is evident in health education. The health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) identifies four underlying and interdependent concepts at its heart: hauora, attitudes and values, the socio-ecological perspective and health promotion. Specifically, the Māori philosophy of hauora (well-being) includes taha wairua (spiritual well-being), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional well-being), taha tinana (physical well-being) and taha whanau (social well-being). Yet, Forgeard et al. (2011) argue such all-encompassing definitions have led to “blurred and overly broad definitions of wellbeing, with researchers using the construct of ‘wellbeing’ simultaneously with ‘happiness’, ‘quality of life’ or ‘life satisfaction’” (p. 81). Indeed, founder of the Positive Psychology² movement, Martin Seligman (2002) stated, “I use *happiness* and *well-being* interchangeably as overarching terms to describe the goals of the whole Positive Psychology enterprise” (p. 261). He claims ‘happiness’ to be composed of three subjective facets: positive emotion, engagement, and meaning. By pursuing one or more of these facets, an individual could achieve happiness. Seligman (2011) has since revised his original theory by adding two additional facets, and redefining the endpoint of his theory as well-being. His new theory posits well-being as comprised of nurturing one or more of

² The field of positive psychology, at the subjective level, according to Seligman (2000) is about “valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)” (p. 5).

five elements: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA). Importantly, it appears Seligman's theory includes both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being, which according to Boniwell (n.d.) tend to be missing from most contemporary well-being literature.

Hedonic well-being

Adding to the unclear and wide-ranging definitions is a distinction drawn between two differing 'types' of well-being. Hedonic well-being focuses on *subjective* well-being, frequently equated with happiness, life satisfaction, striving for pleasure (positive affect), and less negative affect (minimisation of pain) (Boniwell, n.d.; Diener, 1984; Ryan & Deci, 2001). It can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Aristippus, who believed the goal in life was to experience maximum pleasure (Boniwell, n.d.). Within hedonism, no consideration is given to the source of the happiness, rather, the greater the extent of pleasure experienced, the better (Waterman, 2007).

Closely linked to the notion of hedonic well-being is the phenomenon known as *hedonic adaptation*. Lyubomirsky (2013a) writes what is most fascinating about hedonic adaptation is that it is most pronounced in regard to positive experiences. Simply put, we get used to 'things':

We get used to the cities where we live, to our favourite ice cream, our favourite artwork, and our favourite songs ... when we have reached one goal, we are content for only a short while before we begin to feel that we won't be satisfied until we reach even higher. In this way, we continually escalate our expectations and desires ... after a while in the office or at the job site, we don't even notice the things that used to make us smile ... (pp. 118-119)

The idea of hedonic adaptation, according to Diener, Lucas and Scallan (2006), appealed to psychologists because it explained the observation that people seem to be relatively stable in happiness, despite changes in fortune. Based on the research of Brickman and Campbell (1971), the *hedonic treadmill* theory (Deiner et al., 2006; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2012) proposed that just as people quickly adapt to, for example, many smells and scents which thereafter disappear from awareness, one's emotional system adjusts to one's life circumstances and all reactions are relative to prior experience. Brickman, Coates and Janoff-Bulman's

(1978) seminal study concluded after a short period of time lottery winners were no happier than non-winners, and that people with paraplegia were no less happy than those who could walk. According to Deiner et al. (2006) this finding became central to the way scientists understood happiness because it seemed to explain the observation that people with considerable resources were often no happier than those with few resources or those with severe ‘problems’.³ In other words, hedonic adaptation occurs in relation to negative experiences as well, contributing to our resilience (Lyumbomirsky, 2013a), because “We are really good at adapting to negative changes” (Lyumbomirsky, 2013b, n.p.). Decades on from the original hedonic treadmill theory, Lyubomirsky (2013b) sums up the phenomenon:

I guess the underlying theme is that nothing is as joy-producing or as misery-inducing as we think it is. There’s no sort of sure course to happiness, and there’s no sure course towards misery either (n.p.)

While the idea that hedonic adaptation may account for one’s ability to adapt to most situations, a more recent theory suggests not only is it possible to adapt, but to experience personal growth through what would appear as the most traumatic of circumstances.

Posttraumatic growth

Several decades on from Brickman’s et al. (1978) seminal study, the idea that positive change may occur as a result of struggle with the most highly challenging of life circumstances, has been posited by Calhoun and Tedeschi (1998), Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b) define posttraumatic growth as:

... the experience of individuals whose development, at least in some areas, has surpassed what was present before the struggle with crisis occurred. The individual has not only survived, but has experienced changes that are viewed as important, and that go beyond what was the previous status quo. Posttraumatic growth is not simply a return to

³ This study appeared to show it is possible for an individual to adapt to even the most extreme events. However, according to Lucas (2007), what is often not mentioned in this study is that although the participants with spinal cord injuries were above neutral on the happiness scale, which is how Brickman et al. (1978) concluded they were happier, they were significantly less happy than the people in the control group – the average participant in the control groups was approximately 78% happier than those with spinal-cord injuries.

baseline – it is an experience of improvement that for some persons is deeply profound. (p. 4)

The authors suggest posttraumatic growth is manifested in a variety of ways, including an increased appreciation for life, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, an increased sense of personal growth, changed priorities, and a richer existential and spiritual life. However, they point out that although the term is ‘new’, the idea that great change may occur from great suffering is not new, and can be evidenced in many religious traditions, such as Christianity, and the transfiguration of Christ after the crucifixion. It is this *transforming* quality, which according to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b) distinguishes posttraumatic growth from other concepts such as resilience. Posttraumatic growth results in a qualitative change, whereas people who have highly developed coping capacities in the first instance, may be less challenged by the trauma; it is the *struggle* with the trauma which the authors argue is crucial for posttraumatic growth. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b) use the metaphor of an earthquake to describe the process as a psychologically seismic event that can severely shake, or reduce to rubble many of the schematic structures which have previously held meaning in a person’s life. The ‘seismic’ set of circumstances severely challenges or contradicts an individual’s assumptions about life, necessitating cognitive ‘rebuilding’. Importantly, this rebuilding now takes into account the changed reality of the individual’s life to incorporate the trauma, and possible events in the future will now be more resistant to being ‘shattered’. The events themselves are not viewed as desirable, however, the ‘good’ which has resulted is said to be experienced as growth.

Eudaimonic well-being

In many ways, this notion of growth aligns with a type of well-being known as eudaimonic well-being. Eudaimonic well-being focuses on *psychological* well-being, that is, ideas of flourishing and self-realisation, but not happiness in the hedonic sense (Ryff, 2013). Eudaimonism is an ethical theory, which according to Ryff (2013) and Waterman (1993) calls people to live in accordance with the ‘true self’ or *daimon*, and is more strongly associated with opportunities to develop one’s potential through challenge and great effort, as opposed to hedonic

or subjective experiences such as feeling relaxed, excited, content, losing track of time and forgetting personal problems (Waterman, 2007).

Ryff (2014) traces the notion of eudaimonic well-being back to Aristotle, who strongly opposed the idea of the highest of all human goods as hedonic well-being (pleasure and satisfaction of appetites), viewing the task of self-realisation, played out individually, according to personal dispositions and capabilities as the highest good to which humans could strive (Ryff, 2013). Ryff's (1989) seminal work presented a model of psychological well-being to address neglected aspects of positive functioning. Drawing on the perspectives of Maslow, Rogers, Jung and Allport, Ryff concluded that such qualities as "positive relations with others, autonomy, purpose in life, or personal growth" (p. 1071) to be key components in well-being.

More recent literature, however, argues eudaimonic well-being is not simply a matter of psychological flourishing and self-realisation. Some contemporary discourses tend to link well-being with health, which according to La Placa, McNaught and Knight (2011), stems from the World Health Organization's 1946 definition that health is not merely about the absence of disease, but a state of well-being. Consequently, well-being is proposed as one of many domains comprising health, as opposed to a significant and complex phenomenon which might be separately examined.

Because of the adaptive and protective benefits associated with eudaimonic well-being, according to Ryff (2014; 2013), it affords protection against many health challenges associated with aging and stress such as cardiovascular disease and disability (Boyle, Buchman & Bennett, 2010; Kim, Sun, Park, Kubzansky & Peterson, 2013; Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). Whereas 20 years ago, Ryff and Keyes (1995) reported mapping the structure of psychological well-being was reliant on self-report techniques with their inherent self-presentation biases, it appears eudaimonic well-being is a growing area of scientific inquiry:

Without question, the most informative advances have come from linking psychological well-being to physical health, biological regulation and neuroscience ... growing evidence shows that qualities such as purposeful engagement, self-realization and growth, and

enlightened self-regard are relevant empirical influences on how long and how well people live. (Ryff, 2014, p. 23)

Thus, while scientific inquiry attempts to quantify well-being, the core hypothesis of positive health appears to be an explicit link between health and well-being, particularly eudaimonic well-being with its apparent protective and adaptive functions. Of particular relevance to this study is the notion of well-being 'duality'. Hedonic well-being emphasises the subjective nature of well-being and is often equated with happiness and life satisfaction. Eudaimonic well-being is associated with psychological well-being, and is concerned more with personal growth, autonomy and purpose. When taken together, the two paradigms appear to complement each other, by suggesting well-being is both an experiential state and a state of 'being'.

One theory which appears to comprise characteristics of both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being is that of *autotelic experience*, or *flow*, as developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1999). The notion of flow is a theoretical concept which describes a particular kind of experience so enjoyable and engrossing it becomes worth doing for its own sake. Typical sources for flow experiences might be creative activities, music, sport, games, and religious rituals. However, it is not limited to creative endeavours, and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) lists teenagers who love studying, workers who like their jobs and drivers who enjoy driving among those who report to have experienced flow. Characteristically, flow is experienced as an intense or ecstatic experience; stepping into a different reality; becoming one with the activity at hand; and a total loss of a sense of time. Importantly, Csikszentmihalyi (1999) adds that a universal condition for the flow experience is that the person feels his or her abilities match the opportunities for action; it is the balance between challenges and skills whereby one becomes lost in the activity and flow is likely to result.

One rather powerful account of what might be described as a 'flow state', that is, the stepping into a different reality and becoming one with the activity at hand, is reported by Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) who undertook a study on spirituality in the New Zealand classroom. They describe how Marama, a Māori teacher was completely surprised when an intensely shy girl in her class offered to perform a

karanga (a formal ‘calling on’ or welcome to visitors). This unexpected yet highly successful performance appeared to contradict the girl’s normally timid demeanour. In describing the performance Marama said, “She was going with the flow. I was watching her and she was just away and then afterwards when she came back she said ‘Was that alright?’ I said ‘You sounded so awesome you know I could hear your tupuna’ [ancestor(s)] ... she was just all smiles and beams” (p. 313). Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) cite this as an example of a flow state, where action and awareness merge, “the optimal balance between challenge and skill, the zone where task absorption is most likely to occur” (p. 317). Additionally, it serves to exemplify both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being simultaneously, by illustrating happiness alongside autonomy, purpose and self-realisation.

Therefore, given the multifaceted structure of well-being, and assuming it encompasses both hedonic and eudaimonic paradigms the following section begins by examining teacher well-being in a generic sense, and then moves specifically to teacher well-being in relation to mindfulness-based practices.

Teacher well-being

Just as ‘well-being’ appears a multi-layered, complex phenomenon, all but impossible to define, a definitive ‘teacher well-being’ seems equally elusive. In New Zealand, few studies relating to teacher well-being have been undertaken, and those that have tend to focus largely on the psychological well-being of teachers in relation to stress (Beckley, 2011; Manthei & Solman, 1988; Manthei, Gilmore, Tuck & Adair, 1996; Whitehead & Ryba, 1995), burnout in New Zealand secondary school teachers (Milfont, Denny, Ameratunga, Robinson & Merry 2008) and well-being and stress amongst principals (Hodgen & Wylie, 2005). In this way, the literature is more reflective of teacher *ill-being*, rather than considering what it means to be a ‘well’ teacher. One teacher well-being programme has been in operation at Sancta Maria College in Auckland since 2012, and according to its creator, comprises brief weekly well-being focus topics, encouraging colleagues to think about their work habits during the week: “It’s all very simple stuff, like making sure you drink enough water, or eat a piece of fruit every day, or make sure you go home at 5pm once a week” (Vickers, 2013, p. 5).

However, with reference to a more eudaimonic perspective of teacher well-being, the field is large, particularly internationally. Although not all studies are referenced here, this review has identified a key finding recurrent in the literature as particularly significant for teacher well-being: connectedness – to others, and the ‘inner-self’.

Connection to others

In their hermeneutic phenomenological study into the nature of the lived experience of well-being, Healey-Ogden and Austin (2011) describe the well-being experience as “a deeply woven masterpiece, where self and world become one. The continuous interchange between people and their worlds reflects a dance of mutuality that underlies this phenomenon, and is a time of soulful connecting” (p. 91). In a similar way, Palmer (2007) writes of ‘soulful connecting’ as the ability of teachers to ‘dance’ with their students; a critical component in co-creating a context in which teacher and students learn together.

The notion that ‘connection’ signifies one’s sense of well-being as deeply dependent on others is highlighted in two studies relating to teacher well-being. In the first study, Klassen, Perry and Frenzel (2012) found that strong teacher-student relationships were not only important for student well-being, but also teacher well-being, to the extent that teachers’ need for relatedness with their colleagues may be overshadowed by their need for relatedness with their students. The authors concluded that when teachers felt connected with their students, they reported higher levels of engagement and enjoyment with their work, and lower levels of anger, anxiety and emotional exhaustion. In short, “teachers’ relatedness with students is an underemphasised component of teachers’ basic psychological needs” (p. 150).

Further highlighting the significance of connectedness in teacher well-being, Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell (2012) explored perceived control and well-being in teachers and other professionals. Four themes related to control were identified as autonomy, authenticity, resilience and connection to others. Although there were similarities between professions relating to the need for control over one’s work, for teachers, the values appeared different to other professions.

Connections and being able to put pupils first were what really mattered to teachers and provided a source of well-being, which according to McCallum and Price (2012) has a direct influence on student well-being, happiness, achievement and success. Intrator (2005) uses the homespun vernacular of the American South to illustrate this point: “Like the old saying, if Momma ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy. If you get a teacher in the classroom who’s not happy, then look out, little children” (p. 12). In other words:

If our teachers are unwell - weary, unhappy, or demoralized - then our children will suffer. Conversely, available, energized, and soulful teachers provide opportunities for our children to thrive because - as teachers - our moral energy matters, our idealism matters, our capacity to be fully present for students matters. In other words - who we are matters. (Intrator, 2005, p. 12)

Studies investigating teacher well-being and student performance seem to suggest a type of well-being reciprocity at play: teacher well-being appears to directly affect instructional performance and personal characteristics, and performance in turn affects student motivation (Duckworth, Quinn & Seligman, 2009; Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke & Baumert, 2008). This seemingly upward spiral effect is explained by Fredrickson (2000; 2009) and Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) as the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. This theory predicts that positive emotions widen the scopes of attention and cognition, making us more receptive and creative, in turn building new skills, new ties, new knowledge, and new ways of ‘being’. She makes the rather bold claim:

... positivity transforms you for the better, However subtle and fleeting, your moments of positivity accumulate and compound over time to build lasting resources for life. You become stronger, wiser, more resilient, and more socially integrated. Positivity spells growth. It sets you on a trajectory toward becoming a better person ... (Fredrickson, 2009, p. 226)

Fredrickson (2009) identified 10 forms of positivity which she maintains no matter how fleeting, can build and compound over time, helping us to become “stronger, wiser, more resilient and more socially integrated” (p. 226). The 10 forms of positivity are: “joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love” (p. 39). One implication of the broaden-and-build

theory is the claim that positive emotions help to counter the effect of negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2000). Strategies such as relaxation therapies, behavioural therapies, cognitive therapies aimed at teaching optimism, and coping mechanisms that find positive meaning, are advanced by Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) as cultivating positive emotions, assisting to broaden an individual's habitual modes of thinking and building a personal coping practice. The extent to which positivity promotes well-being is a moot point, however. Although Fredrickson's (2009) theory advances the role of positive emotions in well-being, it is important to note that, as described previously in this literature review, the 'transforming' qualities associated with posttraumatic growth, as posited by Calhoun and Tedeschi (1998) and Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a; 2004b), may also be seen as highly beneficial in building lasting resources for life.

Teachers higher in life satisfaction, according to Duckworth et al. (2009) may be more adept at engaging their students. While factors influencing student engagement are complex and multifaceted and cannot be attributed to any one cause, it is interesting to note that the authors hypothesise a causal link between teacher life satisfaction and superior performance, suggesting children may be drawn to and engaged by teachers whose energy and positive attitude can "shift a set-point of mood for the entire classroom" (p. 541).

The notion that reciprocity and teacher and student connectedness are essential in raising student achievement is highlighted in the New Zealand based educational programme Te Kotahitanga (literally translated as 'unity of purpose') which seeks to raise the achievement of Māori students in mainstream schools (Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Bishop, Berryman & Wearmouth, 2014). Through its relational pedagogical approach, teachers and students reflect together how best to raise student achievement and collaboratively move forward. The implication here is that improvements in learning outcomes come about through a shared kaupapa or philosophy by both teachers and students that rejects deficit thinking regarding the abilities of Māori. Importantly, it is the very sharing of power which, according to Bishop and Glynn (1999) is a necessary condition for relationship based pedagogies, ultimately initiating a reciprocal foundation for teacher and student well-being.

Connection to the inner-self

When writing about connection, Kessler (2000) precedes the word with the adjective ‘deep’ and expresses this as “profound respect, a deep caring, and a quality of “being with” that honours the truth of each participant in the relationship” (p. 18). However, connection does not necessarily involve building a relationship with others. Kessler states that the capacity to be in relationship with one’s inner life is critical for the development of autonomy. In describing connection to self, she writes:

Moments of deep connection to the self – when we really know ourselves, express our true self, feel connected to the essence of who we are – nourish the human spirit. Some people define this connection to the self as the bedrock of spirituality, from which all other connections flow. (p. 20)

Intrator (2005) contends most teachers enter the profession for reasons of the ‘heart’; they care deeply about their students, and envision themselves as agents of change in the lives of their students. But a steady stream of challenges and institutional limitations can erode teachers of their idealism, energy and purpose. Put simply, teaching can be stressful.

Stress has been implicated as impacting negatively on the well-being of individual teachers as well as on retention and recruitment for the teaching profession as a whole (Gold et al., 2010; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus & Davidson, 2013). Retaining teachers and providing them with resources for “self-care” (Flook et al., 2013, p. 182) can translate into increased effectiveness within the classroom. Importantly, teachers must be encouraged to develop and promote their personal and professional well-being, by learning to “put on their oxygen masks first” (Hills & Robinson, 2010, p. 2) before they can adequately promote student well-being. Hills and Robinson (2010) claim in order for teachers to strengthen their professional vitality, they require sustained opportunities to renew connections between their personal selves and their work. Professional development could be one such opportunity for renewal, however most professional development tends to focus on upskilling teachers in curriculum development and pedagogy, rather than offering opportunities for renewal of the self.

Intrator and Kunzman (2006) argue that professional development for teachers largely ignores the importance of vocational vitality, instead focussing on innovations in self-contained, one-shot workshops which “embody a view of the teacher as deficient and needing to be fixed through the transmission of a new technique or skill” (p. 19). However, teacher development programmes and professional retreats which speak to the ‘inner-self’, the ‘heart and soul’ of the teacher may be seen as one way of ‘oxygenating’ educators towards enhancing their personal and professional well-being, described by Palmer (2007) as the power of inwardness to transform work and lives.

Mindfulness-based training for teachers

Mindfulness training has been offered as a type of professional development to assist teachers manage the demands of teaching (Flook et al., 2013). Several programmes are in operation internationally, although according to Roeser, Skinner, Beers and Jennings (2012) and Roeser et al. (2013) there is a need for rigorous empirical research regarding these programmes. Roeser et al. (2013) point out that one of the limitations of mindfulness professional development is that such studies include a motivated sample of teachers who elect to partake in the programme, implying an inherent bias in groups of willing participants. Importantly, because the field of research on the effects of mindfulness-training on teachers, classrooms and students is so new, Roeser et al. (2012) call for “phenomena finding investigations that use rich, ethnographic descriptions, case studies of exemplars, and other forms of qualitative assessment ...” (p. 170). Additionally, Roeser et al. (2012) highlight a need for longitudinal designs to examine the long-term effects of mindfulness-training on such areas as work attendance, health care utilisation, leaving the profession, as well as student engagement, achievement and equity.

A brief outline of some current mindfulness-based programmes for teachers operating in North America is listed below. Each programme is followed by a summary of the key principles and practices aligned with these programmes:

- The Centre for Courage and Renewal in Seattle Washington, a retreat programme for educators, was created on the premise that good teaching stems from the identity and integrity of the

teacher. Founded by Parker Palmer, the retreats are often called *Courage to Teach* programmes, and focus on renewal of the inner lives of education professionals (Palmer, 2003).

- CARE for Teachers (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) is run by the Garrison Institute as a professional development programme for K-12 educators. It is designed to help teachers alleviate stress and improve learning environments by promoting awareness, presence, compassion, reflection and inspiration (Garrison Institute, n.d.-a).
- The PassageWorks Institute was founded in 2001 by Rachael Kessler and colleagues after the publication of Kessler's book *The Soul of Education* (2000). It states its practices and principles support the 'inner lives' of teachers and students – the aspect of human nature that longs for deep connection (Passage Works, 2014a). In 2013 this institute acquired the rights to SMART-in-Education (Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques) a curriculum based on the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Programme.
- A ten week on-line mindfulness-training course designed to support teachers and health care professionals who work with children is offered by Saltzman (2014) via her Still Quiet Place website. Unlike the aforementioned programmes, however, participation in this programme is dependent on a number of conditions including an established daily mindfulness practice and mindfulness retreat experience.

Undoubtedly, many educators are assisted in their practice through their involvement in such programmes. However, these are commercial programmes carefully marketed with numerous highly beneficial assertions advertised by participants to attract prospective clients. Claims to reduce personal stress, renew inner lives, renew passion, and promote awareness, appear in-built in these programmes which are delivered within a comparatively short space of time. Most of these are large, sweeping claims that are difficult to verify. For example, participants in the SMART-in-Education programme meet once a week after school for eight weeks, and once for a half day weekend retreat, yet after this, report reduced occupational stress and burnout, reduced feelings of anxiety and depression, more focused attention, increased working memory capacity, greater mindfulness and higher levels of self-compassion (PassageWorks, 2014b).

Similarly, participants in the CARE for Teachers programme meet for a full day once a week for four to five weeks (with added intercessional coaching via

telephone and internet) and during this time are said to, “learn to bring greater calm, mindfulness and awareness into the classroom to enhance their relationships with their students, their classroom management, and curricular implementation” (Garrison Institute, n.d.-a, n.p.). Moreover, these programmes are often costly; Saltzman’s 10 week internet programme costs US\$600.00. Participants in this programme appear to be carefully selected as those who are likely to respond well because priority participation, as aforementioned, is given to those with an established mindfulness practice and retreat experience (Saltzman, 2014).

Gold et al. (2010) investigated the effects of teaching a Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course to group of 11 self-selected primary school educators using the Kentucky Inventory Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) assessment. The eight week course was taught and evaluated to establish its effects on levels of stress, depression and anxiety. Before the course, participants set goals for their desired achievement and on average, reported a 60% progression towards these goals in less than three months. Noteworthy, however, is the finding that one participant reported more anxiety and stress at the follow-up, despite feeling the course had been helpful, and their personal goal had been reached. The authors of this study argue “This may be explained by life events occurring during the course and could have been independent of it” (p. 187). Such explanations appear weak in that they seem to overlook the fact that mindfulness is a way of ‘being’, not simply a tool for the teacher’s toolkit. As such, mindfulness principles and practices should permeate all aspects of one’s life, not just the classroom. Teachers’ professional and personal lives are inextricably linked (Palmer, 2007). For such programmes to be worthwhile, they would need to speak to the ‘whole’ of one’s being, not merely the identification with a particular role. Put simply, what is the point of a programme designed to teach strategies and principles to alleviate stress, if those principles cannot be applied to all of one’s life events?

In an attempt to address what they see as the limitations highlighted by current studies, such as lack of empirical studies including a control group, Flook et al. (2013) recently conducted a pilot study with 18 public elementary school teachers to investigate the effectiveness of a modified version of the eight week MBSR programme on teacher stress, burnout and efficacy. They utilised both self-report

and more objective measures, including classroom observations, computerised tasks relating to attention and emotion regulation, and saliva sampling for cortisol as a psychological stress indicator. The authors concluded that their adapted MBSR programme heightened teachers' mindfulness and self-compassion, reduced psychological symptoms and burnout, and increased effective teacher behaviour. With reference to their control group, apart from a marginally significant increase in burnout (measured by a 22 item scale used to assess three dimensions of burnout as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment), no other changes were found from pre to post-test. The authors report that the teachers who did not receive any intervention during the school year may be prone to a decreased sense of personal accomplishment and increased physiological stress, based on their morning cortisol levels. Yet approaches of this kind carry with them various well known limitations, and the authors agree that the use of a single morning time point sample, rather than multiple post-waking samples limits their ability to accurately track a post-waking cortisol response. Additionally, it must be noted that the sample size was predominantly female (16) with a mean average age of 43.06 years. A more comprehensive study would include a proportionate number of male participants of similar age, as the authors appear to have overlooked any physiological factors which may have influenced results.

Findings such as these leave many questions unanswered. For example, do mindfulness-based programmes result in any significant *ongoing* gains in well-being for teachers once programmes cease? Is it possible to isolate precise mindfulness elements (for example focussed breathing or quiet, restful periods) as major factors influencing teacher well-being? Additionally, current research does not yet reveal whether there are any associated risks for participants with the cessation of such programmes, or for that matter, if there are any risks associated with participation in the programmes. Furthermore, are any well-being 'gains' restricted to the workplace, rather than influencing all areas and aspects of participants' lives? Perhaps most significantly however, is the probability that there are programmes in operation throughout the world which although not labelled 'mindful' as such, promote practices and approaches commensurate with mindfulness yet are not commercially promoted or recognised. A key issue is

this: if the entry point to mindfulness is a commercial model, then surely it will be lost, for mindfulness is not a tool for a teacher's toolbox, nor another commercial product in the consumer market place. It is a way of 'being' in the world, and that is something internalised and lived for much longer than the standard eight weeks duration of many of these programmes, a point espoused by Whitehead (2011), and highlighted in a recent study by van Aalderen, Breukers, Ruezal & Speckens, (2012).

Whitehead (2011) maintains that before mindfulness can be offered to young children, teachers and parents themselves need to develop a personal practice and "work on the transformation of their own being" (p. 21), adding the teacher's presence and awareness of self is central to how a class learns. Although practicing mindfulness may result in a more relaxed mental and physical state, Whitehead (2011) suggests the goal is to be aware and accepting of whatever states the mind and body are in. She recommends using mindfulness in our daily lives, for although it can be practiced through meditation, it may also be practiced through everyday events like mindful seeing, mindful listening and mindful eating.

Similarly, in their qualitative exploration into the role of the teacher in mindfulness based approaches, van Aalderen et al., (2012) emphasised the importance of *embodiment* of mindfulness by the teacher. Nine out of the ten participants in their study considered it crucial for teachers to meditate themselves and know mindfulness meditation personally, for in this way, according to the authors, the teacher functions as a role model of the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness such as acceptance and non-judgment. Other aspects of mindfulness embodiment the authors highlighted were compassion and understanding; the role of language used by the teacher, both the quality of the voice and the way the language was used; the attitude of the teacher, which seemed to help motivate the participants; and the way the teacher was able to use personal examples from her own life, thereby assisting participants in understanding how to integrate mindfulness into their lives. This raises further questions concerning the efficacy of classroom teachers introducing mindfulness-based approaches to their students without 'living' mindfully, for according to one participant, "The mindfulness

teacher is essential for the transmission of mindfulness” (van Aaldern et al., 2012, p. 172). Alternatively, is it possible that as a result of the act of teaching mindfulness-based practices, a teacher may begin to internalise a mindfulness philosophy, and ultimately, embodying mindfulness? Additionally, while we may assume the teacher is necessary for the transmission of mindfulness-based practices, is this necessarily the case?

The authors of one recent study (Bakosh, Snow, Tobias, Houlihan & Barbosa-Leiker, 2015) claim a 10-minute-per-day, eight week audio-guided mindfulness awareness training programme, based on the MBSR protocol, enhanced third grade students’ quarterly grades in reading and science, compared to a control group, without ‘disrupting’ teaching operations. The goal was to use a consistent daily mindful awareness practice to foster social and emotional competence, and ultimately improve educational outcomes for “resource- and time-constrained K-12 classrooms in the United States and elsewhere” (p. 2). The authors claim the programme to be innovative in that it required neither an expert trainer, nor changes to the existing curriculum; therefore it was considered both teacher-independent and curriculum supportive. Bakosh et al. (2015) suggest:

“Through the use of technology, it is teacher independent, in that existing classroom teachers, and even substitute teachers, can facilitate the program without experience or knowledge in mindful awareness. They can participate in the program alongside students after pressing ‘Play’ on the sound device” (p. 16) ... by either closing their eyes along with the students or looking at the gazing rock during the program” (p. 9).

An intervention such as this, although termed ‘mindfulness-based’ seems at odds with the principles of mindfulness and teacher/student well-being in the classroom, simply because any programme termed ‘teacher-independent’ by definition, speaks to the redundancy of the teacher. As previously discussed, mindfulness embodies a loving-kindness or loving-friendliness component within the attending. It is highly arguable whether an audio-taped programme can elicit the same warmth and caring as an engaged, present, and loving teacher, assuming, as suggested by Klassen, Perry and Frenzel (2012), strong teacher-student relationships are important for both student and teacher well-being. Furthermore, if the purpose of using the audio-taped programme was in the

essence of saving time in time-constrained classrooms, it fails to align with mindfulness principles which essentially speak to present moment awareness, that is, acceptance and awareness and presence in any and each given moment. Therefore, the idea of a set 10 minute block of ‘mindfulness’ each day defines mindfulness more in terms of a ‘doing’ mode (press ‘play’ and gaze at a rock) rather than, as Kabat-Zinn (2012) suggests, a ‘being’ mode of mind. In short, the danger in such prescriptive activities is that students and teachers remain uninformed as to the underlying principles of mindfulness, and see it as just another cognitive activity to help them ‘fix’ something, in this case, to achieve better grades. As has been discussed, it is much, more than that. While there is nothing inherently wrong with social and emotional learning programmes which seek to address academic achievement, to label this particular programme as ‘mindfulness-based’ is a rather loose, if not inaccurate and misleading use of both the term and the concept of mindfulness.

Summary

Although there appears to be no universal definition, most literature recognises well-being as a multifaceted construct encompassing aspects of both hedonic (subjective) and eudaimonic (psychological) well-being. The core hypothesis of positive health appears to be an explicit link between health and well-being, particularly eudaimonic well-being with its apparent protective and adaptive functions. Together, the two paradigms appear to complement each other, by suggesting well-being is both an experiential state and a state of ‘being’. Importantly, as the literature pertaining to hedonic adaptation suggests, we seem to have the ability to adapt to those life circumstances which may be deemed both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’, and even ‘grow’ through great adversity.

A key finding recurrent in the literature particularly significant for teacher well-being has been identified as ‘connectedness’ – to others and the inner-self. Teacher well-being seems to directly affect instructional performance, and in turn affects student motivation, creating a kind of ‘well-being reciprocity’. Therapies aimed at teaching optimism, and coping mechanisms that find positive meaning appear to cultivate positive emotions. A causal link has been proposed between teacher life satisfaction (related to and highly correlated with positive affect), and

superior teacher performance, suggesting students may be drawn to and engaged by teachers whose energy and positive attitude can “shift a set-point of mood for the entire classroom” (Duckworth et al., 2009, p. 541).

Teacher development programmes, professional retreats grounded in mindfulness-based practices and MBSR programmes make large claims of a renewed passion for work, a deeper commitment to serving others, and a reduction in stress, anxiety and depression. However, there is no consensus on the recommended training format of mindfulness programmes with teachers, with training varying in breadth and type of practice (Flook et al., 2013). Moreover, these programmes can be costly, and may claim more than they deliver in terms of long term stress reduction and strategies for well-being. Small sample sizes, lack of control groups, the heavy reliance on self-report measures, lack of follow-up studies and the dearth of phenomena finding investigations that use rich, ethnographic descriptions, makes it difficult to establish the long term effectiveness of mindfulness-based practices on teacher well-being over a sustained period of time. We appear to know little about the types of mindfulness activities teachers respond well to, how these influence their perceptions of well-being, what implications there are for their classroom practice, and the efficacy of classroom teachers introducing mindfulness-based approaches to their students without having an established personal mindfulness practice, and ‘living’ mindfully. Finally, research does not reveal whether there is associated risk vis-à-vis participation in, and cessation of mindfulness-based programmes.

Conclusion

In examining the literature from an interdisciplinary perspective, this review has sought to highlight the multifaceted nature of the mindfulness construct. Stemming in part from Eastern contemplative traditions, mindfulness has been defined as both an outcome (mindful awareness) and a process (mindful practice), often described as “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to things as they are” (Williams et al., 2007, p. 47).

The modern day application of mindfulness-based practices is becoming increasingly wide-spread in the fields of health, well-being and education. The

most prominent approach developed to promote psychological well-being is the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Programme. Its core curriculum focuses on the prime elements of mindfulness, such as awareness and non-judgemental acceptance, and underpins many of the mindfulness programmes in use in elementary (primary) schools, particularly in the United States where mindfulness-based school programmes continue to gain popularity as a means towards enhancing student well-being (Association for Mindfulness in Education, 2009).

Although the current research base provides support for the feasibility of mindfulness-based interventions with children and adolescents, there is little comprehensive empirical evidence of the efficacy of these interventions. Studies undertaken tend to rely on teacher-rated pre and post-tests, which in themselves may increase the potential for teacher bias (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). A review of the literature pertaining to well-being revealed two multifaceted well-being paradigms, each consisting of broad definitions, emphasising a type of 'well-being duality'. Hedonic well-being emphasises the subjective nature of well-being and is often equated with happiness and life satisfaction. Eudaimonic well-being, is associated with psychological well-being, and is concerned more with personal growth, autonomy and purpose, which may occur as a result of traumatic life events (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004a; 2004b). When taken together, the two paradigms appear to complement each other, by suggesting well-being is both an experiential state and a state of 'being'.

A key finding in the literature as particularly significant for teacher well-being is the notion of 'connectedness' – to others, and the 'inner self'. Studies investigating teacher well-being and student performance seem to suggest a type of well-being reciprocity at play: teacher well-being appears to directly affect instructional performance and personal characteristics, and performance in turn affects student motivation (Duckworth, Quinn & Seligman, 2009; Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke & Baumert, 2008). While factors influencing student performance are complex, a causal link has been suggested between teacher life satisfaction and superior student performance, suggesting children may be drawn to positive, energised teachers, who can set the tone for the entire classroom

(Duckworth, et al., 2009).

Stress has been implicated as impacting negatively on teacher well-being (Gold, et al., 2010; Goldberg et al., 2013), while teacher development programmes which speak to the ‘inner self’ may help teachers manage the demands of teaching. Teacher development programmes and professional retreats grounded in mindfulness-based practices and MBSR programmes make claims towards a renewed passion for teaching and a reduction in stress, anxiety and depression. However, there is a need for rigorous empirical research regarding these programmes (Roeser, et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013). Significantly, because the field of research on the effects of mindfulness-training on teachers, classrooms and students is so new, Roeser et al. (2012) call for “phenomena finding investigations that use rich, ethnographic descriptions, case studies of exemplars, and other forms of qualitative assessment ...” (p. 170). Such qualitative studies may possibly highlight the nuances, subtleties and ambiguities of the lived experiences of participants in ways some quantitative approaches could not, thereby adding greater perspective to the field of mindfulness research in education.

Despite well-being forming an integral part of the health and physical education learning area, there has been a surprising paucity of current research into teacher well-being in New Zealand, and an even greater scarcity of New Zealand based research into mindfulness-based practices and teacher well-being. This research aims to address precisely this considerable gap in the research field, as it seeks to interpret the *lived* experiences of the participants in relation to the mindfulness phenomenon. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of mindfulness-based practices through assessment scales, it seeks to interpret the awareness and *essence* of the mindfulness phenomenon as lived by the research participants. Where it does aim to contribute new knowledge is through its hermeneutic phenomenological exploration of teacher well-being in relation to mindfulness-based practices in the New Zealand primary classroom.

Chapter THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter comprises two main sections, outlining both the methodological foundations and the procedural stages in this research. The first section gives an overview of the context for this research by providing a brief theoretical perspective, and an explanation as to how this particular methodology aligns with both the mindfulness phenomenon and my own lived experience. Descriptions of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology are presented, and the resulting distinctions serve to qualify the appropriateness of a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology for this project. The role of the phenomenological researcher as ‘being in the research’ is explored through the concepts of hermeneutic circling and reflexivity.

Section Two details the methods of participant recruitment, setting, and the meeting procedures. The two phase research design structure is explained, followed by a discussion of data collection methods. A detailed explanation of the data analysis method, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, is provided, followed by a discussion concerning credibility and quality in studies of this nature. The chapter concludes with a summary of the ethical issues considered in this research.

Section One

The social constructivist theoretical perspective

The general, philosophic assumptions underlying this research are based on a constructivist ontology that posits there is no single objective reality (Krauss, 2005), rather meaning or knowledge for each individual is socially constructed, being built on their lived experiences in situation-specific interactions with others (McMillian, 2012; Mutch, 2005; Nuthall, 2007).

The context for this research is the mainstream New Zealand primary school classroom, and by their very nature, New Zealand classrooms are ‘social’ places. Barker (2012) explains social constructivism informs the New Zealand curriculum statements specifically in science, mathematics and social studies, whereby emphasis is placed on the real-life world contexts of the students, and differentiating to meet the needs of all learners. In many contemporary classrooms, socially constructed learning is acknowledged and enhanced through approaches such as curriculum integration, negotiating the curriculum, and inquiry learning (Fraser, Aitken & Whyte, 2013).

As an experienced New Zealand teacher, I can attest to my teaching practice having been substantially informed by social constructivist theory. Establishing learner readiness, interactive teaching, facilitating learning, and group work characterise the social constructivist classroom (Barker, 2012), and my own classroom reflected such constructivist principles. Yet importantly, for me, it was the relational aspect of the classroom interactions that directly influenced my own professional well-being. Being able to co-create a learning environment with my students where we learned with and from each other had a profound influence on my professional well-being. When my students were focussed, engaged and happy, then I felt worthwhile and valued as a teacher, which directly influenced my teaching performance, in turn, affecting my students’ performance and achievement. This notion of teacher/student ‘well-being reciprocity’ is enlarged upon in Section Four of the literature review, and again in the findings and discussion in Chapter Four.

With specific regard to research, the social constructivist view encourages the researcher to engage in a realm of shared experience and shared language (Etherington, 2004), so that throughout the research process, the researcher and the participants are interlocked in such a way that the findings of the investigation are co-created during the inquiry (Krauss, 2005). Such interconnectedness aligns closely with the relational aspects of the hermeneutic phenomenology, which view the researcher as much a part of the research as the participant, because the interpretation of the data is reliant on the researcher’s prior disposition, knowledge, understandings and judgements (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009).

Finding the methodological fit

As a qualitative researcher, understanding and relaying the meanings people have constructed is paramount, and in my initial research proposal I outlined an action research methodology for this particular study. I assumed given the classroom context and my background as an experienced teacher, action research would serve as the most appropriate methodology. Having satisfactorily applied an action research methodology to my Master's research (Mazza-Davies, 2008), I believed I was familiar enough with action research to apply its principles to this new inquiry. Most importantly, however, the action research methodology seemed to fit well with my initial research questions, which sought to find answers and solve problems in relation to mindfulness, well-being and state education.

Schmuck (2006) describes action research as, "A planned inquiry, a deliberate search for information, perspectives, or knowledge" (p. 29). Unfolding through a continuous cycle of reflecting, planning, data collecting, analysing, re-planning and so on, action research seeks out alternative practices to improve outcomes. Stringer (2004) adds that the processes of action research are particularly relevant when educators face long-term, deep-seated problems necessitating significant changes to existing programmes and practices. However, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the problem-centric nature of action research, in light of the view that mindfulness itself is more concerned with present moment awareness and acceptance than the solving of perceived problems and improving outcomes. So when considered alongside my refined research questions, it became clear that my search was not so much an epistemological one, pursuing meanings via a problem-centric action research approach, rather an ontological phenomenological inquiry, seeking to uncover and gather rich, thick data concerning the *lived* experiences of the participants in relation to the mindfulness phenomenon as it manifests itself. In short, the action research methodology failed to align with the precise nature of my research topic and questions, explicitly:

1. What is the nature of the lived experience of mindfulness in relation to well-being for teachers?
2. How do teachers' perceptions of mindfulness and well-being influence their identity/practices/beliefs?

There was yet an added consideration to my choice of methodology: it did not ‘feel’ a comfortable fit alongside my own life-world. The recent, sudden loss of my husband had left me seeking a connection of sorts with the *essence* of loss. I was far less concerned with finding the answers to the ‘why’ questions of my husband’s passing, as I was with experiencing my loss and seeking to express my loss awareness. My choice of expression was a written journal – a free-flowing, stream of consciousness, a depot for all my discoveries, insights and musings, which acted textually to mediate my meanings. Although I was unaware of it at the time I began my personal journal, I had, in fact, been engaging in a kind of hermeneutic phenomenology by interpreting the awareness and essence of my loss, expressively, through my poetry and prose. Clearly, even at the early stage of this study, the methodology was being defined and re-defined not only by the phenomenon to be studied and my presumptions and experiences with the mindfulness phenomenon, but by my own centrality in the research and penchant for written self-expression. As a consequence, some of my autobiographical diary entries written over the course of a year after my husband’s passing contribute to the data set. It is hoped these entries will serve to assist the reader in understanding my life world experiences at the time of writing this thesis, and highlight an intersection, in some respects, with the participants’ perceptions of well-being mindfulness

Finding the phenomenological ‘fit’

In the broadest sense, phenomenology is both a philosophy and a method of inquiry which according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) advocates the study of direct lived experience, taken at face value. Though all qualitative studies seek to relay participant perspectives, phenomenological studies focus more on the consciousness of human experiences and what is essential for the meaning of the event, episode or interaction (McMillian, 2012), rather than as a theorised perspective. It is the lived experience itself as described by participants that provides the description of the phenomenon. According to Wojnar and Swanson (2007), the ultimate test of quality of a descriptive phenomenological investigation would be verification from the participants themselves that the investigator’s description of the phenomenon had captured their personal experiences.

Husserlian (descriptive) phenomenology

Credited as the founder of the phenomenological movement, and connected to a phenomenological orientation known as transcendental phenomenology, Edmund Husserl [1859-1938] was born in a Jewish family in a small town between Prague and Vienna (van Manen, 2011). Originally a mathematician, Husserl later began a career in philosophy after befriending philosophy student Thomas Masaryk [1850-1937]. Masaryk interested Husserl in the philosophy of Descartes and Leibniz, but especially Brentano, from whom Husserl adopted an appreciation of the British tradition of empiricism (Moran, 2000).

Empiricism seeks to gather evidence that is objective, observable, measureable and replicable. It is based on concrete, physical evidence to what is seen, heard and touched, using direct contact to that which is being studied (McMillian, 2012). This means finding out how things appear exactly as they are, to their underlying essences, rather than through the cultural and symbolic structures of our worlds, by investigating the foundations of science and questioning the common-sense, taken for granted assumptions about our everyday lives (Cohen et al., 2001; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In this way, Husserl's descriptive phenomenology emphasises an intuition that precedes any reflexion or any judgment. Thevenaz (1962) defines this as a return to experience, whereby "the things themselves show themselves and give themselves before any intervention of the mind" (Thevenaz, 1962, p. 53).

This 'transcendental subjectivity' (neutrality) or the conscious stripping away of prior experiential knowledge and personal bias is known as *epoche* or 'bracketing' or 'suspending' and is necessary so as not to influence the phenomenon at hand, thus gaining insight into the common features of any lived experience (McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis, 2009; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). What is left over after this bracketing of preconceptions is said to be our consciousness (Cohen, et al. 2001), and all conscious awarenesses are intentional awarenesses (van Manen, 2011). Transcendental phenomenology is therefore a phenomenology of consciousness, an intentional analysis of how meanings are constituted in and by consciousness or *cognito* (van Manen, 2011).

In summary, Husserl's descriptive phenomenology is both a philosophical tradition and a method of inquiry. Phenomena are explored through direct interactions between the subject and the investigator. So as not to influence the phenomenon being studied, all preconceptions must be suspended or bracketed. What remains is an intentional analysis of how meanings are constituted in and by consciousness or *cognito*.

Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology

Where Husserl's transcendental phenomenology can be said to be epistemological in nature, Martin Heidegger [1889-1976], a student of Husserl, pioneered a field of existential phenomenology far more ontological in nature (van Manen, 2011). Heidegger believed that humans are hermeneutic, or self-interpretive beings, able to find meaning and significance in their own lives (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), and this appears to be a significant point of difference between Husserl and Heidegger, as van Manen (2011) explains:

Phenomenology becomes hermeneutic when its method is taken to be interpretive (rather than purely descriptive as in transcendental phenomenology). This orientation is evident in the work of Heidegger who argues that all description is always already interpretation. Every form of human awareness is interpretive. Especially in Heidegger's later work he increasingly introduces poetry and art as expressive works for interpreting the nature of truth, language, thinking, dwelling, and being. (n.p)

For Husserl then, context was peripheral, yet Heidegger asserted that the understanding of an experience or individual cannot occur in isolation of culture, social context or time. This human way of being in the world, or *dasein* as Heidegger terms it, stresses that individuals cannot isolate themselves from the contexts which influence their choices and give meanings to their lived experiences (Lavery, 2003). Clearly, Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology emphasises the situatedness of an individual's *dasein* in relation to cultural, political and social contexts (Lavery, 2003; Wonjar & Swanson, 2007). As a consequence, Heidegger viewed the researcher as much a part of the research as the participant, because the interpretation of the data was reliant on the researcher's prior disposition, knowledge, understandings and judgments (McConnell-Henry, et al. 2009).

Distinctions in approaches

Although the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger express points of difference, fundamentally, each philosopher sought to uncover the human experience as it is lived (Lavery, 2003). Yet when comparing descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology as research methodologies, distinct differences arise out of the philosophical traditions.

Lavery (2003) explains that when the decision is made to engage in phenomenological research, the researcher must commence a process of self-reflection. To this end, the researcher becomes aware of biases and assumptions enabling them to be bracketed or set aside. What results, is information which is fundamentally epistemological in nature, providing a description of the experience, but no attempt to derive meaning from it (McConnell-Henry, et al. 2009).

However, a hermeneutic approach, while asking the researcher to engage in self-reflection, does so not in order to set aside assumptions and biases, rather to embed them in the interpretive process. In this way, the researcher is continually assessing ways in which his or her own experience and position relates to the issues under investigation (Lavery, 2003) and becomes as much a part of the research as the participant (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Heidegger's phenomenology grants that although not necessarily transparent, the human researcher always lives with certain understandings. Moran (2000) explains:

We don't necessarily know in which way we understand ourselves. But our very existentiality is already one of understanding ... I already understand myself and the world by my approach, by my own situation – as a twentieth century middle-aged male, as a young girl, as a poor or rich person, as a teacher or as someone who is unemployed, or whatever ... Of course, a lot of the way my life presents itself to me is given by the culture I have grown up in, or is simply carried along by a kind of unquestioned horizon of acceptance ... (p. 239)

To summarise, interpretative phenomenology stresses a belief that the contexts of culture, practice, and language are what humans share; emphasis is placed on understanding the phenomena in context. This means that as pre-reflexive beings,

researchers actively co-create interpretations of phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

The role of the phenomenological researcher

Being in the research

As a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation, this research sought to relish nuances, appreciate difference, embrace ambiguity and seek uniqueness in the contextualised life experience of my participants (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). As the researcher, my own way of 'being in the world' was vital in not only uncovering, but interpreting the essence of the mindfulness phenomenon as experienced by my participants. To this end, Giles (2008) asserts researchers must comport themselves towards the phenomenon, that is, their attention, focus of concern, and openness should stay alerted to the phenomenon at hand. This is not a static state, rather a dynamic and fluid process that perceptively follows the discloser of the phenomenon as it occurs. This process cannot be rushed or timetabled, for it requires "extensive dialogue with the text and the hermeneutic circling within one's own personal and historical horizons" (Giles, 2008, p. 7). In a similar way, Lavery (2003) stresses, "The researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched" (n.p.). Thus, my explicit claim, as expressed in Chapter One, is that with the sudden and unexpected loss of my husband, I was positioned directly in the epicentre of the very phenomenon under investigation.

Hermeneutic circling

According to its original definition, "hermeneutics is the art of clarifying and mediating by our own effort of interpretation what is said by persons we encounter in tradition" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 98). Hermeneutic Heideggerian philosophy asserts that all questioning presupposes the answer in light of what is already known; we therefore disclose the answer in light of what we already 'know' because we have a prejudgment of how things will be (Moran, 2000). The question then arises: how is anything new to be learned if it is only grasped in light of what is already known? This 'hermeneutic circling' is in fact, according to Heidegger, an open circle, involving a backwards and forwards reasoning

because “our questioning really is a kind of light which casts a certain pattern on the phenomenon, while also filling in our expectation in a way that allows us to formulate questions, and thus to advance our understanding” (Moran, 2000, p. 237). In practice, participants offer their stories and by examining and re-examining the data, the researcher searches ‘beneath’ the words, beyond the obvious, to reveal the essence of the participant’s experience – his or her ontological perspective (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). I liken this to an exfoliation process – the continual peeling back of layers to reveal the core of my participants’ ontological experiences. Through this circle of readings, writings and interpretations, the search is to understand the experience from particular philosophic perspectives and in the case of hermeneutic research, this calls for the process of self-reflexivity (Laverty, 2003).

Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity, according to Etherington (2004) is the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which may well be fluid and changing) inform both the process and outcome of the inquiry. The use of reflexivity closes the “illusionary gap” (Etherington, 2004, p. 32) between the researcher and the participants by viewing the relationship as collaborative and consolatory:

If we can be aware of how our own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe their conversations with us and write out representations of the work, then perhaps we can come close to the rigour that is required of good qualitative research. (p. 32)

A reflexive journal is one way in which reflexivity may be practised. A journal, van Manen (1997) explains, can record insights that will make them available for on-going phenomenological reflections. For instance, in his PhD thesis, Giles (2008) explains how he made use of a journal from the inception of his research. This journal contained conversations, teaching notes, interactions and reflections concerning the inquiry. Sometimes, Giles explained, the content reflected his own self-discoveries, on other occasions, the journal was a means of working with language to describe the essence of a story. Important, however, is the tracing of one’s position through the research process. This can be achieved through the

constructions of texts that are credible to the experience, easily understood by insiders and outsiders, and a coherence of research conclusions that reflect the complexity of the situation without deception (Laverty, 2003). I have included some entries from my own research journal, which I believe serve to exemplify my attempts at processing my thinking as I observed, interacted with, and interpreted my participants' lived experiences.

Summary

The social constructivist theoretical perspective of this research aligns with the relational aspect of hermeneutic phenomenology methodology, which views the researcher as much a part of the research as the participants (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Moreover, both theory and methodology acknowledge that social contexts influence and give meaning to experiences. Embedded in this interpretive process, the hermeneutic phenomenological researcher continually assesses ways in which his or her own experience relates to the issues under investigation (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). In this thesis, my own autobiographical diary forms part of the data set in order for the reader to gain insight into my life-world experiences at the time of undertaking this research. Through the backwards and forwards reasoning of the hermeneutic circle, the search has been to interpret the life-world experiences of my participants, while at the same time, acknowledging my own researcher reflexivity in the process.

Section Two:

Method: The 'lived experience'

This section, although fundamentally providing a description of the procedural stages involved in this research, seeks to convey the essence of my experience as the research concept was 'brought to life'. It first describes participant recruitment and setting, as well as the procedure of the initial focus group meeting with the teacher participants. The two phase research design structure is explained, followed by a discussion of data collection methods. A detailed explanation of the data analysis method Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is provided, followed by a discussion concerning credibility and quality in studies of this nature. The chapter concludes with a summary of the ethical issues considered in

this research.

The research context

Participant recruitment

Having gained ethical approval from the University of Waikato Ethics Committee in April, 2012, and confirmation of my doctoral enrolment in May, 2012, I met with a state primary school principal early in June that same year to introduce the research project. I chose to undertake the research in a secular, state school as opposed to a private school mainly because the majority of New Zealand school-aged children attend state schools, and most teachers teach within the state education system. I therefore thought I would be accessing a sample representative of a mainstream New Zealand school. Additionally, I am familiar with the state curriculum, and considered this an important factor, given the teachers would be implementing mindfulness-based practices into their class programmes. Importantly, I did not wish mindfulness to be aligned with any particular religious doctrine, as may have been assumed if the research were to be undertaken within a private school.

I have a professional association with the principal of the school I approached, and he had expressed interest in this PhD project. During our initial meeting, I outlined the purpose of the project and the nature of participants' involvement. This information was detailed in a principal information letter (Appendix B), and accompanied by an informed consent form (Appendix C), which the principal read and signed.

I had hoped to work with six teachers from within the same school throughout the project, reasoning that the involvement of six participants, given the nature of the methodology, should provide varied and rich descriptions. My justification for working within one school was that mindfulness experiences would be created and expressed during our group meetings and I believed that as colleagues, the teacher participants might be more comfortable expressing their thoughts and interpretations of their experiences in a supportive group environment, rather than singularly or with only myself present. I was aware of my underlying assumption that because these teachers worked together, they would be mutually supportive of

one another, which may not necessarily have been accurate. Therefore, my design did not preclude space for individuals to communicate with me at will, and I provided on-going access through email, telephone and cell phone. I reasoned, too, that the proximity of the school to my home would help to ensure my availability for unscheduled and spontaneous meetings as the need arose. I considered it critical that I was readily accessible to the participants, as the very nature of this 'lived' research may well have necessitated impromptu discussions and meetings (within reason), in order to capture the essence of the inquiry.

The principal agreed to me outlining the research project at the beginning of a staff meeting, and this was scheduled for June 2012, just before the end of the second term. I prepared a power point presentation that addressed the purpose of the research, my interest in the research topic, the research questions, the project timeframe, issues of anonymity and confidentiality, and the perceived benefits from participating in the research project. I explained what would be involved for those wishing to participate, including informed consent and the right to withdraw at any time, and this was outlined in the teacher participant information letter (Appendix D), the accompanying consent form (Appendix E), and again restated to the participants in person again during our initial group meeting.

At the conclusion of the staff meeting, five teachers immediately indicated interest in participating. Within two weeks four more expressed interest making a final total of nine teacher participants. All of the nine teachers were women, ranging in age from their mid-twenties to mid-sixties. Their years of teaching service ranged from one year to over 30 years. One teacher identified her ethnicity as New Zealand Māori, one as Australian, and the rest as New Zealand European. The following table indicates the years of teaching experience, the class level and the age of the students taught by each teacher in the study:

Table 1: Teacher participant details

| Pseudonym | Years of teaching experience | Class level | Average age of students at this level |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Daphne | 24 | Years 0-1 | 5-6 years |
| Poppy | 1 | Years 0-1 | 5-6 years |
| Rose | 28 | Year 1 | 5 years |
| Sahara | 13 | Year 1 | 5 years |
| Lucy | 10 | Years 1-2 | 6-7 years |
| Hyacinth | 10 | Years 3-4 | 7-8 years |
| Pansy | 30 | Years 5-6 | 9-11 years |
| Fern | 7 | Years 5-6 | 9-11 years |
| Sally | 3 | Years 5-6 | 9-10 years |

The aim in participant selection when undertaking phenomenological research is to select participants who have interest in the focus of the study and who are willing to talk about their experiences (Laverty, 2003). In this instance, the focus was on well-being, and the relationship mindfulness-based practices may have towards teacher and student well-being. Participants in this project would therefore have to be willing to express their experiences of well-being. Although they may (or may not) have had experiences with mindfulness-based practices, they would certainly have to be willing to participate in such practices.

I had considered the possibility that the principal may offer the names of some teachers he believed could be interested in this research topic, and care was taken on my part to ensure no one would feel unduly coerced. I explained to the staff that this project was completely voluntary, and they would have the right to withdraw from the project with no reason given, at any time. In fact, one participant, Sahara, did choose to leave early in the project without explanation, and I respectfully accepted her withdrawal from the study.

Meeting venue and setting

As the very heart of this study centred on teacher well-being, it was vitally important to me that the teachers would feel comfortable, relaxed and valued during our group meetings. In short, I had hoped as a result of our times together, their well-being may be enhanced somewhat. I reasoned that we may well be sharing some very personal opinions and insights and I wanted the atmosphere to be one of warmth and acceptance, where they would feel ‘safe’ about revealing their inner most thoughts and feelings. I decided to offer the option of my home as our focus group meeting venue. Alternatively, I was happy to meet at school, but the teachers appeared enthusiastic about leaving the school site and coming to my home for our weekly meetings. As Lucy expressed “*This has been great - out of the environment - and it’s been nice to leave school at four o’clock, too*” (FFG:C2).

Our first focus group meeting was scheduled during the July holidays, just before the beginning of the third term, 2012, and each Thursday afternoon thereafter for the following five weeks. In preparation for that meeting, and indeed, all subsequent meetings, I busied myself with baking, lighting fires, setting the table for afternoon tea and generally making my home as welcoming as possible. I looked forward to our meeting times, and sometime later it occurred to me that this was more than the efforts of an attentive host – I was meeting a deep need within myself to provide warmth, sustenance and comfort to my participants. Simply put, I was able to ‘give’ of myself in a practical way, something I had little opportunity to do since the passing of my mother and husband a year and a half before. I presumed that this ‘giving’ aspect of myself as a researcher was a way of meeting my own well-being needs, and was indeed an extension of what Healey-Ogden and Austin (2011) term “the dance of mutuality” (p. 91) that underlies the well-being phenomenon: “the continuous interchange between people and their worlds ... a time of soulful connecting” (p. 91).

Connecting to the ‘soul of me’ meant honouring my ‘teacher self’ and as a practical expression of this, I had installed a large whiteboard upstairs in what was to become our meeting room. For me, the whiteboard proved an invaluable tool, serving not only to display meeting formats, but as a receptacle for our brain

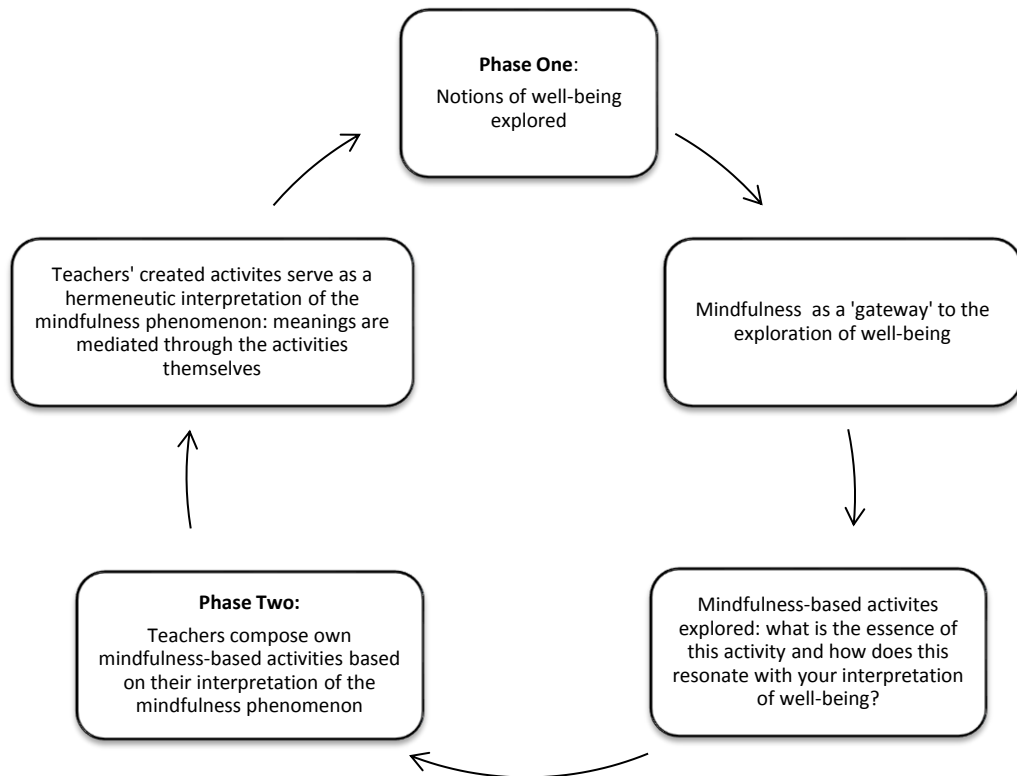
storming sessions. As the weeks went on, the whiteboard became the repository for 'soulful' quotes and inspirational sayings – those maxims the teachers and I found particularly encouraging. But perhaps most importantly, and for me, quite unexpectedly, the whiteboard served as a very tangible, visual link to my participants in the days between our meetings. Because it often displayed their reflections and expressions – our meeting 'energies' as such – it helped to keep me connected to the teachers as I reflected throughout the week on our discussions. In this way, the whiteboard became another mode of connectivity, for as I transcribed the audio tapes in the days between our meetings, the whiteboard seemed to add another dimension to the voices of my participants.

Clearly, the use of my home as our meeting venue, and my efforts to ensure the comfort and well-being of the teachers helped to convey the value I placed on my participants. Yet it raised an important question: could my efforts in some way influence my participants' responses? Would they tell me what they thought I wanted to hear as an expression of appreciation? And in opening my home in this manner, was I in fact accentuating my 'power' in the researcher/participant relationship? This raised questions concerning credibility and quality and impressed upon me the importance of using a range of data collection methods as a way of cross-checking across the data set.

The research design: Two phase data collection design

The two phase design of this study drew upon a range of data collection methods over a 10 week period. The following diagram depicts the distinctions between the phases and a detailed explanation of each phase ensues:

Figure 1: Two phase data collection design



Phase One

Well-being and mindfulness: Making the connection

During this phase I met with the teachers for approximately two hours per week, for a total of six weeks. This was a time of sharing our well-being experiences and exploring the mindfulness phenomenon together. Although I tended to prepare each focus group meeting in advance by having a pre-determined meeting schedule and by sourcing appropriate resources, I was acutely aware that these sessions had to be sufficiently fluid to allow for free-flowing expression, and I wanted to be attuned with my participants to such a degree that I was as close to their experiences as possible. Wilkinson (2008) states “a good focus group discussion will appear to run itself” (p. 195) and this is what seemed to happen during our times together; the meetings appeared to move seamlessly through the schedule often in an almost effortless manner on my part. Any initial awkwardness the participants may have felt seemed to quickly dissipate, aided no doubt by the sharing of refreshments during our afternoon tea times, before the

commencement of each meeting. I also had prepared a schedule of open-ended interview questions for our first meeting (Appendix I) that proved particularly useful as a portal through which to explore our notions of well-being, and helped to keep the meeting flowing at a comfortable pace.

I was mindful of the fact that the emphasis I was placing on discussions during our meetings may prove somewhat limiting for the teachers. Moran (2000) explains, “Things show themselves in many ways depending on the modes of access we have to them...” (p. 229), and given our well-being focus, I decided to invite the teachers to express their thoughts and musings not only through our discussions, but by using written text, including poetry, prose, metaphor and journaling in their own time. I considered they might like to explore art forms, including drawing, painting, photography, or any manner of combinations, and I invited them to make use of the range of materials, including pens, paints, pastels, various types of paper, and sculpting materials I made available each week. However, a major flaw in this design was that although I provided these materials each week, our meetings tended to be centred in our meeting room, upstairs, and separate to the ‘art space’. This naturally limited the opportunity for art-making, because no-one was keen to separate from the group discussions to take advantage of the opportunity to create. Additionally, it would have made the audio-taping of our sessions very difficult to have the group split in separate rooms. If I were to replicate this study, I would set aside at least one meeting solely for the purpose of exploring art forms as a way of expressing well-being and the mindfulness phenomenon. Alternatively, I would designate a time during each meeting when we all would meet in the ‘art space’ and invite those who wished to create, the opportunity to do so. This way, everyone would have all been in the same area, and no-one would have felt excluded from the discussions.

In summary, our first meeting loosely observed the following format:

- Welcome participants and outline the nature of the research, with accompanying written explanation and breakdown of the two phase design structure of the project (Appendix H).
- Discuss the nature of well-being, following the schedule of open-ended questions (Appendix I).

- Allow for opportunity to express well-being definitions through mixed media during this session.

The subsequent sessions were given over to exploring the mindfulness phenomenon. I explained that mindfulness is both a concept and a practice, and although we would be exploring mindfulness through a series of sessions and activities, mindfulness itself is a much greater concept than a series of 40 minute classroom lessons. However, for the purposes of this research, mindfulness-based practices could be thought of as one possible gateway through which to explore the notion of well-being, and the practical application of this would be classroom-based activities lessons.

Our second session was given to comparing the well-being characteristics we had identified the previous week, against the mindfulness characteristics as expressed in a poem by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2008) *A Taste of Mindfulness*. The focal point of this meeting was a discussion centring on whether well-being and mindfulness were synonymous. I wanted the participants to move beyond mere description towards developing personal interpretations, because these interpretations would potentially be expressed to a degree, in their choice of classroom activities in the weeks to come.

By our third meeting we were exploring in practical ways, mindfulness-based activities. We practiced some exercises as recommended for adults by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2006) as part of an audio-tape. These ‘beginner’ activities include an eating meditation, mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of the body as a whole, mindfulness of objects, sounds, thoughts, emotions and mindfulness as pure awareness. The following week we practiced several mindfulness-based activities as recommended for young children by Whitehead (2011) and Kaiser Greenland (2010). Some of these activities included deep belly breathing, mindful thinking, mindful seeing and mindful eating. Kaiser Greenland (2010) explains that in her mindfulness programmes for children she begins with activities that develop breath awareness, and then moves to activities that develop sensory awareness, and then to activities that develop awareness of thoughts, emotions and worldview. All activities used in her classes are claimed to promote kindness to

self and others as well as patience, generosity, and gratitude. Throughout our exploration of these suggested activities we were continually revisiting the teachers' original notions of well-being, so that by week five, the participants were able to establish which activities resonated with their own personal definitions of well-being. To assist the teachers in their assessment of each activity, I devised a simple assessment sheet where they could record the name of the activity, what they considered to be the mindfulness elements embedded in each activity, and how each particular activity resonated with their personal definition of well-being. The sixth week was given over to further exploration, critiquing, and planning for their classroom activities.

The aim at this stage was for the teachers to experience personal mindfulness meditations as well as come to an understanding of how these might translate into activities for children. This proved a critical stage, as it enabled the teachers to build an experiential foundation upon which to base their own activities. By discussing, critiquing and analysing their perceptions of each activity, they were able to decide its merit for use in their own classrooms, while continually reflecting on their own notions of well-being.

At this stage I did not wish to overwhelm the teachers with an exhaustive list of mindfulness-based activities, rather, I wanted to delve into what precisely it was about each activity that resonated with their personal interpretations of mindfulness. I placed a chart in our meeting room to act as a kind of gauge by which to critique each activity, asking: *What is the relationship between this mindfulness-based activity and well-being for you and your students?* In so doing, I was hopeful the teachers would interpret the experience itself, rather than simply replicate an activity. I reasoned that if they could identify the elements or essence of the mindfulness-based activity, they may be more confident in designing their own activities. This would encourage scope for their own compositions which may be quite different from those we had explored, but again, would be based on their interpretations of the mindfulness phenomenon. For example, Poppy integrated some yoga activities with her group of new entrant students. She initiated a sun salute exercise each morning with her class as a way of acknowledging the place yoga holds in enhancing her personal well-being.

Sally shared how she loved art and particularly sketching, so she undertook sustained periods of silently sketching with her class, something she rarely did because of classroom time constraints. Critically, such activities served as a kind of hermeneutic interpretation of the mindfulness-based phenomenon itself. Thus, by observing these activities in action, later in Phase Two, I was in a position to question teachers as to why they made the choices they did, and their explanations seemed to indicate their understanding of the mindfulness phenomenon in relation to well-being.

Phase Two

Classroom expressions

The second phase of the research involved the composition and application of mindfulness-based classroom practices. By this phase, teachers had been encouraged to interpret the nature of their own mindfulness experiences, and establish whether there existed a connection between these experiences and their personal definitions of well-being. The aim was to focus on the essence of these experiences and seek to interpret this by creating mindfulness-based experiences for their students.

During this phase I observed six teachers each teach two mindfulness-based lessons each, and one teacher who chose to be observed once (one teacher chose not to be observed and one had withdrawn from the project by this time). These observations varied in duration from between 20 minutes to over an hour, depending on the nature of the activity and the age/year level of the students. Often in the junior classes in particular, the chosen activities were used to quieten and settle the children after interval or lunchtime. For example, at this time, Daphne would have her students lay on the floor and place a small teddy bear on their tummies in order to ‘rock the teddy to sleep’, thereby encouraging ‘soft belly’ breathing. Poppy’s sun salute yoga based exercise with her new entrant class was used as a transition activity between subject areas throughout the day. In the middle and senior school areas, the activities were often extended over much longer periods of time. Hyacinth’s mindful tasting activity with her class of seven and eight years olds took place over most of an afternoon.

Each of these classroom observations was followed by a de-brief session with the teacher lasting approximately 15 minutes. The de-briefings took place as near as possible at the end of the observation, often during interval, lunchtime or after-school, and followed a schedule of interview questions (see Appendix I). Once parental and student consent was gained (Appendix G), I also conducted four student group interviews in total, with students representing the junior, middle and senior school areas⁴. These group interviews took place in empty classrooms or offices and lasted approximately 15 minutes each. A total of 16 children were involved in these interviews. Three were aged five and six years; three were aged seven years; 10 were aged nine and 10 years. My original intent was to interview six children from each school area, but the final decision on group size was left largely to the classroom teacher, as ultimately, she would know which children would feel comfortable and confident about answering my schedule of interview questions (Appendix I).

The following tables summarise the composition of the 10 week data collection schedule:

⁴ In New Zealand, the terms 'junior', 'middle' and 'senior' are often used to refer to the different age groups at primary schools. For the school involved in this research 'junior school' referred to students in Years 0 - 2 (which generally corresponded to children aged five to seven years); 'middle school' referred to Years 3 and 4 (children generally aged seven to nine years), and 'senior school', which referred to the remainder of the school, Years 5 and 6 (generally, children aged nine to eleven years).

Table 2: Composition of Phase One data collection schedule

| Week | Number of teacher participants | Contact | Activity |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 1 | 8 | focus group meeting | well-being exploration |
| 2 | 9 | focus group meeting | mindfulness the construct explored |
| 3 | 9 | focus group meeting | mindfulness activities for adults |
| 4 | 8 | focus group meeting | mindfulness activities for children explored |
| 5 | 8 | focus group meeting | mindfulness – activities for children explored and critiqued |
| 6 | 8 | focus group meeting | mindfulness activities planned for classrooms |

Table 3: Composition of Phase Two data collection schedule

| Week | Number of teacher observations followed by de-briefings undertaken | Total number of student group interviews undertaken | Number of student participants at each interview |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| 7 | Optional meeting - teachers teaching own activities | | |
| 8 | 4 | nil | n/a |
| 9 | 7 | 3 | 3 junior school 3 middle school 5 senior school |
| 10 | 2 | 1 | 5 senior school |
| Final focus group meeting | | | |

Data collection methods

A range of data collection methods were used throughout the research process. The following table states each method and its frequency of use. A detailed description of the methods used during each phase follows the table:

Table 4: Summary of data collection methods

| | Method | Frequency of use |
|-----------|--|---|
| Phase One | Focus group meetings (teacher participants only) | Six (approximately two hours each) over a six week period |
| Phase Two | Candid, unstructured observations | Twice per teacher |
| | De-briefing sessions | Twice per teacher at the completion of each lesson observed (with the exception of one teacher who opted for one observation, and one teacher who chose not to be observed) |
| | Student focus group meetings | Once per group of children at the completion of both observations |
| | Focus group meeting | Once at the completion of all data collection |

Focus group interviews/conversations

Stringer (2004) explains that in recent years, focus groups have evolved as a useful way to engage and involve participants in sharing information and in triggering new ideas and insights. Focus groups may be thought of as a group interview whereby questions provide a stimulus for people sharing their experiences and perspectives, although the goal of the focus group interview is to generate discussion as opposed to question and answer responses (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). According to Mertler (2006) interactions among focus group members may be extremely enlightening, as people tend to ‘feed off’ each other’s comments. Yet, as Mertler (2006) cautions, when conducting focus group

interviews it is vital participants are afforded equal opportunities to speak, for there is often a tendency for one or two members to dominate the discussion.

Stringer (2004) points out the size of the focus group is an important consideration, with four to six being the optimal number to enable everyone to effectively participate. Other worthy considerations are the interview time and venue, for rushed meetings during recess or in rooms where others can overhear will limit the information shared (Stringer, 2004).

Although I was guided by an interview schedule, the ‘interviews’ were far more in the nature of conversations. Each time I met with all participants I explained the proposed meeting format of that particular meeting, but I was careful not to over-plan, as our meetings necessitated fluidity if I hoped to gather the essence capturing moments of my participants’ experiences. With reference to the focus group meetings with student participants, these occurred at teacher nominated times, at school, and again, took the form of conversations and discussions rather than interviews as such, although I did follow an interview schedule (see Appendix I).

Candid, unstructured observations

During the second phase I observed six teachers each teach two mindfulness-based activity lessons (one teacher chose to be observed once, and one opted not to be observed). O’Leary (2010) explains that observation as a potential data collection method is often over-looked in favour of surveys and interviews, which provide instant responses; the answers, whether tainted or not by the process are immediate, and only the data relevant to the research questions are collected. Yet with indirect, situational data collection, such as observation, the relationship between researcher and the researched is minimised, and researchers observe what participants actually do. This enables data to be gathered through all the senses: “Observation invites you to take it all in; to see, hear, smell, feel, and even taste your environment. It allows you to get a sense of reality and work through the complexities of social interaction” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 209).

O’Leary (2010) identifies various observation types from candid to covert, structured to unstructured. For the purposes of this inquiry, I conducted candid,

unstructured observations. This type of observation method allowed me to observe and record data without predetermined criteria. I could then “record all observations and later search for emergent patterns ...” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 210). Yet, the nature of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was such that I needed to enter the life-world of my participants, and the best way to do this, according to van Manen (1997) was to participate in it.

Participant observation, or what van Manen (1997) refers to as “close observation” (p. 69) requires the observer to become a participant and an observer at the same time, a kind of “gatherer of anecdotes” (van Manen, 1997, p. 69). An anecdote is a certain kind of narrative with a point, and it is this point which needs to be honed. The object of phenomenological description is not to develop abstract theoretical thought, rather, to try to “penetrate the layers of meaning of the concrete by tilling and turning the soil of daily existence. Anecdote is one of the implements for laying bare the covered-over meanings” (p. 119). Translated into practice, as the observer, I tried to become deeply aware of the phenomenon I was observing – recording the sights, the sounds, the silences within the classroom. There was no formal observation schedule as such, rather a situated immersion with my participants as the mindfulness-based lessons unfolded. The data were, however, recorded in a systematic fashion, the focus of which was on the teaching of the lesson, and the actions and responses of the teacher and students throughout the lesson.

I divided a notebook into three columns, heading the columns *time*, *observation* and *interpretation*. The time column served as a marker indicating the length of time given over to any particular activity or aspect of an activity. For instance, I would record the time duration of a mindfulness-based lesson, but within that lesson, I recorded transition times or moments which marked a shift in focus or attention. The observation column recorded the apparent chain of events as they unfolded. The interpretation column recorded what I *thought* was happening. For example, when observing in Lucy’s room, she had the children take a quick break and run around the field in preparation for the up-coming cross country. When the children returned to class, she questioned them as to what was happening to their bodies when they were running. In my column headed ‘interpretations’, I

questioned whether Lucy was drawing the children's attention to their bodily sensations as a way of developing a mindful awareness of what they were actually experiencing. At our debrief session following the lesson, I was able to raise this with Lucy, and she affirmed that that was exactly what she was hoping to do; it appeared 'mindful exercise' was a way of "*collecting ourselves back into the moment*" (DB:1).

A data collection method such as observation necessitates the building of trust and ensuring participants are comfortable with the process. This in itself can prove problematic, as people do not always act the same when they know they are being observed (O'Leary, 2010). Yet, the six sessions we had spent together up until the point of the first observation had proved invaluable as a time of rapport and trust building, and the participants I observed did not express any discomfort or ill-ease at my being in their classrooms; both Pansy and Sally commented, "*This is so non-threatening*" (FFG:C2). However, one participant chose not to be observed and one chose to be observed only once, which could indicate some discomfort with my presence in their rooms. The timing of the observations was determined by the participants, that is, on their terms and in accordance with their schedules. They chose the lesson they wished me to observe, its duration, and the time of day it best suited their timetable. This helped to mark a mutual respect and trust between my participants and myself.

Yet, as with all data collection methods, observation contains inherent issues and complexities. Certainly, all of which we interpret is filtered and processed through our socialised ways of thinking and understanding (O'Leary, 2010). To this end, I was acutely aware of my own researcher reflexivity, and this further impressed upon me the importance of the triangulation of data as a way of cross-checking across the data set.

Interviews/conversations

The research interview seeks to gather data through direct verbal interaction between persons. The literature presents a plethora of interview types, ranging from the highly structured, standardised quantitative interview, (possibly enlisting multiple researchers, for instance, telephone interviews), to the more semi-

structured, informal, open-ended qualitative interview (such as used in classroom-based, action research), to the totally unstructured, anthropological and ethnographic interview (whereby the researcher is fully embedded in the subject). In the second phase of the research, the interview took the form of de-briefings, and occurred following each of my classroom observations. Whatever the approach, it appears the key lies in what Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) term, “fitness for purpose” (p. 270).

In hermeneutic phenomenological human science, van Manen (1997) explains the interview serves very specific purposes:

- It may be used as a means of exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon.
- The interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience.

For his PhD research, Giles (2008) initiated being interviewed by one of his facilitators as a way of experiencing a hermeneutic interview. He described it as being more akin to a conversation, with no pre-planning and open-ended questioning. This enabled him to easily share his stories, and sense that the interviewer was engaged and interested in the conversation. Such reflexive interviewing enables the interviewer to notice and share personal experiences of the topic, which constitutes an unfolding of the communication between both parties (Etherington, 2004). Yet, van Manen (1997) cautions:

Too often a beginning researcher enthusiastically goes about “interviewing subjects” using the so-called “unstructured or open-ended interview method” without first carefully considering what interest the interview is to serve. One needs to guard against temptation to let method rule the question, rather than the research question determining what kind of method is most appropriate for its immanent direction”. (p. 66)

Thus, van Manen (1997) recommends the need to be orientated to one’s research question in such a strong manner, that the temptation to be carried away by an interview that goes anywhere and everywhere is avoided. With consideration to

my research question, namely, *What is the nature of the lived experiences of mindfulness in relation to well-being for teachers?*, I sought to uncover the hidden meanings of the experience for my participants, and then, transform that lived experience into a textual expression of its essence, in a manner that was both a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful, “a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own experience” (van Manen, 1997, p. 36). This necessitated the need to “develop the duality of being both present and meta-present in order to listen carefully in the moment and simultaneously consider and respond to the fruitful leads that emerge” (Fraser, 2005, p. 5).

Maxwell (2005) explains that good interview questions require creativity and insight, rather than mechanical conversation, and are certainly not to be confused with the actual research questions: “Your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain that understanding” (p. 92). He advises anticipating, as best as possible, how people will understand the questions. To this end, I had developed a schedule of research questions which focused specifically on the lived-experience of the mindfulness phenomenon for the teachers and students. I generated some question stems that I had hoped would require thoughtful analysis on the participants’ part, and guide me towards developing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, as seen through the eyes of my participants (see Appendix D).

To summarise, the inherent strengths of the semi-structured interview approach lay not only in its potentiality for in-depth responses, but in its flexibility, which presumably, permits the interviewer the opportunity to probe for clarity or rephrase questions to ensure comprehension. However, as with all interview methods, it is not without weaknesses.

It appears a strange contradiction that the very channel to rich data collection can also prove the greatest blockade – the interviewer. Petrie (2005) highlighted several flaws in both her interview schedule and interviewing technique as she lamented ‘lost moments’ during her semi-structured interviews. Petrie’s desire to gain consistent data that supported her assumptions resulted in the interview

schedule being used as a series of questions which needed addressing, with no scope for the participants to generate discussion outside of the set themes: “The constraints of my assumptions, and desire to gain ‘good’ data that supported these assumptions, meant that my interviews became surveys where the participants became the vehicles for obtaining data” (p. 110). In short, the semi-structured interview, whilst potentially affording the interviewer great freedom of exploration, is highly prone to researcher subjectivity. From interviewee misconceptions to inappropriate interview settings; from assumptive leading questions to the locus of power and control, interviews by their very nature are fraught with elements of bias. Nevertheless, I attempted to mitigate this somewhat by having an established relationship with the teachers, as we had met weekly for six weeks prior to the lesson debriefings. Importantly, by observing each lesson prior to each de-briefing, I had a relevant context to draw upon which assisted me to frame questions, and clarify and interpret any matters which may have arisen during the lesson.

Interview schedule

In addition to the questions asked during the de-briefing sessions with each teacher (Appendix I), and those questions asked at the final focus group interview at the conclusion of Phase Two (Appendix I), I interviewed a selection of student participants from each area of the school (junior, middle and senior), by way of focus group meetings. The parents/caregivers of these students received an information letter detailing the nature of the research project, and their role in it (Appendix F). These brief semi-structured student focus group meetings took place at the conclusion of Phase Two, following the final classroom observations. I anticipated the students might have an artwork or piece of writing they could bring along and discuss in relation to the mindfulness-based lesson they have just participated in, and some students chose to do this. The explanation of these artefacts assisted me in further understanding the nature of the experience for each student. For example, the children in Lucy’s class chose to share their characterisations of ‘anger’ during our focus group meeting, following a lesson based on awareness of emotions. This allowed me the opportunity to ask specific questions based on their representations, in turn enabling me to gain deeper insights into their understanding of anger.

In summary, the variety of data collection methods as outlined in Table 4 lent itself to the generation of codes, categories and themes across the data set.

Data analysis

Hermeneutically interpreting a text or lived experience is, according to van Manen (1997) “more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure - grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” (p. 79). McConnell-Henry et al. (2009) liken this to a process of looking and re-looking at the data, searching beneath the words for what is hidden, or not immediately obvious, and ending up with an ontological perspective of the participants’ experiences. As noted previously, I view this as a process of ‘exfoliation’ – the continual peeling back of layers to reveal the core of my participants’ ontological experiences; the hermeneutic circle is the ‘tool’ which enables the researcher to ‘see’ that which at times may be unseen.

Similarly, Wonjar and Swanson (2007) explain that the aim of hermeneutic inquiry is to identify the participants’ meanings of an experience, but qualify this as being a blend of the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon, participant-generated information, and data obtained from relevant sources. Essentially, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their experience. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) refer to this as a ‘double hermeneutic’, a term used to describe the dual role of the researcher in an approach to qualitative inquiry known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA was developed in the mid-1990s as a distinctive research method in psychology (Shinebourne, 2011). At this time Smith (1996) argued for an approach to psychology which could enable researchers to capture the experiential and qualitative dimensions, and still dialogue with mainstream psychology.

IPA has been informed by concepts and debates from three central areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. As Smith et al. (2009) explain:

...IPA requires a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights. It is phenomenological in attempting to get as close as possible to the personal experience of the participant, but recognizes that this inevitably becomes an interpretative endeavour for both the participant and researcher. Without the phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen. (p. 37)

Idiography, the third theoretical underpinning of IPA, is concerned with the particular, which Smith et al. (2009) describe as in contrast to most psychology, which is ‘nomothetic’ or concerned with making claims at group or population levels, and establishing general laws of human behaviour. IPA is therefore committed to the particular in the sense of detail and the depth of analysis. The focus is on understanding how “experiential phenomenon (an event, process or relationship) have been understood from the perspective of particular people in a particular context” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29).

To summarise, IPA’s theoretical grounding in hermeneutic (interpretative) phenomenology, and its emphasis on idiographic analysis made it a clear choice as an analytic tool for this particular research project. The aim was to search beneath and beyond the obvious to reveal the essence of my participants’ experience and the analytic process involved in IPA afforded me flexibility and manoeuvrability as my attention was drawn towards attempting to make sense of my participants’ attempts to make sense of their lived experience.

The analytic process in IPA

My primary research questions focused on the experiences and understandings of my participants in relation to well-being and mindfulness, and how these perceptions in turn influenced their identity, practices and beliefs. These exploratory ‘essence seeking’ questions required a complementary analysis method which would enable me to identify themes but at the same time emphasise both convergence and divergence. While approaches to qualitative analysis tend toward a linear, step-by-step process, it is a key tenet of IPA that the process is

iterative – “we may move back and forth through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step, one after the other” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). An important feature of this involves the movement between the part and the whole of the hermeneutic circle – a small part of the text may be looked at in the context of the whole transcript while at the same time, the whole interview may be thought of from the perspective of the unfolding utterances being examined (Smith et al., 2009).

Smith et al. (2009) stress there is no clear right or wrong way of conducting IPA analysis, and they encourage researchers to be innovative in their approach. However, a heuristic framework for analysis has been summarised by Howitt and Cramer (2011, p. 384) as follows:

- Each account is read several times to enable the researcher to become familiar with the material. Any impressions may be noted in the left-hand margin of the account as it is being read. There is no set way of doing this and no rules that must be followed.
- After familiarising themselves with the account, the researcher looks for themes in the material. Although themes are clearly related to what was said, they are usually expressed at a slightly more abstract or theoretical level than the original words used by the participant in the research. Themes are usually described in terms of short phrases of only a few words and these are written in the right-hand margin of the account.
- Once the main themes have been identified, the researcher tries to group them together in broader and more encompassing superordinate themes. These superordinate themes and their subordinate components may be listed in a table in order of their assumed importance starting with the most important. Next to each theme may be a short verbatim example which illustrates it together with a note of its location in the account.
- The themes that have been identified are discussed in terms of the existing literature on that topic in the report.

I had initially began the coding process using grounded theory, but I found this to be a rather fragmented and disjointed treatment of my data and the step-by-step process was limiting in terms of capturing the overall essence of what my participants were experiencing. I was subsequently drawn to IPA because of its theoretical grounding in hermeneutic (interpretative) phenomenology, and its

emphasis on idiographic analysis, which as an analytic tool, appeared to align well with my project. I found IPA afforded me greater flexibility than grounded theory analysis. It is a key tenet of IPA that the process is iterative – analysis moves back and forth through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step, one after the other. With IPA there are no rules about fragmenting the transcripts into meaning units and assigning comments to each, and I felt I could be creative in my analysis approach.

However, precisely because of the non-prescriptive nature of IPA, it took me some time to create a way of extracting subordinate and then superordinate themes from the wide range of data I had collected. I initially decided to cluster emergent themes by colour coding excerpts within transcripts themselves, but quickly learned that a single excerpt could contain within it several subordinate themes, and at times any given subordinate theme could fit within more than one superordinate theme. For example, in the following quote from Pansy I identified no less than five subordinate themes, culminating in the emergent themes of authenticity and autonomy:

I think with teaching there are so many outside influences that have a bearing or have controls over what you can actually do or how you perform in a classroom whereas being a mother or a wife or a partner or whatever, you make those choices on a sort of one to one basis, whereas in the classroom you've got ... hoops to jump through all the time and you've got to consider not only 35 other well-beings, but the controls that are pulling the strings ... (M1:Q8)

Using the same quote, the following table illustrates how the exploratory comments are written on the right of the table, and then refined to suggest emergent themes on the left (this differs from Howitt and Cramer's 2011 recommendation as discussed above, which suggests impressions may be noted in the left-hand margin, and emergent themes recorded in the right hand margin). Here, the themes move to what Smith and Osborn (2008) refer to as a slightly higher level of abstraction. All themes, once identified, were then written onto pieces of paper, cut up, and spread across a large table, where they were re-grouped once more into related subordinate themes. Some of these themes tended

to cluster together and so emerged as superordinate themes, while others, as recommended by Smith and Osborne (2008), were dropped as they did not appear to fit with the emerging structure, or lacked rich evidence in the transcripts. These superordinate themes, along with their subordinate components, were then ordered coherently into tables, and coded verbatim excerpts were listed under each theme. Each transcript from each teacher focus group meeting was transcribed this way. This was a lengthy, refining process, eventually leading to the revelation of what I believe are the major themes in this study.

The following table presents an example of how, using Pansy's quote above, the superordinate theme of authenticity and its sub-ordinate theme of autonomy were identified as pivotal in professional well-being. It is important to note, however, that this is just one instance of where these themes first appeared. Across the data set these themes surfaced several times, and as such, warranted being identified as substantial themes:

Table 5: Example of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

| Emergent themes | Original transcript | Exploratory comments |
|--|---|---|
| Controlling influences dictating what you do Lack of autonomy Controlled The ‘ authentic ’ self? Playing different roles Autonomy Lack of autonomy Lack of control Made to perform Made to consider others. Resentment? Being controlled Lack of autonomy | I think with teaching there are so many outside influences that have a bearing or have control over what you can actually do or how you perform in a classroom whereas being a mother or a wife or a partner or whatever, you make those choices on a sort of one to one basis, whereas in the classroom you’ve got ... hoops to jump through all the time and you’ve got to consider not only 35 other well- beings, but the controls that are pulling the strings ... | What outside influences? As in out of our control? Lack of control? Inability to control? What does she mean by perform? Is someone pulling the strings? Are you in control in your ‘other’ life? Do you have ‘another’ life? Differing roles. What is the essence of the ‘other’ self? Perform – like in a circus? Who – management? Ministry of Education? Being manipulated? |

In much the same way, all the material collected across the data set was scrutinised in this manner. Teacher de-briefings were analysed and themed but this time in accordance to the questions asked, and then cross-referenced against what I had observed and recorded during my class visits. For this analysis, as with the student focus group interviews, I created tables, which allowed me to list all responses in accordance with each question asked, thereby highlighting similarities, incongruences and ambiguities in responses. Subordinate themes were extracted from each table, recorded in lists, and then, once again, grouped into superordinate themes, with corresponding coded quotes.

Throughout the analysis process, across the entire data set, I continually returned to the audio-taped material, listening repeatedly in order to discern any linguistic cues relating to sentence structure, tone, utterances, fillers, pauses, hesitation and the use of metaphors and such, which might be helpful in revealing the essence of my participants' experiences. For example, when Hyacinth was recounting a recently shared experience with her children, she sighed deeply. As a result, I was able to glean a deeper significance to the meaning of that event for her, as the sigh appeared to indicate a peaceful, pleasurable, 'letting go' and surrender to the moment – a nuance words alone could not represent.

Credibility and quality in IPA studies

McMillian (2012) explains the primary criterion for evaluating qualitative studies is the credibility of the study. Credibility can be defined in terms of the extent to which the data, data analysis, and conclusions are seen as accurate and trustworthy. Lavery (2003) suggests that in phenomenological research reliability and validity give way to issues of rigour, which in themselves can be confusing as there is no universal set of criteria used to assess such rigour.

Yardley (2000) produced a set of guidelines for assessing validity and quality in qualitative research which Shinebourne (2011) contends can be applied irrespective of the specific theoretical orientation of the qualitative study. The four key dimensions suggested by Yardley (2000) are: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance, all of which Smith et al. (2009) suggests are present in 'good' IPA research.

Examples of how sensitivity to context can be demonstrated may occur in the initial stages of the research process as the very choice of IPA implies a close engagement with the idiographic and the particular and the distinctiveness of each case (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). In terms of data collection, sensitivity to context is demonstrated through an understanding and appreciation of the interactional nature of the data collection process, for example, within the interview situation. Because care is taken in the collection of data, a strong IPA study will demonstrate sensitivity to the raw material and will contain a considerable number of verbatim extracts to support the argument being made,

thereby giving participants a voice in the interpretations being put forth (Smith et al., 2009).

Inherent in IPA principles is the expectation that commitment is shown by the degree of attentiveness to the participants during the data collection and the analysis of each case. During an interview situation, for example, the IPA researcher would demonstrate considerable personal commitment by ensuring the participant was comfortable and by attending closely to what was being said (Smith et al., 2009). Rigour in IPA refers to the thoroughness of the study, for example, in terms of the “appropriateness of the sample to the question in hand, the quality of the interview and the completeness of the analysis taken” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 181).

Yardley’s third principle of transparency and coherence makes reference to how clearly the stages of the research can be described and written about. This could be enhanced by carefully describing participant selection, a description of the interview schedule and the steps taken in analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Coherence can refer to the presentation of a coherent argument, while acknowledging ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the data (Shinebourne, 2011). Coherence may also refer to the ‘fit’ between the research question and the underlying theoretical perspective adopted (Yardley, 2000), so for example, when reading an IPA study, one would expect it to adhere closely to the underlying principles of IPA and not some other qualitative approach (Smith et al. 2009).

Finally, impact and importance refers to whether the research tells the reader something interesting, important and useful. Yardley (2000) maintains there are many varieties of usefulness, but ultimately the value of a piece of research can “only be assessed in relation to the objectives of the analysis, the applications it was intended for, and the community for whom the findings were deemed relevant” (p. 223). Smith et al. (2009) conclude that all IPA researchers should be aspiring to achieve this.

In this study I sought to address issues of credibility and quality in the first instance by seeking a close fit between my research questions and the hermeneutic

phenomenological perspective adopted. This was reflected in the variety of interactional data collection methods such as focus group meetings, interviews, and observations followed by de-briefings which yielded vivid, in-depth descriptions and accounts of the experiences of my participants. The multiple stages of data interpretation involved in IPA analysis, much like those of the hermeneutic circle, meant sensitivity to the raw material remained paramount throughout the analysis as themes and superordinate themes emerged. Throughout this process, I endeavoured to maintain a reflective engagement with my participants' accounts while at the same time, remain mindful that the reader was also trying to make sense of my attempts to capture the essence of my participants' experiences.

Data source identifiers

The data presented in this thesis include observations and direct quotes from teacher participant focus group meetings; in-class observations; teacher de-briefings; student focus group meetings; my research journal; and my autobiographical diary. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the thesis with reference to teacher and student participants. In most instances, the pseudonyms used for the teacher participants are of their own choosing. All teacher and student participant quotes, as well as my own, are italicised to assist the reader in readily identifying this as data, as opposed to other literary sources.

The source of each reference is identified by a code. The following are some examples of data source identifiers:

- Pansy, M1:Q1 – a quote from Pansy, during meeting one, in response to question one. Quotes from meetings which were not comprised of specific questions, were identified as follows:
- Rose, M2:C2 – a quote from Rose, during meeting two, and can be found in cluster two of the transcript. Transcripts were grouped into clusters for ease of identification.
- Poppy, O:2 – observation two in Poppy's class.
- Pansy, DB:1 – a quote from Pansy during our first de-briefing session, following the first lesson observation.

- SFG:PC – student focus group, Pansy’s class.
- SFG:D&RC – student focus group, Daphne’s and Rose’s classes.
- FFG:C3 – final focus group meeting, cluster three.
- RJ:1 – my research journal, entry one.
- PJ – my personal journal, followed by the date of the entry.

Ethical considerations

In preparation for this research project several ethical principles were carefully considered. Issues of confidentiality, anonymity and participants’ rights were among those addressed in the initial application for ethical approval to the University of Waikato’s Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. A guiding tenet in the discussion of ethics, and certainly one which received due consideration in the planning of this project, was that of informed consent.

Informed consent recognises participants have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of the research in which they are involved. Christians (2011) explains respect for human freedom includes voluntary agreement to participate – without physical or psychological coercion, and agreement must be based on full and open information. It was critical therefore, that all care be taken in the preliminary stages of the project to ensure participants were completely aware of their commitments as part of the data collection process. I sought to address this in the first instance when meeting with the principal, and again in the subsequent staff meeting. At that staff meeting in addition to the information letters and consent forms (Appendices B,C,D,E) all participants received a hand-out (Appendix H), which reiterated the information I had presented, and also included the schedule of interview questions I would be using during our initial group meeting. I believed it necessary to provide this additional information because as O’Leary (2010) explains, participants may wish to have a document they can consider, which will serve to clarify the research and offer them the opportunity to ask questions and if so desired, withdraw from the research.

As part of the data collection process I would be observing in classrooms and then interviewing students in focus group meetings. One critical consideration in this

project was that of power dynamics, particularly pertaining to working with children.

In addressing research with child participants, Finch (2005) writes, “It is assumed that their [children’s] understandings of the world in general and research procedures in particular are less developed than those of adults” (p. 65). Whilst subject to the same ethical considerations as adults, children involved in research are potentially more vulnerable to exploitation. Finch (2005) explains that the building of children’s understandings of the proposed research is of even greater importance and requires greater care than with adults. To this end, the language used by the researcher to convey the purpose of the research is of vital importance. I was aware of the capacity for the children to not fully understand their involvement in the research, feel intimidated, or compelled to participate. In consideration of this, the parents/caregivers of students invited to participate were given an information letter (Appendix F) which requested they kindly explain the nature of the letter to their child, and their part in this research if they chose to participate. The accompanying consent form (Appendix G) made provision for signatures from both parent/caregivers and the child participant. I explained at the beginning of the group interviews with the children the purpose for the meeting, and that if anyone would rather not participate, it was fine, and they may be excused. However, no child opted not to participate, rather, I was met with enthusiastic, eager students, who appeared to enjoy our meetings. My schedule of focus group questions with student participants (Appendix I) used straight forward, unambiguous language, but I endeavoured to re-phrase or clarify questions when I suspected they were not understood.

Summary

This section has provided an explanation of the procedural stages involved in the research, while at the same time, offered some insights into aspects of the ‘lived’ experience for me as the researcher. The research design, the data collection methods, and the data analysis method have been described in detail alongside the significant issues of credibility, quality and ethics in qualitative research.

Chapter FOUR

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents findings relating to teachers' perceptions of well-being and mindfulness from both their personal and professional perspectives. Major findings are presented by way of three sections derived from three super-ordinate themes. Each super-ordinate theme comprises a number of sub-ordinate components. The first section, 'Well-being: more than just a mind thing?' presents teachers' personal beliefs regarding the nature and characteristics of well-being. This section highlights the paradoxical nature of well-being, and makes the distinction between a well-being experience and a well-being state. The subordinate theme of connectedness, that is, connections to place, others and 'soul' is presented as particularly meaningful in personal well-being.

The second section, 'Well-being and the 'authentic' self: The roles we play', explores some distinctions between personal and professional well-being. This section draws attention to the conditions that enhance and inhibit well-being as identified by participants mainly in their role as teachers. The notion of authenticity or the 'authentic self' is explored as a super-ordinate theme. The sub-ordinate themes of teacher/student reciprocity and teacher autonomy are highlighted as pivotal in professional well-being.

The final section, CORE, seeks to capture the essence of teachers' lived experiences of mindfulness in relation to well-being as evidenced mainly in their professional lives, through their classroom practices. In this section, CORE serves as an anagram for some common, core elements of mindfulness practice, such as Centring, Observing, Recognising and Expressing awareness.

Each section of findings is followed by a discussion, and the chapter concludes with a summary, drawing together the three super-ordinate themes in direct reference to the two research questions: *What is the nature of the lived experience of mindfulness in relation to well-being for teachers*, and *How do teachers'*

perceptions of mindfulness and well-being influence their identity, practices and beliefs?

Section One

Well-being: More than just a ‘mind thing?’

In this section, many of the teachers’ personal thoughts about the nature of well-being, both as an experience and as a state are presented. It aims to capture the quintessence of their beliefs and experiences as expressed largely during our early focus group meetings. Attention is focussed here in order for the reader to develop an in-depth understanding of teachers’ personal views as later, the data highlights distinctions between their perceptions of personal and professional well-being. Throughout the findings, the subordinate theme of connectedness, specifically connections to place, others and self is integrated. The connection to ‘soul’ however, is addressed separately as analysis points to a spiritual theme embedded in the findings which cannot be addressed when referenced to any other connections.

The well-being experience: This was bigger than that

Initial discussions regarding the nature of well-being experiences signalled how personal and individual this was for each teacher. In response to my invitation to describe a well-being experience, I noted that for some participants, solitude, aloneness and connections with nature, place and one’s senses seemed to characterise the experience:

... I’d be sitting just outside my place, and just listening to nature – just hearing the birds and seeing the birds, and feeling the warmth of the sun – just the greenness, and all sorts of hues, but just being there in that solitary state – just appreciating everything that’s going on around you. (Pansy, M1:Q1)

... initially I thought it’s when we are on holiday and I am not in my home – although connection to home is very important ... and then I thought, no, actually, just recently, when there was no-one at home, to actually snuggle on the couch with the cat – and not do the dishes and not tell the kids that they should be doing something or not doing something ... (Daphne, M1:Q1)

At other times, the elements of a well-being experience included connection with others, noise, movement and laughter. Hyacinth made explicit that for her, “*solitude isn’t well-being*” (M2:C2):

... in my kitchen, yesterday, just dancing around with Mia, and I can still hear her giggle now ... dancing with her and enjoying the music, and Kieran and River were there as well and we were just in the kitchen and we were all chatting and dancing and being silly and eating cake and you know just doing kitchen/family stuff ... (Hyacinth, M1:Q1)

Although Hyacinth’s well-being experience appears initially to contrast with Pansy and Daphne’s expressions, it is notable that all three women make reference to connections with home and their senses as elements in their well-being experiences. For Pansy, the sights and sounds of her garden, while feeling the warmth of the sun, led her to express an appreciation for “*everything*”. In Daphne’s excerpt, the sense of touch is expressed with reference to the cat and the couch, while Hyacinth refers to hearing giggling, and eating cake in her kitchen while doing “*family stuff*”. Hyacinth’s excerpt appears notable in that her kitchen is mentioned three times. When I asked her whether that was important to her well-being experience, she replied, “*Yes, I think so – connected with home and kitchen – cause the kitchen’s where it’s all at for me*” (M1:Q1), and later, in reference to eating: “*I often have a moment with food – my friends laugh at me but I often have a moment*” (M3:C3).

Like Hyacinth, being with family was an important facet of the well-being experience, but for Poppy and Fern, this was met with certain conditions:

... I think I can be very blunt about it – I get that well-being feeling when I am with my family but I only get it when I am around my family without having demands on me. Like I can just sit there and watch them doing whatever they’re doing and pottering or whatever, and just feel like “wow, this is cool” but as soon as you get the “wah, wah, wah”, whoa, it’s gone ... (Poppy, M1:Q1)

Fern expressed holidays at the lake as ideal well-being times, because *“there’s no technology – the kids love it, they have stuff to do, so they go fishing and they potter and they’re happy and they’re good and I’m just relaxed”* (Fern, M1:Q1). An essential component for Fern was *“relaxation; no demands or stress, either inwards or outwards”* (M1:Q1).

What most teachers did identify, however, as common place across all experiences was *“being in the moment”* (Sally, M1:Q1), and *“my mind’s not thinking about other things – it’s just focussed on what’s happening then not what happened yesterday or what’s going to happen tomorrow”* (Daphne, M1:Q1). This meant *“nothing else was outside that moment ... being totally present in what was happening then – not thinking about anything else, not looking to the future ... this was bigger than that”* (Hyacinth, M1:Q1). Hyacinth’s analysis proved particularly poignant in light of her personal circumstances. She was experiencing what she described as the devastating effects of a marriage dissolution after her husband left her, yet she was able to describe her time in her kitchen with her children, after they had returned home from a stay with their father, as *“more intense than that ... it was just us in the kitchen, and all the other stuff wasn’t there ...”* (Hyacinth, M1: Q1).

The happy/sad song paradox

Almost paradoxically, then, it appeared possible to experience well-being episodes during times of great sadness; being happy did not necessarily equate with well-being, it seemed. Sally, a third year teacher, described her well-being experience as under-scored with feelings of sadness. Upon returning home to Christchurch for the first time after working away, Sally shared how she stood in the hills, looking out over everything: *“It was quite surreal ... I just realised as soon as I got there what I had been missing”* (M1:Q1). When I questioned how missing home could equate to a well-being experience, she explained: *“Because I was getting in touch with family and friends and my surroundings. It was a sense of familiarity – reconnection”* (M1:Q1). We discussed the possibility that the intensity of loss could heighten a well-being experience. For Sally, the ‘loss’ of home stressed the importance of reconnecting with home, just as for Hyacinth, the ‘loss’ of her marriage seemed to intensify the experience of being with her

children. Hyacinth explained the paradoxical nature of the well-being experience as mirroring life itself, and summed it up:

... you can be all sorts of feelings all at the same time – the best songs are the happy/sad songs – you know, they are the up-tempo songs in a minor key. They’re the best songs because life is happy/sad, always, always – sometimes more sad than happy, sometimes more happy than sad ... (M1:Q2)

In a similar manner, Poppy explained feeling sad was an accepted and expected part of being well: *“You can be really sad but feel well because part of being well, is being sad sometimes. I feel fantastic when I am bawling my eyes out at a horrible sad movie. I enjoy that, and I like having that” (M1:Q2).*

The coalescence of ostensibly opposing feelings was something I felt I understood. For me, it was possible to live simultaneously with great pain, and yet experience a ‘knowing’ that all was well. As we continued to discuss the paradoxical nature of well-being, I shared the following personal thoughts with the teachers:

When Richard died I found myself detached from my life – it was as if there was this horrendous thing happening, this unbelievable grief and despair and pain and trauma but somehow I would get glimpses of a sacredness in those moments that made me aware that no matter whatever this life was, ‘it’ was not who I was. Somewhere, above the river or under the ocean there was the essence of me and that was okay ... (Laurie, M1:Q7)

Hyacinth suggested that my being ‘okay’ would have depended largely on my overall state of well-being at the time of this crisis, as that would *“influence how that experience affected you” (M:1:Q5)*. This suggestion led us to theorise about an overall well-being state, which would encompass both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ experiences. Yet defining precisely what constituted an overall state of well-being proved problematic and a fundamental incongruence appeared present between a well-being experience and a well-being state.

The well-being state: Is it all ‘in your head’?

Whereas all participants could recount a well-being experience and to a large degree, describe it as a time of presence, sensory awareness, being in the moment, and *not thinking*, characteristics of a well-being state proved far more abstruse. It appeared for some teachers, *thinking* about how they thought about their well-being influenced how they interpreted their state of well-being. Statements such as “*it’s all about what’s going on in your head*” (Lucy, M1:Q6), “*the way you thought about your well-being may have changed*” (Pansy, M:1Q), “*so it’s a sort of perception*” (Pansy, M1:Q2), and “*so is it not even what you have or what happens to you but how you look at it, or how you perceive it, or how you interpret it maybe?*” (Hyacinth, M1:Q2) seemed to mark the influential nature of thinking on self-perceptions of well-being. In this excerpt, Fern appears to think about her well-being, makes an assessment using the past as a reference point, and then pinpoints her state of well-being as her present ‘state of mind’:

I was nice and relaxed last night and I got a phone call that I was probably pretty frustrated about. This time last year or the year before, I would have been quite emotionally upset about it [having recently separated from her husband]. But I was in a whole different state of mind two years ago than I am now, so I was able to deal with it a lot calmer and a lot better. (M1:Q5)

The difficulty in defining a well-being state appeared even more explicit when participants were asked to place their well-being on a continuum, the low end being ‘despair’, the high end, ‘Nirvana’ (a term they chose to represent the ultimate in well-being). It is interesting to note how often participants refer to their thinking as indicative of their state of well-being:

... it’s the hardest thing to do because you think I’m at a low ebb at the moment, but maybe in general things are pretty chipper... yes, I am breathing so yes, I am well, however, I haven’t slept for three days, so it all depends how you look at it ... it depends what you mean by well-being and despair cause some people might think feeling well should be the medium, where other people would see that as being the ultimate goal ... for some people their despair might be, right, I’m off to top myself. (Hyacinth, M1:Q6)

... because well-being, you may have had a great day at school or a great day at work and you may think wow my well-being is great but when you look at your emotional or family state, you might think, no, my well-being is not up there. (Pansy, M1:Q6)

In placing well-being along a continuum, Lucy shared the following analogy, which seemed to describe well-being as a reasonably fixed state, while simultaneously, being susceptible to flux. Although she does not qualify the precise cause of the back and forth movements along the continuum, given the context of our discussion, it seems reasonable to suggest these fluctuations are driven by thoughts, the precise nature of which seem to depend on an overall well-being state:

And you might move within your own little area – so you might be quite close to despair and you might spend all of your time coming slightly up and back in then slightly up ... you might spend your time in the same sort of bracket – and then on a dramatic occasion you might end up all the way down at despair – from where you are – but most days you’d sort of hover in your little area. (M1:Q5)

In this excerpt, Poppy adopts Lucy’s hovering analogy, suggesting again movement within a reasonably static state, but goes further to explain the importance of a well-positioned well-being along the continuum in the first place:

I guess when traumatic things happen you’ve got that hovering place where you are, as long as that’s reasonably good in the well-being line, then when traumatic things happen, you’ve got further to go [down the continuum] – you can survive. (Poppy, M1:Q7)

Poppy’s reference to being “*reasonably good in the well-being line*” seems to suggest a kind of healthy, robust well-being is important to survival. While connections with others, place and one’s self through the senses appeared influential in well-being experiences, for a number of participants, another kind of connection was noted as significant. These participants described a connection with something indeterminate yet essential for a healthy well-being state, something Sahara termed as “*intrinsic*” (M2:C2).

The well-being state: The invisible string

As an introductory welcoming to each of our focus group meetings, I would read a short, fictional, picture book to the teachers. I felt given their work with children this would be an appropriate start to our weekly sessions together, and my selected literature tended to centre on a mindfulness related theme. Although I did not fully recognise it at the time, the use of children's literature in this way proved highly significant, and is elucidated upon in the CORE section of this chapter. However, one book, *The Invisible String* (Karst, 2000) contained a message about the transcendence of love to bind and connect, and appeared particularly poignant to the teachers. Not only was it used widely as a teaching aid during their classroom mindfulness lessons, but the phrase 'invisible strings' became a popular metaphor used by the teachers when describing valued connections to people and places. During one meeting, as we were discussing 'belonging' as an element of well-being, I asked, "*If you were to lose everyone in your family and your home, as some people do in tragedies, and you were standing completely alone, could you still belong?*" (M2:C1). Poppy replied, "*Yes, because you've got invisible strings*" (M2:C1), implying a connectedness that transcends circumstance, time and place. I have used the analogy of an invisible string to suggest the connectedness of self with something indefinable. For some participants, this could be described as a kind of 'soul string'.

The soul string

A key finding from the analysis of our focus group meetings was that although perceptions of self seemed to influence one's overall well-being state, self could incorporate several aspects of well-being. As highlighted earlier in Chapter One, I was careful at this point not to draw attention to the multifaceted nature of well-being as defined in the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), preferring instead for the teachers to express their own notions of well-being. However, both Pansy and Lucy drew upon models to explain the holistic nature of well-being:

Going back to PIES at training college – physical, intellectual, emotional and social – if those needs are met, then you have a feeling of well-being. (Pansy, M1:Q2)

I was thinking of the whare tapawhā ...[a metaphor in the health and physical education curriculum depicting a traditional Māori meeting house. The four walls of the house are representative of the dimensions of each person] you've got to have your intellectual, spiritual, mental and physical well-being. If you've got all those four aspects, then you are well. There are other things that make you happy, and other things that make you sad ... but you have to have all the walls up in your house to be able to have well-being. (Lucy, M1:Q2)

Neither Pansy or Lucy made clear whether these four aspects of well-being were considered proportionate or congruent in order to create what Lucy refers to as “your house”, but findings seem to suggest that for at least some participants, Lucy’s referral to a spiritual well-being may be an all-encompassing, overarching well-being. Phrases such as “it’s your soul” (Poppy, M1:Q1), “it’s almost the essence of being female” (Pansy, M1:Q1), “I found myself” (Fern, M1:Q5) and “somewhere between life and death it just is – isness (Lucy, M7:C3), were used by participants when describing what appeared to be a connection with an unquantifiable source. For these teachers, this source seemed to be inseparable from what they saw as representative of themselves – the essence of self from which all aspects of well-beings sprang:

So maybe it’s just right down to the grain – the very, very grain that was you before you were any of that – but it still needs all the other things to make you the person you are now – but it’s this bit – the bare you – the naked you ... (Poppy, M4:C3)

In the Māori culture spiritual connection is in everything that you do – practices on the marae and such – these things are like spiritual connections – you are born, it’s intrinsic – you’re brought up with it, you grow up learning it. (Sahara, M2:C2)

In the following excerpt the reference to an ineffable yet essential connection seems to appear as a kind of assuredness, a knowing that everything, no matter what, is ‘alright’. Here, Hyacinth is responding to my question “*what is it that allows you to dance around your kitchen?*” [in the face of personal adversity]:

There is very much that time when you think it's alright – and you feel like you are alive – and you're alright – it's alright – even though you know you're not alright but it's alright – it's alright to not be alright! It's just that you are – you are – it is – he is – she is – the kids are – it's just all this and actually, it's alright. And the sun's coming up and it's all good. (M2:C2)

Hyacinth's 'knowing' looked to be expressed not so much as a resignation in the face of the inevitable, but a confidence, a faith that everything was alright despite not being alright. In many ways Hyacinth's sentiments resonated with my own concerning the loss of my husband. I understood the 'alright-ness' in grief, and I felt I needed and wanted to share my own personal 'soul connection' beliefs:

After Richard died it didn't take me long to realise that even though this was so intense and so painful and so horrid that I couldn't move off the sofa or shower myself or whatever, it didn't take me long to realise that there was something so big holding me. So much of my well-being was intact, even at that moment, even with all that despair there was a peace that passed all understanding. And I couldn't conceptualise it, or intellectualise it, but something was okay, despite all that, I was breathing. I kept hearing "you're breathing, you're alright – you're breathing, you're alright – take one breath now, one more now, one more now." So there was a state of wellness; despite all the despair, I knew I was okay. And I believe that is, for want of a better word, God, or the soul of me – not Laurie here, but Laurie 'in here' – the thing inside me that knows that this [all that is happening to me] is not 'me'. (Laurie, M2:C2)

Summary

The findings presented to this point appear to illustrate participants' views that well-being experiences and well-being states are not the same thing. Well-being experiences were often characterised by presence, sensory awareness, connectedness and *not thinking*. The well-being state, however, proved far more complex, and for some participants, *thinking* or perceptions of self seemed to influence their overall well-being state. For some participants, self encompassed a connection with an unquantifiable source, the essence of self, which was sometimes expressed as a knowing that no matter what, everything was alright. Because of this connection with an indeterminate source, it seemed possible to experience well-being episodes during times of great sadness and even grief: an

individual's overall well-being state was considered to determine how well, or otherwise, they coped with both day-to-day frustrations and great adversity.

Discussion

Well-being: More than just a ‘mind thing’?

At its heart, this research sought to bring to light the essence of the well-being/mindfulness relationship for one group of primary school teachers. In so doing, considerable time was spent exploring the notion of well-being. It appeared that while well-being experiences were often characterised as times of presence, a time where time didn’t matter, connectedness to place and others, sensory awareness and *not thinking*, the well-being state, although considered reasonably fixed, was subject to fluctuations influenced, at least to some degree, by *thinking*. Thinking seemed to affect perceptions of self, which in turn, caused fluctuations in the over-all well-being state. Importantly, however, the well-being state was also characterised by what some participants describe as a connection with something indeterminate yet essential for a healthy well-being – a kind of ‘soul’ connection, or a deeply felt knowing that even in the most difficult circumstances, all was well.

The well-being experience: This was bigger than that

When the teachers defined a well-being experience it was often contextual, referenced to a point in time and place that proved particularly memorable, and marked by a ‘connectedness’. In this sense, well-being was much more than ‘just a mind-thing’ – it was a holistic, all-encompassing connection, a moment in time when thinking seemed to stop, and time did not matter. At times this connection was sensory in nature, experienced in moments of solitude and aloneness. At others, the connection appeared during social times with family and friends. Such experiences might be deemed ‘spiritual’ in nature. Piechowski (2003) identified timelessness, oneness with nature, and God in everything among some common descriptors of spirituality, while Claxton (2002) described qualities such as aliveness, belonging, affinity with mystery and peace of mind as common to the spiritual experience. In their definition, Egan et al. (2011), state spirituality “... may include (a search for): one’s ultimate beliefs and values; a sense of meaning and purpose in life; a sense of connectedness; identity and awareness, and for some people, religion ...” (p. 321). Certainly, the theme of connectedness or what I term the ‘soul string’ appears as a common thread across the well-being, spiritual and mindfulness literature.

I decided that in articulating their well-being experiences, the teachers were expressing elements of spirituality, spiritual connectedness and interestingly, mindfulness. Even though their accounts never at any time mentioned mindfulness, I was struck by how their descriptions reflected many elements of what I had come to understand as the essence of mindfulness, such as present moment awareness, not being consumed by thoughts, non-judgemental acceptance of the present, and the present moment being of paramount importance. Early in the data collection phase I recorded the following thoughts in my research journal:

Mindfulness is a gateway through which to access your well-being because mindfulness is well-being. We can all identify the characteristics of well-being: then it follows that we all know what mindfulness is – because the moment we begin to look at our own well-being, we identify mindfulness. Even without ‘knowing’ what mindfulness is, we ‘know’ it simply by understanding our well-being state. The closeness is extraordinary – you can’t access one without having the other. (RJ:1)

Yet I was never fully comfortable in labelling the teachers’ well-being experiences as ‘mindful’ because they had not expressed a familiarity with the construct of mindfulness or any mindfulness-based practices. Despite this, many of their well-being accounts and statements seemed to embody elements of mindfulness. They clearly captured the sensory awareness aspect of mindfulness and the connection with something much bigger and deeper than surface connections. However, whether they were *aware* of this connection is a moot point. It is difficult to ascertain this with any surety, as my research journal entry reflects:

All of the teachers can articulate the elements of their personal well-being, but it appears the awareness of this occurs only when we bring our consciousness to the deliberate act of expressing thoughts and feelings. Does this mean that we are only aware when we conceptualise awareness? (RJ:2)

This raises the question of whether participants were aware of being aware at the times they were experiencing well-being episodes. They appeared to be conscious of their thoughts and emotions at these times, given they could recount them and label them as well-being experiences. But does one need to know about

mindfulness, in order to be mindful? Kabat-Zinn (2012) is definite – “mindfulness is awareness” (p. 17) and that is something we need to learn. He states:

Technically speaking, mindfulness is what arises when you pay attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally, and as if your life depended on it ... awareness is the capacity that we are all intimately familiar with, and yet are simultaneously complete strangers to. .. [it] is really the cultivation of a resource that is already ours. It doesn't require going anywhere, it doesn't require getting anything, but it does require learning how to inhabit another domain of mind that we are, as a rule fairly out of touch with. And that is what you might call the *being mode* of mind. (p. 17)

Mindfulness then, by definition, refers here to intentionality, the deliberate act of being aware or being conscious. Tolle (2005) asserts that in addition to being conscious of thoughts perceptions and emotions, awareness implies a consciousness of being conscious, and this involves sensing:

If you can sense an alert inner stillness in the background while things happen in the foreground – that's it! This dimension is there in everyone, but most people are completely unaware of it. Sometimes I point to it by saying, “Can you feel your own Presence?” (p. 228)

Hyacinth seemed to refer to this Presence when she stated “*this was bigger than that*” in reference to her well-being experience. In the din and busyness of her kitchen, she seemed to sense stillness. ‘This’ for Hyacinth appeared as present moment awareness which meant ‘that’ didn't much matter at that point in time. Perhaps this is why she said “*it's just that you are ... and it's alright*”, referring to an awareness of a stillness in the background of her life. This stillness or consciousness is what I refer to as the ‘being’ in the well-being state. Even though, as the happy/sad paradox findings suggest, all may not be well all of the time, the constancy of ‘being’ means there is an ‘alrightness’ in life. In other words, ‘being’ precedes wellness, so that in many ways, well-being simply is ‘being’ as expressed in my personal journal entry:

I like to think it's a realisation that I can hold my grief tenderly, with great respect for its sacredness, while at the same time experience fully the joy of being in this life, of being human. I think of it like this: I cradle my beautiful grief, that which keeps me 'human' in this life, in my left hand, while simultaneously

cupping my joy of 'being' in my right hand. And then I gently fold my hands together, and let my fingers interlock, so the joy mingles with the grief and the grief seeps into the joy and I no longer draw distinctions between the two. They just come together as 'being'. (PJ:25.06.12)

Whether it is termed 'being', 'Presence', 'stillness' or 'a sense', Tolle (2005) likens this awareness to a deep peace that passes all understanding, a non-conceptual sacred sense of serenity and complete freedom from fear. In this way, well-being can be said to be much, much more than 'just a mind thing'.

The well-being state: Is it all 'in your head'?

Well-being definitions

Chapter Two of this thesis examined the complexity of defining well-being. Despite an upsurge in well-being research in recent decades, attempts at focussing on the nature of well-being have centred on dimensions and descriptions rather than definitions, and as such, the question of how well-being should be defined remains unanswered (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). Boniwell (n.d.) asserts that current definitions of subjective well-being have come about 'accidentally': "First of all, researchers wanted to develop well-being questionnaires (because they needed to evaluate various interventions), then they derived the definition of well-being from these questionnaires, without paying much attention to whether they actually captured the richness of human wellness and happiness" (n.p). Instead, current theories tend to focus on the notion of hedonism, or hedonic well-being, the striving for pleasure (positive affect) and the minimisation of pain (negative affect) without addressing notions of growth, self-actualisation and meaning (Boniwell, n.d.). Eudaimonic well-being, on the other hand, stems from the theories of Maslow and Rogers, emphasising a belief in the fundamental motivation towards growth, or a self-actualising tendency. Boniwell (n.d.) adds that other frequently used eudaimonic definitions include: the realisation of one's true self, personal growth, meaning, psychological well-being and flow.

Well-being and well-Being: The theory

The delineation of these two well-being paradigms in many ways aligns with the findings in this research project. Well-being experiences for the teachers were often characterised by a non-cerebral 'being' mode of mind. This could be

likened to the hedonic or pleasure seeking, ‘feeling’ mind. I record this as Well-being, with the capitalisation emphasis on Well as in happy, content and positive. The well-being state however, as described by the participants, appeared more of a ‘state of mind’ or a *thinking* mind. The thinking mind was inclined to assess self, make judgements and apply labels which in turn affected how the well-being state was perceived. Significantly, however, the well-being state descriptions also tended to make reference to *knowing* something far greater than self – the invisible string connection to the soul, “*the very, very grain that was you before you were any of that*” (Poppy, M4:C3). In this sense, a ‘eudaimonic well-being’ is reflected in the well-being state. I record this as well-Being, with the capitalisation emphasis on the Being – that undefinable yet undeniable awareness of a connection to something ‘bigger’.

Perhaps, then, well-being could simply be defined as an *awareness of awareness* between the Well and the Being aspects of one’s life; between the experiences and the state. This raises further the question of whether one can build Well-being capital, so that, as Poppy suggested, “*when traumatic things happen you’ve got that hovering place where you are, as long as that’s reasonably good in the well-being line, then when traumatic things happen, you’ve got further to go [down the continuum] – you can survive* (M1:Q7).

The hovering place: The well-Being default

The essence of Poppy’s ‘hovering place’ analogy is noteworthy because it seems to suggest well-Being is both a reasonably fixed state, and simultaneously, a resource which can be built upon, and stored, as necessary. This fixed state or fixed point I term the well-Being *default*, that is, that part of our character which seems to be ‘who we are’, arguably influenced to some degree by our genetic makeup. This notion of what I term a well-Being default appears to have a similar counterpart in the field of psychology where it is known as a genetically determined set-point. Lykken and Tellegen’s (1996) seminal study on the heritability of happiness gathered demographic and questionnaire data from hundreds of pairs of middle-aged twins born in Minnesota between 1936 and 1955. The study concluded that about half of the variance in one’s subjective well-being is associated with genetic variation. Simply put, the set-point theory

suggests that each of us is born with a potential or baseline for happiness to which we return even after major impediments; happiness and unhappiness are apparently short lived reactions to changes in circumstances, and people tend to quickly return to neutrality (Diener, Lucas & Scallan, 2006; Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Lyubomirsky (2008) suggests however, that just because one's happiness set point cannot be changed, it doesn't necessarily follow that one's happiness *level* cannot be changed. She contends that although 50 percent of differences among people's happiness levels can be accounted for by their genetically determined set points, only 10 percent of the variance in our happiness levels is explained by differences in life circumstances. Accordingly, 40 percent is apparently within our ability to control: "to increase or decrease our happiness levels through what we *do* in our daily lives and how we *think*" (p. 22). Yet, what does it actually mean to an individual that their happiness may be 50 percent heritable?

With reference to this research, it may mean that although we may tend to 'hover' as suggested by Lucy, around that reasonably fixed point, or default, certain resources can build or add to our well-Being state. Although my particular research is not centred on happiness per se, the notion of a well-Being set point ratio is interesting in that it suggests a considerable portion of one's well-Being state is governable. Sometimes, although by no means always, these resources take the form of positive experiences or Well-being experiences – those which induce positive emotions. I term such resources Well-being *capital*, suggesting it is possible to save or accrue 'funds' which can be safely deposited into the well-Being state and drawn upon as required. As deposits grow, so too does the interest, so there is an accumulation of disposable funds at the ready. It is important to note, however, that experiences which could not be deemed positive (for example, death of a spouse or marriage dissolution) may also build Well-being capital and lead to an enhanced state of well-Being because for some people, they seem to elicit a kind of transformation or personal growth, as was the case with Fern when she remarked:

I was nice and relaxed last night and I got a phone call that I was probably pretty frustrated about. This time last year or the year before, I would have been quite emotionally upset about it [having recently separated from her husband]. But I was in a whole different state of mind two years ago than I am now, so I was able to deal with it a lot calmer and a lot better. (M:1:Q5)

Similarly, experiences which could be considered traumatic, appeared to illumine a connectedness to an ineffable source, as was the experience for both Hyacinth and myself when we spoke of a sense of ‘alrightness’ in the midst of grief and despair. This raises the question: what is the nature of this resource, or capital, and how can it grow?

Building Well-being capital

When the teachers shared their well-being experiences, many of those experiences could be said to have comprised several forms of positive emotions. Tranquillity, gratitude, joy, laughter and love were evidenced in moments of seclusion, solitude, fun, connection and reconnection. In this way, the teachers could be said to have been building Well-being capital, that is, the accumulation of resources ready to be drawn upon when needed. Hyacinth shared just such an example of the significance of Well-being capital:

You can re-visit moments of peace and calm in your mind when you need to. On the weekend the kids and I went for a picnic to nearby gardens ... We packed our thermoses and things like that and we also packed our sketch pads and our pencils and we went and sat in the field of daffodils, had our picnic and then sketched the daffodils. And I’ve been back to that field several times this week in my head – just to [sighs deeply]. So I think when you have moments of calm, they are also places you can go back to sometimes when you need a little beauty. (DB:1)

When awareness and gratitude intersect, the effects on the inner-being may be enduring. Lovecky (1998) reports the experience of Tom, whose faith underwent a profound change when he was just 11 years of age. Tom attributed this to the experience of looking through a telescope and first seeing the Milky Way and the moons of Jupiter. At that moment, he felt life exceeded all his expectations in the most absolute and wondrous way, and left him with feelings of thanksgiving and awe which never really left him, even in the most painful and disappointing

moments of his later life. Loveky (1998) describes this as a truly transcendent moment for Tom, through which he became a seeker of transcendence in himself and others.

Kashdan (2012) describes the combination of gratitude and mindfulness, as two over-lapping circles of mind-set and consciousness. He states that when we appreciate the benefits we receive as each moment unfolds, we can catch particular moments and make them linger, both in the present, and at a later date, as a kind of mood boost. This appears to have been the case for both Hyacinth and Tom: by bringing their awareness and appreciation to their experiences as they occurred, it can be said Well-being capital was built. At a later date, when needed, they were able to draw upon that capital by revisiting their experiences.

In a similar way, Fredrickson's (2009) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions states that however transitory, positivity builds resources for life by opening people's hearts and minds, making them more receptive and creative, which in turn builds new skills, new ties, new knowledge, and new ways of being. However, Fredrickson (2009) argues there is one caveat: positivity is fragile, and whether you experience it or not depends vitally on how you think. When the teachers used statements such as "*it's a sort of perception*" (Pansy, M1:Q2) and it's "*how you look at it*" (Hyacinth, M1:Q2) they suggested they could affect their well-Being state by controlling their thinking. In much the same way, Fredrickson (2009) proposes positivity can be turned on or off by how we think and there is particular power in the questions we ask ourselves. Questioning, "What's going right for me right now?" (p. 51) supposedly can do much towards unlocking positivity. In other words, bringing one's *awareness* to *being aware* of experiences may be the key to unlocking positivity. In this regard, positivity, like well-being, can be said to be very much 'all in your head'.

Yet, while Fredrickson's (2009) theory highlights the fragility of positivity by suggesting it highly subject to one's thinking, and the importance of staying in a positive 'frame of mind', Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b) argue posttraumatic growth mutually interacts with the development of the life narrative (the general framework people have for thinking about their lives); it is both an ongoing

process and a static one. In much the same way, Poppy's 'hovering place' analogy suggested well-Being is a both a reasonably fixed state, and simultaneously, a resource which can be built upon. Although Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b) advise the early stages of response to trauma may include intrusive thoughts, images and negative intrusive rumination, eventually this can lead to growth as it becomes evident that the old way of living is no longer appropriate in the radically changed circumstances. It is this often lengthy process during which distress persists which may actually be, according to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b), key for the maximum degree of posttraumatic growth to occur. They contend distress keeps the cognitive processing active, eventually leading to the disengagement of certain goals and assumptions, while at the same time, persisting in building new schemas, goals and meanings. In short, while the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2009) seems to signal the importance of positive thinking, and the avoidance of 'negative' thinking, the posttraumatic growth theory (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004a; 2004b) somewhat contradictorily, suggests it is the very steps involved in the cognitive processing of trauma, often involving intrusive, 'negative' thoughts, which eventually can lead to enhanced aspects of well-being, such as personal growth. In reference to my Well-being/well-Being theory, capital can be comprised of both what would generally be termed 'positive' and 'negative' experiences, and importantly, rather than remaining fixed, the well-Being state may be, at least for some individuals, subject to growth and a 'spiritual' connectedness to an indeterminate source, during difficult and challenging circumstances.

The well-Being soul string

I have suggested that when several of the participants made reference to an ineffable connection with an 'unknown' source, they were describing a 'soul' connection. Poppy expressed this as "*the very, very grain of you that was you before you were any of that*". For Sahara, it was something we are born with, an intrinsic connection to everything, and Hyacinth described it as feeling alive and alright even in the face of great difficulty. Although these descriptions differ somewhat, they were all made in reference to the state of well-Being, suggesting perception of a significant 'something' in the teachers' lives. However, revealing the essence of these perceptions is not easy. Words tend to compartmentalise

experiences, pigeon-hole beliefs and reduce the sacredness of such intuitions to mere thoughts:

You can't pin it down and say "Now I have it," or grasp it mentally and define it in some way. It is like the cloudless sky. It has no form. It is space; it is stillness, the sweetness of Being and infinitely more than these words, which are only pointers. When you are able to sense it directly within yourself, it deepens. So when you appreciate something simple – a sound, a sight, a touch – when you see beauty, when you feel loving kindness toward another, sense the inner spaciousness that is the source and background to that experience. (Tolle, 2005, p. 235)

Yet I believe coming to some sort of 'knowing' about these perceptions is important because they point to a connection with the 'authentic' self. The writings of Parker Palmer (2000) reveal how ignoring 'true self' led him into a battle with depression he could only describe as "the snake pit of the soul" (p. 58). Palmer explains that for a long time the driving force in his life had been the 'oughts' and failing to live up to those 'oughts' led him to see himself as weak and faithless. He admonishes: "True self is true friend. We ignore or reject such friendship only at our peril" (p. 69). In the next section of this chapter, the findings reveal how not honouring the authentic self may be damaging to well-Being.

Mindfulness, well-Being and awareness: Making the connection

At this point, the connection between well-Being and mindfulness seems to be awareness, and specifically, its role in well-Being. When awareness is brought to 'positive' experiences it may create positive emotions, which in turn may enhance well-Being. Of course, the same holds for 'negative' experiences, because as Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a, 2004b) theorise, it is the very steps involved in the cognitive processing of trauma, often involving intrusive, 'negative' thoughts, which eventually can lead to enhanced personal growth. The important point is that with mindful awareness, individuals are *aware of being aware*, and may learn to observe their thinking and come to understand the link between thinking and emotions. The CORE section of this chapter explores how when the teachers and their students engaged in the deliberate act of 'awarenessing' that is, when they took their full attention to what they were experiencing in the present moment,

both positive and negative emotions, their own understanding of their well-Being was heightened.

Summary

In attempting to portray the essence of the teachers' lived experiences of well-being a somewhat messy canvas has emerged. In part, Well-being can be said to be associated with positive experiences, which in turn can lead to the awareness of positive emotions, such a tranquillity, gratefulness, joy, laughter and love, and consequently affect an overall well-Being state. In this way, positive emotions build Well-being resources or what I term Well-being capital, which can be drawn upon in times of crisis: the greater the amount of capital, the greater the ability to withstand adversity.

However, experiences which could not be deemed positive (for example, death of a spouse or marriage dissolution) may also lead to an enhanced state of well-Being because for at least some people, experiencing trauma may result in a transformation, or growth, and illumine a connectedness to an ineffable source. For both Hyacinth and me, this connection was experienced as a sense of 'alrightness' in the midst of grief and despair. While I am not suggesting all people do move forward and grow as a result of trauma in their lives, indeed, some are mired in lasting despair and bitterness, these findings may offer a way forward for those so afflicted, because they act as a reminder that when we look through a lens of awareness, pain is just one window through which to view the landscape of our lives.

The link between Well-being and well-Being appears to be awareness, specifically, an awareness of being aware. 'Awarenessing' may mean a cognisance of one's thoughts and an understanding of the effect of thinking on the well-Being state. But awarenessing may also occur in another realm as 'sensing' – a kind of intuitive or inexplicable *knowing* that arises far less from *thinking*, and far more from *being*.

Section Two

well-Being⁵ and the authentic self: The roles we play

This section explores some distinctions between personal and professional well-Being as defined by the participants. Attention is drawn to the conditions which enhance, and alternatively impede well-Being as identified by the participants mainly in their role as teachers. The super-ordinate theme of authenticity and the subordinate themes of time (that is, the conceptualised awareness of past, present and future) and reciprocity, have been identified as pivotal in both personal and professional well-Being.

well-Being and our defined roles

Early in our focus group meetings the participants seemed to distinguish between their personal and professional well-Being. The distinction was drawn by the teachers themselves, and highlighted by Lucy when after an hour long discussion concerning the essence of well-Being, she remarked, “*Nobody said my well-Being is in the classroom*” (M1:Q6). When I observed that their definitions did at times tend to reference well-Being alongside the gender defined female roles of wife, mother and daughter, Pansy replied:

I think being female, it's the first thing you actually think of – even if you're married or not married, you still think of family. It's the female nurturing type role ... (M1:Q1)

Yet despite every participant agreeing that their teacher well-Being was different to their well-Being as a wife or mother, the demarcation did not always seem clear, and the two often appeared interdependent:

... having a good day at work, coming home and thinking what am I going to cook for tea, coming home to find Jason got home early and cleaned the kitchen, cooked tea, which he did do a few times (not that many times, but a few) and just walking in and going [sigh] you know. I can enjoy my family and I can be here

⁵ In the previous section I expressed a hermeneutic distinction between Well-being experiences (hedonic) and a well-Being state (eudaimonic) with a shift in the capitalisation emphasis on Well and Being. In the following sections (unless otherwise specified) I make use of well-Being, as it seems to communicate textually the essence of self-hood or the notion of the ‘authentic self’ as expressed in the data.

and feel good about the day I have had but I don't have all these demands on me and I can just chill ... (Poppy, M1:Q1)

In this excerpt Hyacinth appears to affirm the separateness, while simultaneously acknowledging the connectedness between professional and personal well-Being. However, she seems to ascribe a far greater weighting to one:

... it doesn't matter how well things are going at home, if things are not working well at work, like if you are really stressed or whatever, then that's going to leech through and eventually things will start falling apart in other parts of your life. (Hyacinth, M1:Q7)

But for Daphne, the distinction appeared far more evident:

My teacher well-being is definitely not okay at three o'clock. We talked last week about depending on what roles we play in our lives, whether we are a teacher - how our well-being is as a mother - how our well-being is as a sister - you know, different. Like I could be feeling really well about my motherly duties and I could be feeling [sighs] less well about my teacher role. My well-being changes in those roles. (Daphne, M2:C2)

When I questioned how it would be possible to protect one's personal well-Being, given the intense nature of the teaching work-place, both Daphne and Pansy explained:

By playing different roles. I think I am very clever at that. I am a different person when I am a teacher than when I am a mum, than when I am a partner, than when I am a daughter ... [there are] very different states of who I am ... I can be on the scale up here as a teacher, but when I get home ... (Daphne, M1:Q7)

... like you, I can be different. I can go run a meeting, but basically I'm very shy. But you can actually get into that box and you can perform according to that role that you need and as soon as that's finished then that role changes. (Pansy, M1:Q7)

Authentic self/autonomous self

From my own experience, both personal and as a result of this study, there appears to be a legitimate claim to be had for this notion of authenticity or authentic selfhood: at the core of each individual there is an authentic self, our unique and individual nature – our ‘birthright’. Palmer (2000) puts it in terms far more eloquent than mine:

Everything in the universe has a nature, which means limits as well as potentials, a truth well known by people who work daily with things of the world. Making pottery, for example, involves more than telling the clay what to become. The clay presses back on the potter’s hands, telling her what it can and cannot do – and if she fails to listen, the outcome will be both frail and ungainly ... Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks – we will find our path of authentic service in the world. (pp. 15-16).

Because of my belief in an authentic selfhood, I was curious to know if in assuming differing roles one’s ‘authentic self’ was affected, and what, if any, affect this would have on well-Being. I did not, however, define authentic self to my participants, rather, I made several references throughout our conversations to the notion of authenticity, by asking questions such as “*Strip away the roles – the teacher you, the mother you, the partner you, and the essence of what is left, is you. What is that?*” (M4:C3) and “*How important is it in this life for us to be authentic?*” (M1:Q7). Yet authenticity was never really defined or addressed directly by the by the participants, other than in this excerpt:

I think you can be authentic and have a good state of well-Being, but protect that well-Being by not letting any influences from outside [come] within that ‘little box’ – protecting your own well-Being until you feel comfortable enough to actually open the door. (Pansy, M1:Q8)

Pansy’s reference to “*protecting your own well-Being*” alludes to the recognition of someone doing the protecting of one’s own self. Whether this is a reference to the authentic self as well-Being protector is not clear at this stage, nor is it clear as to what well-Being is being protected from (points further deliberated in the discussion following this section of findings). However, what does appear possible is a link between autonomy and authenticity within various roles. It

seemed possible that the greater the degree of perceived autonomy, the stronger the connection to the authentic self, leading to an enhanced state of well-Being. For these teachers, the authentic self appears more evident in their personal lives than in their professional lives, possibly because of what they seem to view as greater control and choice:

It's a job ... it's your work too. At some underlying aspect it's what you do for a living – it's not what you do because you've chosen to do that. So as a family member and a mother you are that person because it's what you've chosen to do but for teaching it's your job, it's your career. You've still chosen to do it, I'm not saying you haven't chosen to do it, but there's a difference between your personal life and your work life. (Lucy, M1:Q8)

I think with teaching there are so many outside influences that have a bearing or have controls over what you can actually do or how you perform in a classroom, whereas being a mother or a wife or a family member or a partner or whatever, you make those choices on a sort of one-to-one basis, whereas in the classroom you've got hoops to jump through all the time and you've got to consider not only all the 35 other well-beings, but the controls that are pulling the strings all the time. (Pansy, M1:Q8)

In the discussion section following this segment of findings the themes of authenticity and autonomy are explicated as being critical to teacher well-Being.

Impediments and enhancements to teacher well-Being

Although it seemed the group had established teacher well-Being as a separate entity, defining its characteristics proved nebulous and complicated. Pansy suggested it was something that needed to be protected and stored away when she referred to her “*little box*” (M1:Q8) of well-Being. Daphne suggested it was “*balance*” (M1:Q7) but did not make clear the nature of this balance. However, the teachers did tend to explain this concept through a kind of reductionism by identifying factors which impeded their work place well-Being. In other words, by identifying what teacher well-Being was *not*.

Pressure

In the following excerpt Poppy responds to my questioning as to how teacher well-Being differs from that of a wife or mother. She appears to begin by making reference to an aspect of responsibility to her pupils, and then shifts to describe the pressures of the work-place:

They're not yours, and there are other people involved and there's pressure so you have to do – what were we saying at the meeting last week where the Minister was up saying all the key competencies and how fantastic they are and you have to do this and that and – oh, hang on – we'll just chuck in all these national standards on top of you, you know? So you've got all these other pressures as well. (Poppy, M1:Q8)

Distractions

Here, Hyacinth appears to make a connection between the times she feels most well and those she is able to bring her full awareness to what is required, without distractions:

I think too it comes down to what we were saying before about when you feel the most well, or when you can focus on something solely and unfortunately you can't – well you can with teaching I suppose it's easier when you are younger and you don't have other things to do, but as you go on in your life you get more things to do and you don't focus on it [teaching] so you always feel slightly – not quite in the game and that effects how you feel about how you are performing because you care – because you care for the kids. (Hyacinth, M1:Q8)

For several of the teachers, distractions seemed to occur in the form of emails, and what they perceived to be a continual requirement to check their inbox:

You're always thinking oh, have I had another email come in that I need to respond to? Last year for me it was constant. It was more about the stuff you needed to have for them [management] then it was about teaching these beautiful children in front of you, you know? And I was like, hang on a second, what am I supposed to be doing ... I want to be teaching these kids ... I'm going to spend about an hour one day just deleting my old emails cause my inbox is like 450 emails now and about 50 of them I haven't opened cause I know they are things that I need or want to keep but not actually things that I needed at that moment – but it's going to take such a huge amount of time. (Lucy, M1:Q8)

Like Fern said to me, oh you should be having your laptop on and then throughout the day just be checking the emails sort of thing and I'm like NO, actually I'm chasing my tail now trying to make sure Cody is actually at his desk doing some work, and it's really hard. (Hyacinth, M1:Q8)

Yes, I've had my hand slapped various times because I haven't checked my email. (Pansy, M1:Q8)

Time

Lack of time

Along with what the teachers seemed to identify as pressure and distractions, time, or rather, the perceived lack of time was identified as a major impediment to their professional well-Being. The following conversation is from our fourth focus group meeting, as we planned for mindfulness based classroom activities. Here, the teachers were expressing concern over how they would fit their activities into what they see as an already over-crowded timetable. They also expressed concern for what they viewed as their students being hurried, and referred for a second time to their own perceived lack of autonomy as 'hoops to jump':

Lucy: I'm serious. I don't have 10 minutes in my day for them [students] to stand still. It's so intense.

Laurie: So what does that tell you about your well-Being?

Fern: It's rush, rush, rush for us, and it's rush, rush, rush for the kids.

Laurie: But where's the well-Being for the kids?

Lucy: There isn't any.

Laurie: The curriculum addresses well-Being. We are meant to teach it.

Pansy: *If you could hear the kids' speeches this morning. One of the subjects was 'Five day weekends and two day weeks', and that's what they brought up – they're rushing, and the teachers are grumpy.*

Hyacinth: *I feel like I'm pushing people through a sausage machine – and that's not the way I want to teach.*

Rose: *So how can we change?*

Hyacinth: *What can we do? We've got boxes to tick and hoops to jump.* (M4:C1)

For Pansy, one of the effects of an over-crowded timetable seemed to be the loss of fun, as expressed through a kind of lamentation for how things used to be: *"I often say to people the fun's gone. The fun time that you used to be able to fit in and do all these arty, crafty things is gone"* (Pansy, M4:C1).

In a similar manner, Rose, an experienced teacher of more than 25 years, appears to attribute the pressure to compact much more into a day (than in times past), as a characteristic of modern day teaching:

I think probably it's related to the time we are now teaching. I spoke to Daphne about this this morning. Going back 30 years there wasn't the need to compact so much into a day. I think we were possibly more mindful back then. We had those times where we just sat with children and we talked to children whereas now it just seems as though it is constant – you have to finish this, this, this and this ... (M7:C2)

Here, Rose offers an apparent explanation as to one reason for the current work pressure:

I believe what's happened is that we've gone to four terms and once we went to four terms we tried to fit in exactly what we used to in a 15 week term in 10. And when you went to four terms you had another full set of planning ... we just made the whole lot busier in the end ... (M4:C1)

Time out

Classroom related tasks did not appear to stop at the school gate. School time responsibilities were reported to run into personal time on a regular basis and for Sally, this appeared as the norm rather than the exception. However, when she decided to suspend one responsibility one evening, her personal and professional well-Being seemed to be affected in a positive way:

Sally: I tried something the other night. I didn't do any of my marking at home, I confess. And the next day I felt so good. I felt a tiny bit guilty, but I don't know, I just was a totally different person all day... I actually relaxed at home and I didn't sit for two solid hours marking writing. And the next day I was just [pause] happy.

Laurie: And what did you do instead of marking the writing?

Sally: I watched the Olympics. Not that I would do that all the time, but every now and then ... I off-loaded all my school stuff for once and forgot about it and it felt so good... I can pinpoint that as one time in the last weeks where I have been relaxed.
(M4:C1)

Taking school work home was something Hyacinth appeared to recognise as having a run-on effect for the families of the teachers concerned. Here, she is discussing the experiences of the teachers she works closely with, who are taking school work home to complete: *“Not one of them has a partner who is happy about the way they are working so hard and all of them feel guilty that they're not spending time with their families* (M4:C1). But for Rose, taking work home appeared to be something teachers just did, and something she had been well acquainted with for some considerable time:

In some ways, it hasn't changed that much. If I go back 20 years, even 15 years when I had all the kids [own children at home]. I would be working till midnight writing reports and because you couldn't do them on the computer, I used to start at nine o'clock at night and finish after midnight. Sometimes I'd be going until two in the morning because we actually had to repeat and rewrite every report that had an error in it... (M4:C1)

Time off

While lack of time, structuring of the daily time-table, and the length of the school term had been identified as impediments in professional well-Being, time off, that is, an extended period of time away from the school work-place, was identified by Pansy as a definite enhancement to her well-Being, both personal and professional. In this conversation she is responding to my invitation to isolate a certain time, or year, or class, where she felt she had reached a state of teacher well-Being:

Pansy: I think possibly when I came back last year after having that term off, I think my well-Being for teaching, for the job, for the way I regarded other things – the things that used to really bug me, changed. I just had that time away from everything and I realised that there is life outside teaching. But coming back in to it I came back refreshed, with a totally different attitude, and even though the kids were quite tough, they were just delights. So even though it's not all roses, you can still have that well-Being state within that time.

Laurie: You've identified especially the fact that you had time off, which makes me wonder what was it about that that led you to have that well-Being state?

Pansy: It was a time where time didn't matter. Whereas at school everything is structured – this time, this time, this time – the whole day is time orientated ... you've got to get it done in this time and this time and this time. For basically 14 weeks I had no constraints on me as far as time.

Hyacinth: Had you been doing things that were just for you? Just for you? Things you loved?

Pansy: Yes – I took my watch off. I don't think I wore my watch for 10 weeks.

Poppy: That would have been hard to do.

Pansy: But that's what I do every holiday. I take it off, and that's it. (M1:Q8)

Time for a change

While Pansy identified time off as making a difference to her personal and professional well-Being, for Lucy, a change in both the age group she taught and in management responsibilities seemed to bring about a change in her professional well-Being:

Teaching the little kids – they're so much more excited about school you know. You go in there and they're just buzzing to see you and it's much more – it makes you feel good". (M1:Q8)

In this conversation, she shares the effect of a change in management duties:

Lucy: For me, it's different. Like for this year it's about not being a syndicate leader. So essentially I dropped something. You know it might not be a whole term off, but it's different – like there is something that has gone from the bucket. The bucket is now just full instead of over-flowing.

Laurie: Maybe change is good for well-Being?

Hyacinth: I think it's actually [pause] what's that saying? When things don't add up, try subtracting.

Lucy: A change is as good as a holiday.

Laurie: A change is as good as a rest. My Mum used to say that!

Pansy: In teaching you can almost get into a rut where you just do and you just keep on in this rut and you can't get out of it. And it's only when you make that big leap or conscious decision to get out of that rut that you actually realise you are in it – or that you've been in it. (M1:Q8)

While change may be said to enhance well-Being, as appears to be the experience for Pansy and Lucy, it may also be accompanied by periods of discomfort, even detachment from what may be considered as the authentic self. Here, Sally, a third year teacher, is describing how she felt having recently changed not only schools, but cities:

But the person I was last term, and where I am now is just so far apart ... I really was not myself last term ... overwhelmed and I think I doubted myself and I hadn't doubted myself like that before ... I just lacked the rapport with people here to off-load how I was feeling ... (M1:Q8)

However, it may be that what began as an apparently difficult experience, eventually led to self-awareness, a revelation of the authentic self, and eventually, present moment acceptance: *"I'm slowly letting my guard down now, and letting people know who I am ... if you just take little snippets of the day, actually, I'm okay..."* (M1:Q8).

Brain chatter

In the previous section, the non-cerebral 'being' mode of mind was identified as one characteristic of Well-being experiences for the teachers. For most teachers, brain chatter, that is, the incessant *"thinking about the next moment or tomorrow or yesterday or what I have to do next"* (Lucy, M2:C2) appeared as an impediment to their well-Being and seemed to be most prominent *"when troubles keep me awake at night"* (Hyacinth, M5:C3). Here, Rose uses the analogy of a vessel unable to anchor as she describes her sleepless night: *"I didn't sleep at all last night – my anchor must have been right over the other side of the ocean [thinking] just never stopped"* (M5:C3). During one meeting, as we discussed the types of thinking that keeps us awake, I became aware of laughter from some of the teachers. The following excerpt appears to highlight in a somewhat amusing manner, the power of the 'story-teller' mind:

Laurie: So, when we're awake at three o'clock in the morning, and we're ruminating and we're stressing ... [aware of giggling]. I've hit a nerve?

Lucy: Only because at three o'clock this morning I woke up thinking that one of Fern's puppies might have crawled out of its basket and because it's so cold it might freeze to death.

Laurie: There you go! You made a story and then the rest of you fully expected to believe it.

Lucy: *But I did a “calm down Lucy, the puppy will be fine”*
[breathes deeply].

In the discussion section which follows these findings, I examine this issue of ‘brain chatter’ in some detail. I explain why having some understanding of the functionality of the brain is important to our well-Being, as explicated by Bolte Taylor (2009), a Harvard Medical School neuroscientist who suffered a stroke which affected the left hemisphere of her brain.

Reciprocity

Recurrent throughout the findings was the theme of reciprocity, particularly as it occurred between teachers and their students. For the most part, this was evidenced through students reflecting their teacher’s state of being. The teachers appeared to recognise the seemingly commanding position they held within their classrooms when they referred to themselves as “*feeding the atmosphere*” (Lucy, M1:Q8), and “*setting the tone*” (Lucy, M4:C2). The following excerpts appear to illustrate the teacher as “*making the weather*” (Hyacinth, M1:Q8):

Moment-to-moment and day-to-day, if your well-Being isn’t good then the classroom isn’t there ... and if you are quiet and calm then the classroom is quiet and calm – and if you’re noisy and charismatic the children are noisy and charismatic ... (Lucy, M1:Q8)

You’re stressed, so the kids are stressed. You’re in a grumpy, so the kids are naughty. (Lucy, M4:C2)

So you’re busy, busy, busy and the kids are busy, busy, busy.
(Sally, M4:C2)

It’s rush, rush, rush for us, and it’s rush, rush, rush for the kids.
(Fern, M4:C1)

When some teachers appeared to address their own well-Being by selecting activities for their class that they themselves identified as personally enjoyable (such as dancing, yoga, sketching and singing), the children generally seemed to respond by mirroring the teacher’s enjoyment: “*Heaps of my children like*

dancing, because I like dancing” (Sally, M6:C3). Similarly, when an activity was chosen by the teacher which she determined her students would enjoy, the reciprocity appeared clear: *“It makes me feel heaps better, because when the class are calm and quiet, I’m calmer and quieter, because when they are feeling good, I am feeling good, and we’re not stressing out about things”* (Lucy: DB:Q4).

Summary

The findings in this section presented some distinctions between personal and professional well-Being, as referenced to the various roles assumed in the lives of the participants. The ‘authentic self’, that is, the self not defined by roles, proved difficult to isolate, although participants indicated authenticity was aligned with autonomy – the greater the autonomy, the greater the sense of self. Pressure, distractions (particularly in the form of emails), time (perceived as lack of time and an over-crowded timetable), and brain chatter (incessant thinking) were considered impediments to professional well-Being. Professional well-Being appeared to be enhanced by time out and time off from teaching duties, a change in teaching positions and responsibilities, and activities the teachers themselves identified as personally meaningful and enjoyable. Reciprocity appeared as a mutual reflection in tone and mood between a teacher and her students, and was identified as a significant factor in teacher well-Being.

Discussion

well-Being and the authentic self: The roles we play

Hermeneutic phenomenology, in the context of this research, is an essence seeking method of inquiry which looked to reveal the lived experiences of my participants. In many ways, it was a soulful passage, an interpretative journey to the heart of my participants, through my own self-reflexivity. This proved to be a fluid, dynamic process of continuously peeling back layers by asking questions and seeking answers in order to reveal the core of my participants' ontological perspectives. Sometimes, what finally appears as a most significant and ultimately obvious theme is gleaned initially as the tiniest of insights, which could easily be passed over as inconsequential. Such is the case with the super-ordinate theme of authenticity. Although rarely addressed overtly by the participants, issues of authenticity emerged as a major finding due to the relationship between the 'authentic self', autonomy and well-Being. Consequently, a significant portion of this discussion is given over to the super-ordinate theme of authenticity.

Authenticity and role playing: The many faces of 'me'

For some participants, the assumption of certain roles in life was viewed as a choice, as pointed out by Lucy in reference to her teaching, "*it's a job ... it's your work ... it's what you do for a living*" (M1:Q8). For others, their roles were defined by their gender as "*the female nurturing type role*" (Pansy, M1:Q1) of wives, partners, mothers and daughters. However, for all participants, the distinction between their personal and professional roles created a distinction in well-Being states. Personal well-Being was compartmentalised further as mother, partner and daughter well-Being, each independent and subject to fluctuation: "*my well-being changes in those roles*" (Daphne, M2:C2).

This seeming multiplicity of roles, each with a separate well-Being, led me to contemplate the notion of authenticity, specifically, what effect role playing had on the authentic self. It is accepted that certain people will fulfil certain roles in this life. Yet what is important, according to Tolle (2005) is not really what function you fulfil in this world, but whether you identify with your role to the extent that you *become* that role:

When you play roles, you become unconscious. When you catch yourself playing a role, that recognition creates a space between you and the role. It is the beginning of freedom from the role ... The pre-established roles may give you a somewhat comforting sense of identity, but ultimately you lose yourself in them ... Authentic human interactions become impossible when you lose yourself in a role. (p. 91)

When I remarked to the teachers, *“Strip away the roles – the teacher you, the mother you, and the partner you, and the essence of what is left, is you”* and *“How important is it in this life to be authentic?”* (M1:Q7) I was referring to what I see as the authentic self – the Being in well-Being. However, my frame of reference is uniquely mine: the changes in my life, with the sudden and unexpected passing of my husband, and my mother three months before that, had in many ways forced me to encounter head on the essence of my authentic self. No longer a wife or a daughter, no longer defined by these roles, I felt displaced and disconnected to what had been my life, as this personal journal entry written a month after my husband passed, reflects:

All that has defined me, all I thought I knew about my life, the familiar patterns, the plot, the predictability is gone. Someone has picked me up off the pages of my life and set me in a completely new book. I do recognise some of the characters (although the two main ones are gone), the setting looks familiar, but the plot – the plot is unrecognisable to me. I thought I had the story line all worked out. I thought I could read the symbols and signs. But in an instant all that has changed, and all I knew about myself, my life, has gone. Who am I? Where do I fit in this new place? I know nothing anymore. I have no idea where I start and where Richard ends. I have no idea about my story. I am a poor, little, misplaced character, floundering in a foreign novel, and I can't even read the chapter headings, let alone the paragraphs. (PJ: 06.12.10.)

My own lived experience ultimately led me to discover that the essence of my true self was something infinitely greater than any role I had identified with. A particularly poignant incident occurred a year after my husband passed away when I reconnected with a childhood friend from the time I lived in Canada, my birth place. My friend happened to have kept the many letters I had sent after immigrating to New Zealand, some 40 years before. These letters held clues – they served as a kind of time capsule, revealing the thoughts, dreams, aspirations

and beliefs and philosophies of a much younger Laurie. What struck me as I read through the letters, was the way I was able to reconnect with what appeared to me as the essence of who I was, who it appeared I had always been. My losses had left me unable to identify any longer with the roles I had played in my life, but the letters seemed to unearth a connection with what I believe is the ‘true’ self – my selfhood, void of identification with roles. Above all, the letters spoke of my belief that no matter what, everything would always turn out just fine. For me, these letters written so long ago evidenced that ‘soul string’ connection with the same ineffable source that seemed to be holding me now. They were a reminder of the authentic me, the ‘I’ in my life, and the Being in my well-Being. Some might say these letters merely represented the optimism and naivety of youth, uncluttered by the challenges that lie ahead. Indeed, it may be argued we are in some ways unfettered by life’s challenges if we are fortunate enough to have loving parents, a stable and safe home environment, and our basic needs met. However, what seemed most evident to me was the way the letters acted as a tangible reminder of who I was at heart; as though, I held in my hands, once again, the essence of Laurie and my place in this world.

Authenticity and the existentialist

As stated previously, based on my personal experience and as a result of this study, I believe there is a legitimate claim to be had for the notion of authenticity or an authentic ‘selfhood’ as the unique, individual nature at the core of each person’s being. However, a breadth of historical knowledge which offers a somewhat different view can be found in the philosophical tradition of existentialism.

Authenticity appears as a core idea among such major figures in the existentialist tradition as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Camus. Wartenberg (2008) states that an important belief shared by existentialists is that individuality is a fundamental value of human life, and as such, rather than submit to norms of ‘the mass’ or ‘the crowd’ we should aim to develop our own special qualities – our own uniqueness. At first glance this belief does not appear vastly different from Palmer’s (2000) assertion that “everything in the universe has a nature ... our deepest calling is to grow into our

own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be” (pp. 15, 16), or my belief in the essence of a true self at the core of our being. Yet, some existentialists reject the notion that humans have a predetermined, specific nature, rather, through our own choices, they assert, we are free to create our own nature. One of the most famous existentialist catchphrases is ‘existence precedes essence’ (Sartre, 1957) which is to say that humans, unlike other entities in the world, are free to create themselves as they so desire, and as such, are void of an essence or nature given to them from outside themselves (Wartenberg, 2008). Therefore, existentialists maintain that living a fulfilling life requires coming to experience our true or authentic self, which is the one lived in full acknowledgement of our own freedom as a human being to choose how to conduct our life:

For in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be. To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen; for we are unable ever to choose the worse. What we choose is always the better; and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all. (Sartre, 1957, pp. 291-292)

Perhaps this is something Pansy recognised and affirmed for herself when she referred to being authentic and having a good state of well-Being by protecting that ‘little box of well-Being’: *“not letting any influences from outside [come] within that little box – protecting your own well-Being until you feel comfortable enough to actually open the door”* (M1:Q8). It is not possible to say categorically, but in the midst of our discussion about identity, roles, authenticity and well-Being, Pansy speaks of opening the ‘door’. This appears noteworthy on two counts. First, it seems to imply two separate entities simultaneously operating as one: the protector, or ‘door opener’, and second, it makes reference to well-Being or ‘true self’ – that which is prized, precious and worthy of protection by being stored away. Although the true self remains hidden, far from being inauthentic, Pansy chooses when the time is right to disclose the authentic self. In other words, Pansy chooses what Sartre would term ‘the better’, and her choice, Sartre would claim, is ‘better for all’.

In much the same way, Daphne protects her well-Being by playing different roles. When she revealed, *“I think I am very clever at that. I am a different person when I am a teacher than when I am a mum, than when I am a partner, than when I am a daughter”* (M1:Q7), it appears she is referring to the ‘authentic Daphne’ as the clever one who chooses to play roles as necessary for ‘the better’. When we consider Sartre’s notion of ‘the better’ in relation to both Daphne’s and Rose’s role playing comments, a significant insight may be gleaned: both these women refer to an ultimate ‘I’ – the supreme self, the ‘choice maker’, unable to choose the ‘worse’. Sartre would claim this ‘I’ to be an act of free will, yet as discussed, I maintain this ‘I’ to be the essence of ‘true’ self – an emerging dimension of consciousness, interminably greater than any role assumed for whatever purpose believed to be chosen.

The ever-present ‘I’ in my life

For some, finding the inner or true self occurs as a process of surrendering to a time of great adversity. Lesser (2005) terms this the Phoenix Process, “allowing the pain to break us open, and then being reborn – stronger, wiser, and kinder” (p. 55). In a way, it is a process of being broken down in order to be broken open. This appeared to have been the experience of contemporary spiritual teachers Eckhart Tolle and Parker Palmer.

Tolle (2004/2008) describes ‘true’ nature as the omnipresent *I am*: “consciousness in its pure state prior to the identification with form” (p. 5). For Tolle, this awakening came in the midst of a lifetime of continuous anxiety interposed with suicidal depression. He describes the moment he became aware of *I* in his life:

The most loathsome thing of all, however, was my own existence ... I could feel that a deep longing for annihilation, for nonexistence, was now becoming much stronger than the instinctive desire to continue to live. “I cannot live with myself any longer.” This was the thought that kept repeating itself in my mind. Then suddenly I became aware of what a peculiar thought it was. “Am I one or two? If I cannot live with myself, there must be two of me: the ‘I’ and the ‘self’ that ‘I’ cannot live with.” “Maybe,” I thought, “only one of them is real.” (pp. 3-4)

Tolle (2004/2008) goes on to explain that the intense pressure of suffering must have forced his consciousness to withdraw from identification with the deeply anguished self. This withdrawal was so complete, that the suffering self immediately collapsed and only his true nature, and an on-going undercurrent of peace, remained.

In a similar manner, Palmer (2000) writes of his personal encounter with the destructiveness of depression:

Twice in my forties, I spent endless months in the snake pit of the soul. Hour by hour, day by day, I wrestled with the desire to die, sometimes so feeble in my resistance that I “practiced” ways of doing myself in. I could feel nothing except the burden of my own life and the exhaustion, the apparent futility, of trying to sustain it. (p. 58)

Palmer’s ‘rebirth’ came after a realisation he had been living an inauthentic or “ungrounded life, living at an altitude that was inherently unsafe ... for a long time, the ‘oughts’ had been the driving force in my life ... as a result, important parts of the life I was living were not mine to live, and thus were bound to fail” (Palmer, p. 67). He writes of eventually coming to an awareness that depression was the hand of a friend, pressing him down to the ground, where it was safe to stand: “the ground of my own truth, my own nature ...” (p. 67)

For both Tolle and Palmer the change process, the discovery of the true self, occurred as intensely painful, and all but impossible to bear. For others, however, the process occurs less dramatically, but occurs nonetheless. Lesser (2005) writes that for many women, what she terms the Phoenix Process begins when they admit to themselves that they are tired of doing things only to please other people: “They realise that they have little respect for their own needs and their own opinions” (p. 57). It appeared that for some of the teacher participants in this study, such a realisation was taking place.

Authenticity and autonomy: The puppetry of teaching

Numerous references were made by participants to having to perform, or being controlled in some way by management personnel. The following excerpts

highlight how participants see themselves as manipulated, regulated and somewhat immobilised within their profession:

... in the classroom you've got hoops to jump through all the time ... you've got to consider not only all the 35 other well-beings, but the controls that are pulling the strings all the time ... (Pansy, M1:Q8)

... we'll just chuck in all these national standards on top of you ... (Poppy, M1:Q8)

... so you always feel slightly – not quite in the game and that effects how you feel about how you are performing ... (Hyacinth, M1:Q8)

... I've had my hand slapped various times ... (Pansy, M1:Q8)

... we've got boxes to tick and hoops to jump ... (Hyacinth, M4:C1)

... it's like being on automatic pilot – you get in there and it just goes – [whistles] and at three o'clock – you're back on manual basically. (Pansy, M1:Q8)

Through their use of puppetry and circus metaphors, the teachers indicate an awareness of their perceived powerlessness and subjection. Despite this apparent awareness, however, Pansy maintained that it was only through hindsight, when she decided to take a term off from teaching, was she able to see with clarity that which had previously been shrouded: she had been in a rut. In making a “*big leap or conscious decision to get out of that rut*” (M1:Q8) she was able to come back into teaching refreshed and “*with a totally different attitude*” (M1:Q8). This raises a significant issue around awareness – simply because we may use the language of awareness, such as in the case with these teachers, it does not necessarily mean that that awareness has been internalised enough to be acted upon. Or it may mean that one is not in a position to act upon that awareness in the way Pansy could, by taking time off. Yet even seemingly small acts of autonomy appeared to ultimately have a significant effect on teacher well-Being.

Authenticity, autonomy and well-Being

When Sally decided to watch the Olympics instead of marking books, she was making a choice which could be interpreted as an act of autonomy, albeit in a seemingly inconsequential one. For Sally, watching the Olympics was not only something she liked, it was an extension of herself. Sally greatly enjoyed fitness activities; she played sports, went to the gym and frequently ran. It seems possible that in choosing to watch the Olympics, Sally was addressing her authenticity, her true nature, which resulted in an act of autonomy:

“I just was a totally different person all day... I actually relaxed at home and I didn’t sit for two solid hours marking writing. And the next day I was just [pause] happy ... I off-loaded all my school stuff for once and forgot about it and it felt so good... I can pinpoint that as one time in the last weeks where I have been relaxed” (M4:C1).

Similarly, Pansy shared how one day she decided to forgo her usual classroom timetable. She had previously stated the fun had gone out of teaching, *“The fun time that you used to be able to fit in all those arty, crafty things is gone”* (M4:C1). On this occasion, however, she decided to create some fun by abandoning the regular schedule for reasons she deemed important – because she *needed* to (the bold typeface emphasis is Pansy’s):

Pansy: ... we did Picasso pictures and we did all sorts of things that weren’t the normal thing and I just thought if I don’t write for today what does it matter? So we spent more time with reading - doing things they like - they had more time on the computers and they did art. They went out for a run.

Laurie: And what did that do for you?

*Pansy: Well I felt much better. After the last two days of parent interviews till goodness knows when and the stress is so high that to come back today I thought this is what I am going to do. This is what **I need** to do. (M6:C3)*

Among several strategies ‘ordinary people’ judged as helpful in improving their overall well-being, Henry (2006) cites learning to say no, to take on less, to clarify priorities and be present-centred as effective traits in attaining balance and

mastery of one's life. In many ways, this appeared to be what Pansy had done when she openly stated her decision to alter the timetable. This decision was based on what could be seen as her needs for balance and mastery, and came as a significant disclosure for Pansy. In stating this, she was admitting to breaking from her usual 'hoop jumping' and in so doing, it could be argued, was honouring her authentic self. As a consequence of this seemingly autonomous act, she felt "*much better.*"

Returning to the existentialist philosophical tradition, the 19th century German philosopher Nietzsche (2001/2003) posed an interesting if not an unusual test for determining whether an act was authentic. He asked:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence ... the eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' ... 'Do you want this again and innumerable times again?' (p. 194)

According to Wartenberg (2008) Nietzsche's idea was that the outcome of the test which he termed the "Eternal Recurrence of the Same" (p. 138) would be an action that was authentic. In other words, the authentic option is one we could live with, eternally.

Although, as stated, Nietzsche's hypothesis is an unconventional check on authenticity, it does bear significance to this study. For it appears possible that when teachers honour their authentic selves, when they address their true nature by making decisions *they can live with*, by selecting activities and tending to their own needs for reasons they deem significant, they feel autonomous, and feeling autonomous appears to heighten well-Being (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012). But more than this, it seems when teacher well-Being is enhanced, the flow on effect to pupils is considerable (Duckworth, Quinn & Seligman, 2009; Intrator, 2005; Klusmann, Kunter, Tratwein, Ludtke & Baumert, 2008). In short, in honouring one's authenticity, it is quite probable autonomy is heightened,

which in turn, enhances well-Being. And well-Being seems to be ‘contagious’, particularly in the classroom, as discussed below.

Reciprocity: The classroom as the mirror

There seemed little doubt that the teachers recognised themselves as highly influential in creating the tone in their own classrooms. They referred to themselves as tone setters, atmosphere feeders and weather makers. They identified their own mood as being mirrored in their students; they stated that when they rushed, the children rushed; when they were noisy, so too were the children; when they were stressed, this was reflected as stressed students; and a calm teacher seemed to create a sense of calm in the students. It appeared clear that what the students saw in their teacher, they generally reflected back at her, something I witnessed in my classroom observations, and discuss further in the CORE section of the findings. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that teachers have great reason to invest in their own well-Being state, given this may be reflected back through their students.

The love mirror

With reference to my theory of well-Being capital,⁶ it seems advantageous that teachers look to create experiences which enhance the mutual interchange of positive emotions between themselves and their students. In so doing, they are not only investing in their own well-Being state, but equally, helping to build the well-Being states of their pupils and ultimately enhancing the atmosphere of the classroom.

This idea of mirroring positivity seems to be supported by Fredrickson’s (2013) theory of “positivity resonance” (p. 17), or what she defines as love. Fredrickson (2013) claims love is the supreme emotion, and contends it is far more ubiquitous than we imagine, simply because love is connection. According to Fredrickson,

⁶ My theory states that Well-being experiences, that is, experiences which may induce various forms of positive emotions may build well-Being capital. It is possible to save or accrue ‘capital’ through positive experiences which are then ‘deposited’ into the well-Being state. However, challenging and traumatic circumstances may also build capital (see Section One Discussion for an in-depth exploration of this theory). As the deposits grow, so too does the interest, so there is an accumulation of capital at the ready to be drawn upon as necessary, for example, in times of great adversity, everyday trials, or simply when you feel the need for ‘a little beauty’.

when a connection is made between two people, respective feelings, actions and impulses align and become synchronized. A powerful back and forward energy arises, much like an electrical charge, and in that moment, a deeply interpersonal resonance different from any other positive emotion is created: “That’s because within micro-moments of love, your own positivity, your own warmth and openness, evoke – and is simultaneously evoked by – the warmth and openness emanating from the other person” (Fredrickson, 2013, p. 18). This means that love is not only reserved for those we are in close relationships with, according to Fredrickson (2013), but all we make contact with during the micro-moments of positivity resonance.

The experiences of Ashton-Warner (1963), in many ways, seem to align with Fredrickson’s (2013) positivity resonance theory. Ashton-Warner taught in remote, rural New Zealand schools in the 1930s-50s in what was referred to as the ‘Native’ School system (later known as the Māori School System until its abolition in 1968) (Middleton, 2009). In her book *Teacher* (1963), Ashton-Warner chronicles her teaching experiences, likening the reciprocity of the teacher/student relationship to marriage:

When I teach people I marry them. I found this out last year when I began the orchestra. To do what I wanted them to do they had need to be like me. More than that. They had to be part of me ... There is quietly occurring in my infant room a grand espousal. To bring them to do what I want them to do they come near me, I draw them near, in body and in spirit ... (pp. 209-211).

To some extent, this type of ‘drawing near’ was found in my classroom observations, as teachers and pupils interacted during their mindfulness based activities. In the CORE section of this chapter, I present some examples of the specific kinds of mindfulness based activities which appeared to build positivity between themselves and their pupils, while simultaneously enhancing well-Being. Many of these activities could be said to be positivity resonance building opportunities – moments in time which held the ability to mirror love connections within the classroom.

Time

The many faces of time

When the teachers spoke of time, that is, their conceptualised awareness of past, present and future, their references appeared somewhat paradoxical. In Section One, the findings revealed how when recounting personal Well-being experiences, participants referred to time as rather inconsequential. Common place across all experiences was a recognition that time did not particularly matter. They spoke of “*being in the moment*” (Sally, M1:Q1); being “*focussed on what’s happening then not what happened yesterday or what’s going to happen tomorrow*” (Daphne, M1:Q1); and “*being totally present in what was happening then – not thinking about anything else, not looking to the future*” (Hyacinth, M1:Q1). When Pansy took a term off from teaching, ‘time’ appeared easily disregarded – she literally took her watch off and did not wear it for 10 weeks: “*That’s what I do every holiday. I take it off, and that’s it*” (M1:Q8).

Yet, when referring to their professional lives, the characteristics of time became many and varied. Time was seen as a rare commodity: “*I don’t have ten minutes in my day ...*” (Lucy, M4:C1); a constraining and restraining force: “*... at school everything is structured – this time, this time, this time, the whole day is time orientated ... you’ve got to get it done in this time, and this time, and this time ...*” (Pansy, M1:Q8); a personal reward for working hard: “*I didn’t sit for two solid hours marking...*” (Sally, M4:C1); a respite in routine: “*When I came back last year after having time off ... I just had time away from everything ...*” (Pansy, M1:Q8); and as a catalyst for change: “*... this year, it’s about not being a syndicate leader ...*” (Lucy, M1:Q8). However it is viewed, it appears everything is referenced against time, and yet, paradoxically, it is only ever now.

No time like the present

School life appeared characterised by a total and complete identification with time, and primarily, what the teachers perceived as a lack of time. Racing against the clock to meet deadlines, fulfil timetable requirements and the constant distractions of incoming emails, appeared to take their attention away from the present, and led Lucy to entreat, “*... hang on a second, what am I supposed to be doing ... I want to be teaching these kids*” (M1:Q8). This raises the question: is it possible to eliminate ‘time’ or at least the constraints of time, remain present, and still function in a world which seems to pivot around time? Tolle (2005)

suggests that it would be almost impossible to function in a world without clock time, which is the use of time for practical purposes – appointments, trip planning and such. But what is possible, he contends, is the elimination of psychological time, the mind's ceaseless preoccupation with past and future and its willingness to align with the inevitable *isness* of the present.

Time, according to Tolle (2004/2008) is a delusion of the mind, and time and the mind are inseparable: "To be identified with your mind is to be trapped in time: the compulsion to live almost exclusively through memory and anticipation" (p. 48). Yet when we remove time from the mind, it stops. This appeared to be the experience of the teachers when they spoke of 'being in the moment' and being 'totally present' in reference to their Well-being experiences. Accordingly, they were dis-identifying with their minds (Tolle, 2004/2008). Hyacinth captured this when she stated she was "*totally present in what was happening then – not thinking about anything else, not looking to the future*" (M1:Q1).

Time identity: mind identity

Hyacinth, Rose and Lucy expressed difficulty sleeping due to thinking of events that had either occurred throughout that day, sometime in the past, or in what they perceived to be, the future. When Lucy awoke through the night worrying about Fern's puppies being exposed to the cold, she recognised this as a preoccupation with an *imagined* event – she was worrying about something that had not, and in all likelihood, would not happen. In this way, these teachers had become identified with their minds, not only through memory and anticipation, but also, as for Lucy, through playing out an imagined event in what Bolte Taylor (2009) describes as the story-teller portion of the mind.

Bolte Taylor, a Harvard trained brain scientist, experienced a massive stroke in the left hemisphere of her brain, at age 37. Her description of the stroke, her recovery, and the functionality of the right and left brain hemispheres is something I shared with the teachers during our third focus group meeting. I had been moved by Bolte Taylor's story, particularly her courageous recovery, but equally fascinated with her description of the workings of the two brain hemispheres. It struck me that the right hemisphere, as Bolte Taylor (2009)

described it, must be what we access when we practice awareness and presence – it must be where mindfulness arises – the ‘being’ mode of mind:

My right mind is all about the richness of this present moment. It is filled with gratitude for my life and everyone and everything in it ... content, compassionate, nurturing, and eternally optimistic. To my right mind character, there is no judgement of good/bad or right/wrong, so everything exists on a continuum of relativity. It takes things as they are and acknowledges what is in the present ... observations are made without judgement ... [it is] open to the eternal flow whereby I exist at *one* with the universe. It is the seat of my divine mind, the knower, the wise woman, and the observer ... my intuition and consciousness. My right mind is ever present and gets lost in time. (pp. 146-147)

The left hemisphere, by comparison, Bolte Taylor explains is the multitasker – the ‘doing’ mind. This portion of the brain loves performing as many functions as possible at the same time. It is the language centre, it constantly speaks, and through brain chatter keeps us in touch with our own lives, by manifesting our identity as *I am*, a “solid, separate from the whole” (p. 149). Bolte Taylor explains that one of the prominent characteristics of the left hemisphere is its ability to weave stories. It is specifically designed to make sense of the world on minimal amounts of information by taking whatever details it has to work with and crafting them to form a story. The left hemisphere has the ability to fill in the blanks where there are limited facts, manufacture alternative scenarios, and create all manner of ‘what if’ possibilities. Lucy’s puppy story seemed to exemplify the story-telling function of the left hemisphere.

What appears significant is that according to Bolte Taylor, (2009) we can *choose* to “step to the right” (p.147), that is, into the consciousness of the right hemisphere, and in so doing, access the ‘being’ mode of mind. This may be particularly helpful when our minds seem to be stuck in the rumination tunnel, when thinking becomes fixated on endless questions and concerns, which can very quickly lead to negative emotions. Fredrickson (2009) explains the danger associated with rumination this way: “You start out a little bit worried, ruminate, and your worry expands toward a full-blown anxiety attack” (p.164). Similarly, sadness coupled with rumination may bring on symptoms of depression. Once in the rumination rut, it is difficult to think clearly about the situation at hand.

Fredrickson (2009) states that the first step in countering rumination is awareness – spotting the rumination cycle when it is happening, and then choosing to disengage with the incessant stream of thinking. It may be that in ‘stepping to the right’, and accessing the ‘being’ or quietening mode of mind, we are able to counter the potentially damaging effects of rumination.

In her study of strategies for achieving well-being, Henry (2006) found one of the most commonly cited helpful approaches was some form of quietening the mind. Apparently, this strategy seemed to offer an intuitive way to resolve issues and receive guidance, and acted as an alternative to analysis and dialogue. For some, this took the form of physical exercise, such as running, walking, dancing or being in nature, for others this involved some spiritual approach or meditation. In other words, accessing the ‘being’ mode of mind proved particularly helpful as an effective way of achieving lasting personal change. Moreover, Claxton (1998) writes of the liberating potential of the unconscious part of the mind. As a cognitive scientist he has long been fascinated by the gains to be had by deliberately *not* thinking, instead letting an idea ‘come’ to us rather than always striving to plan and to know. Claxton (1998) refers to this as the “gentle art of mental gestation” (p. 69) suggesting insight and inspiration are akin to having a baby – although they need a seed to begin, once the process has begun, it happens by itself through to fruition. Of course, certain conditions are necessary for gestation, but essentially, Claxton (1998) advises the creative idea cannot be hurried or forced; it is ‘organic’ rather than mechanical, and as such, it has to ‘be’ in order to grow. Thus, it appears quietening the mind may prove beneficial as both a strategy for well-being, but additionally, as a critical element in fostering creativity.

Finally, Bolte Taylor (2009) states that unfortunately, as a society, we do not “teach our children that they need to tend carefully the garden of their minds” (p. 152). Ironically, this may mean teaching our children how *not* to think, rather to ‘be’ by developing an awareness which allows the mind to quieten. In a similar vein, Kabat-Zinn (2012) points out, for the most part, we have never been taught during our educational trajectory, by either our parents or teachers, that awareness of thinking could provide perspective and balance, so that thoughts didn’t rule our

lives: awareness is “our only capacity robust enough to balance thinking” (p. 31). Perhaps then, our first duty of responsibility, as teachers, is to teach awareness.

Summary

This section has explored the superordinate theme of authenticity, that is, the essence of ‘true self’, particularly in reference to the multiplicity of roles we identify with in our lives.

For some of the participants in the study, assuming various roles appeared to be one way of guarding or protecting the authentic self. Closely linked to the notion of authenticity is autonomy. For some teachers, it appeared when they chose to honour their authentic selves through acts of autonomy, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, their well-Being state appeared heightened.

In the classroom, students tend to reflect their teacher’s mood and tone, suggesting teachers have great reason to invest in their own well-Being state, given this may be mirrored back to them through their students. Experiencing positive emotions, love being the supreme emotion (Fredrickson, 2013), may be one way to build well-Being capital, which ultimately may lead to an enhanced state of well-Being.

The characteristics of time, that is, the conceptualised awareness of past, present and future, appeared many and varied. In the workplace, time was seen as a scarce commodity, with frequent rushing against clock time to complete required tasks. The tendency to incessantly think in terms of time, and to ruminate on the past and worry over an imagined future, may impede well-Being. Conversely, awareness of our thinking, and some understanding of the functionality of the right and left brain hemispheres may assist us in accessing the ‘being’ mode of mind, thereby helping to break the rumination cycle, and foster both well-being and creativity.

Section Three

CORE

This section presents the lived experiences of the participants, both teachers and students, in relation to mindfulness-based practices. It begins by addressing the connection between the mindfulness construct and well-Being as experienced by the teachers first through a variety of mindfulness-based activities explored during our focus group meetings, and then as their hermeneutic interpretation of the mindfulness phenomenon, evidenced through their design and implementation of activities for their pupils. Although, at first glance, the classroom experiences selected by the teachers appeared varied and wide ranging, analysis revealed their choice of activities to be grounded in some common, core elements of mindfulness practice. Therefore, the use of the word ‘core’ proves a helpful anagram in summarising the essence of thinking behind the classroom practices as teachers aimed for students to Centre, Observe, Recognise, and Express awareness.

The CORE activities are divided into three main categories, and the section concludes with a table identifying the main characteristics of each category and its corresponding teacher planned activity.

Mindfulness and well-Being: Making a connection

In Section One of this chapter I explained that I was struck by how the teachers’ descriptions of well-being reflected many elements of what I had come to understand as the essence of mindfulness; present moment awareness, not being consumed by thoughts, non-judgemental acceptance of the present, and the importance of the present moment. I expressed to the participants my belief that the closeness between well-Being and mindfulness was extraordinary, and you could not have one without the other. To me, their Well-being experiences and my understanding of mindfulness appeared synonymous. Yet as we explored the mindfulness construct the group appeared divided on this point. Some of the participants seemed to view mindfulness more as an identifier to well-Being. For Poppy, Lucy and Fern, mindfulness seemed to be viewed as an optional lens of sorts, through which to identify their well-Being state:

I think well-Being is something you are. You don't need to know you are – you don't need to know you are well – that is something you have. A lot of people probably don't have any idea but in order to identify whether they have well-being, you need to be mindful. But it doesn't necessarily go the other way. (Poppy, M2:C2)

I don't think I'm very mindful at all. I am hoping I will learn to develop that skill in the next few weeks in doing this and talking about it some more. But, I do have an overall state of well-being ... but I wouldn't say that I am mindful – I am always thinking about the next moment or tomorrow or yesterday or what I have to do next. (Lucy, M2:C2)

To me mindfulness is more of an awareness ... you are aware of everything around you or what is happening or your state, whereas well-being is more a – um – whole chemical reaction that continuously changes which is sort of a well-being type thing, but mindfulness is being aware of those [chemical changes]. (Pansy, M2:C2)

For Sahara, however, a New Zealand Māori, mindfulness and well-Being appeared inseparable. Here, she shares her understanding of the concept of hauroa⁷, the Māori philosophy of well-being:

I see well-being and mindfulness as one – the essence of the whole – the whole being. I don't see the mind as being up here [points to head]. Mindfulness happens from the tip of your head to the bottom of your toes ...in the Māori culture spiritual connection is a lot. It is in everything that you do – practices and that on the marae – these things are like spiritual connections – they are intrinsic, you're brought up with it, you grow up learning it. It can align to mindfulness and well-being – there are connections and links that can be made. (Sahara, M2:C2)

Hyacinth appeared to ponder the well-Being/mindfulness connection by attempting to weigh up the relationship almost as a 'chicken/egg' scenario:

⁷ Māori philosophy of well-being includes taha wairua (spiritual), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional), taha tinana (physical well-being) and taha whanau (social well-being) (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Mindfulness contributes to well-being – or maybe well-being contributes to it. Maybe well-being makes you more able to experience mindfulness. Or does the fact that you experience mindfulness influence your well-being? We're back to the old argument – are they the same? (Hyacinth, M2:C2)

She offered the following scenario as a way of expressing the relationship, to which Rose appeared in complete agreement:

Could it be like fitness? I'm not saying it is fitness, but could it be explained in the same term – fitness is a state of your overall health, whereas going for a run is what you do to influence that, and at that moment when you are feeling the burn and it's all good you are experiencing your fitness to the nth degree. Perhaps well-being is your emotional, spiritual, physical fitness and mindfulness is a practice that enhances it. And when you are experiencing it then you are experiencing your wellness to its highest degree – but you are also influencing it as well – you are building it. (Hyacinth, M2:C2)

That's exactly it – a state and a practice ... it's a state you arrive at through the practice you go through. (Rose, M2:C2)

That the group never seemed to reach consensus on the well-Being/mindfulness relationship appeared to add an element of richness to our focus group meetings and diversity to their classroom activities. As they worked their way through a series of mindfulness activities over several weeks, it became apparent that while some activities held an attraction for some teachers, the same activities did not appeal to others. The teachers also appeared particularly adept at altering activities to meet their own personal preferences and that of their students.

Mindfulness in action: The activities

In the *Method: The lived experience* chapter of this thesis I detail the two phase data collection structure of this project. To recap, Phase One was given over to an exploration of the mindfulness phenomenon through a series of focus group meetings. Some of these meetings included the practical exploration of mindfulness meditations as recommended for adults by Kabat-Zinn (2006), such as an eating meditation, mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of the body as a

whole, mindfulness of objects, sounds, thoughts, emotions and mindfulness as pure awareness. Several mindfulness-based activities for children were also explored as recommended by Whitehead (2011), and Kaiser Greenland (2012) in her book *The Mindful Child*, along with several video clips of mindfulness activities being undertaken in classrooms (see Kaiser Greenland, 2010a). I stressed to the teachers that although we were exploring the mindfulness phenomenon through a series of activities, mindfulness itself is a much greater concept than a series of 40 minute classroom lessons. Yet for the purposes of this research, mindfulness-based practices could be thought of as one possible gateway through which to explore the notion of well-being, and the practical application of this would be classroom lessons. With this in mind, I created and positioned in our meeting room three charts which the teachers used as prompts when critiquing what they considered to be the value of each activity:

What fosters well-being?

How do we grow it?

*How can we design and
create well-being for our
students?*

*How can my teaching
practices reflect what I value
about my well-being?*

*What is the relationship
between this mindfulness
based activity and well-being
for **you** and **your** students?*

The charts, along with a simple assessment sheet inviting the participants to record what they believed were the mindfulness elements embedded in each

activity seemed to alert teachers to three broad categories of activities. I term these categories micro, meso and macro mindfulness practices. It is important to note, however, that although the in-class activities have been categorised, this is a somewhat loose classification, and there is considerable overlap between the activity categories.

Micro mindfulness moments

The first category, micro mindfulness moments were sometimes dubbed ‘mini’ mindfulness practices by the teachers. These brief, succinct activities were apparently designed to ‘centre’ children by calming and clearing their minds, and characteristically, did not appear to involve much teacher talk or instruction. Several teachers tended to use such micro moments as transition times between subjects. Many of the teachers had identified mindful breathing as personally worthwhile during our focus group meetings, and it appeared frequently as a micro activity in their classes. In this transcript excerpt, the group are discussing the importance of breathing awareness, just before we begin a breathing meditation:

Hyacinth: *Breath is the spirit in all religions across all cultures, isn't it?*

Laurie: *I think if you wanted to develop a mindfulness practice it would have to start with breathing.*

Lucy: *It's about 90% of us isn't it that don't breathe properly?*

Rose: *I worked with a teacher once who had to re-train herself to breathe because she had all sorts of problems and that's what happens sometimes with children you know – their breathing is so shallow and doesn't it relate to hyperventilation?*

Lucy: *I get busy sometimes and I think I don't breathe at all.*

Pansy: *Often teachers who lose their voices, it's the breathing – it's not right. They are breathing from up here [points to upper chest] rather from down here [points to stomach].*

Of the 13 in-class lessons I observed, nine featured breathing awareness at some stage in the lesson. During my first observation of Sally and her Year 3 and 4 class, a micro mindfulness moment consisted of bringing the children to the mat between mathematics and reading times to participate in what Sally called “*deep belly breathing*”. She explained this was a time when she wanted her class to “*focus on clearing their minds and just know what they are doing there and then, before rushing chaotically through to the next thing*”. She stated she wanted the children to “*forget everything they’ve done throughout the day, and just for a couple of minutes just really focus on their breathing*” (Sally, O:1). The children appeared to have been previously instructed in their breathing technique, for they quickly found a personal space, and all but one chose to lie down, some positioning their hands on the stomachs, I assumed in order to feel the rise and fall of the breath. Sally later questioned the children as to what they were thinking when they were practicing their breathing. The children’s responses tended toward the use of verbs such as floating, weaving, drifting. One boy explained he was thinking about nothing as he was so relaxed, while another child explained she was thinking about being in Samoa, as that was her country of birth. All children appeared to willingly participate.

Pansy’s Year 5 and 6 students also practiced mindful breathing as a transitory activity between subjects. However, in this class I observed several children who appeared restless and less willing to participate. During this session, Pansy reprimanded one boy for disturbing the other children, and at least three other children appeared continuously disruptive by moving into the space of others, talking and appearing to ignore the teacher’s requests to respect others. During our de-brief session, Pansy remarked that getting the children to a place of being able to be still was very challenging. She asked, “*What do you do – do you just put up with the rubbish? ... Part of it is about respect – they don’t respect themselves so they don’t respect others*” (Pansy, DB:2). Yet later, when I met with five students from this class for our focus group interview, I was struck by how they appeared to value this activity, enough to practice at home. Here, we are discussing the relaxing effect of mindful breathing:

Tina: *I was not tired [last night] because we had a babysitter, so I just laid in my bed, on my back, with my eyes closed, hands on my belly. I counted my breathing. I breathed in one and counted to one, and out one.*

Kyle: *Some people count sheep.*

Tina: *Ya, but I didn't do that so the only thought that was in my head was about counting.*

[Candy explains how she practices her breathing by counting, and adds that she joins her thumbs together, and makes a circle. Like Tina, she practices her breathing in bed].

Laurie: *How do you feel when you do that? When you've emptied out your mind and there are no thoughts and there's only counting and soft belly breathing. How do you feel in yourself?*

Tina: *It helps me get to bed 'cause it's hard for me to go to sleep 'cause it's noisy – it's my brothers and sisters. I try to go to sleep but it's hard.*

Laurie: *So now you have a technique ... do you like it Anna?*

Anna: *Yes I do, cause it makes me calm and less chatty in class ... it makes you want to stay in the calm mood.*

Some of the students from Pansy's class appeared to observe a connection between their own well-Being and that of their teacher's when the room was quiet. As I discussed with the students their perceptions of the benefits of mindful breathing in the classroom, Tina shared "*it makes the teacher calm and it puts a smile on her face when everyone is not talking*" (SFG:PC).

In both Daphne's and Rose's Year 1 classes, small teddy bears were placed on the children's stomachs as they lay still. They had expressed an interest in having the children participate in some mindful breathing exercises, in particular, an activity where a small soft toy was placed on each child's stomach. I had acquired 25 teddy bears exactly the same except for their fur colour, and several of the junior school teachers used this class set of teddies as a means of focussing the children

on their breathing. The activity became known as ‘soft belly breathing’ or ‘rocking the teddies to sleep’; the idea being the children could feel the weight and observe the rise and fall of the teddy as they breathed. This activity appeared to have a most quietening and calming effect on the children, for during my first observation in Daphne’s class, the principal came into the room with a new whiteboard table for the class – something which according to Daphne would normally have caused great excitement among the children. However, on this occasion, none of the children appeared to notice his presence, and the breathing activity continued without interruption for six minutes. Later, during my focus group interview with three children from these classes, I asked why it was important to practice our breathing. Sapphire replied, *“If you don’t breathe, you will die”*, to which Julia added, *“Our mums and dads really wouldn’t want us to die”* (SFG: D&RC).

As well as mindful breathing, mindful physical exercise appeared to be used as micro mindfulness transition breaks. For Poppy and her Year 1 class, this occurred in the form of a yoga activity known as a sun salutation, and was sometimes used first thing in the morning as well as at times when the children appeared to be restless. Yoga held meaning for Poppy in terms of her personal well-Being, and this was something she thought her children would enjoy: *“They’ve got a diagram of the steps – I just found it online and once they get better at it, it can get really fluid. You’re supposed to inhale at one point and exhale at one point but we’ll get to that – they love it”* (M5:C1). On my second observation visit to Poppy’s class, she asked the children what the word salute meant, and a child remarked it was a way of saying ‘hi’ to the sun. Thereafter, Poppy and the children chanted *“Hi sun, you make me feel good”* (Poppy, O:2). It appeared to me this may be a way of paying homage to the sun, perhaps as an acknowledgment of the role the sun plays in our well-Being.

Not all micro mindfulness practices were teacher directed. Lucy incorporated some independent activities into her exercise stations with her Year 1 and 2 students. The children individually performed a mindfulness body exercise such as those described by Thich Nhat Hanh (2008) in his book *Mindful Movements* as an alternative to a more vigorous exercise. Lucy explained: *“Between word work*

and writing has been mindful exercise. Instead of doing fast exercise, one day we did running on the spot and the two mindful stations – like the arms slowly up and down and what Rose calls soft belly breathing – lying on the floor, hands on tummies, concentrating on our breathing” (M5:C1). She went on to explain what she perceived as the benefits for her and the class: “It’s nice because they calm down ... before we go into the next part of our busyness, so it gives them a brain break I suppose” (M5:C1).

Another frequently used independent micro mindfulness activity appeared in the form of what the teachers termed the ‘mind jar’. During our fourth focus group meeting we watched a video clip presented by Kaiser Greenland (2010a) in which she used glitter filled clear balls to demonstrate the ability of mindfulness to clear the mind of all thoughts. This clip appeared to resonate with the teachers. The following week Poppy had made what she termed ‘mind jars’ for her class. Here, she and Pansy are discussing slowing down the movement of the glitter in the water as a way of demonstrating to the children the slowing of their thoughts:

Poppy: We’ve got wallpaper paste at school – just sprinkle that and I used a big plastic soft drink bottle so I can actually super-glue the lid on – a bit of dye in there and only about a spoonful of that paste – shake it up with the glitter and it’s nice.

Pansy: I was thinking about the glitter – if you get two sizes you can say that big stuff is actually your big problems and they sink to the bottom and become calm. (M4:C1)

Poppy later told us the mind jars would be used independently by her children, *“as part of my reading task board, which I have just about finished. It’s going to have a mindfulness activity on each section, and one of them has got mind jars on it” (M7:C1).*

Of the seven teachers I observed, four had created some variation of the mind jars in their classes. In Lucy’s Year 1 and 2 class, each child had made their own mind jar, which sat on their desk. The lids were decorated with nuts and shells and spray painted gold. During my first observation in her room, I noted how, upon completion of a cross-country training run, the children entered the class,

collected their mind jars and returned to the mat, lying down. Many children placed their jar on their chest and appeared to be quietly watching the glitter as the jar moved with their breathing. When Lucy asked the class how the jars made them feel, the children responded with terms such as sleepy, smart, creative, calming. On the same occasion I observed the children during their independent writing time, and noted several would spontaneously pick up their jars, shake them, watch them and then return to their writing. Later, during my focus group interview with three children in Lucy's class, I asked about the purpose of the mind jars:

Tom: *You have to shake it [shakes the jar] and then you watch it [glitter] come down when you're really, really angry.*

Laurie: *Why? What does it do?*

Sara: *It's doing what your mind's doing.*

Laurie: *And what is your mind doing?*

Sara: *It's calming down.*

Laurie: *Ah. So Ryan, what does that glitter represent in the jar?*

Ryan: *It represents all the thoughts in our brain that are going through our head and they're all swirling around in our brain and then they start settling down, settling down, settling down. And when they've settled down, we will be calm. That's what our brain looks like inside.*

Laurie: *Do you really think our brain is full of glitter?*

Ryan: *No, but the glitter is our thoughts.*

Laurie: *Well you've all got those jars in your class. Do you use yours Tom?*

Tom: *Yes, I normally use it when I read and some words I can't figure out and I use it and I feel calm, and I try again and I get it right.*

When I asked three students from Daphne's and Rose's classes of Year 1 students why they made the mind jars, they replied:

Julia: *When we're doing soft belly breathing you can shake them and they calm down – the glitter calms down.*

Libby: *Then **you** calm down.*

Laurie: *Tell me more about that.*

Libby: *Cause when you're all mad and you don't know what to do you just shake it and watch it go calm and then your brain goes all shaky and then calms down ...*

Laurie: *When do you think you will use it?*

Libby: *When I get all crazy and I don't know what to do and I can't rest down.*

In this excerpt, Rose is explaining how she used a mind jar in what appeared to be a 'first aid' application to calm an upset boy in her class:

I've got this boy who has melt downs often on a regular basis and he was starting to have one this day and I dashed into the room next door and asked the teacher if she had some glitter. I just put water in a jar and gave it to him and I talked to him about his mind how it might feel at that time and there was a lot going on in his mind and he couldn't understand all those things happening in his mind ... I said I want you to sit there and watch that until it becomes calm and goes all the way to the bottom. So he sat there and he sat there and he just watched it and watched. (M5:C1)

Later, during my first in-class observation with Rose, while the class were participating in a Keeping Ourselves Safe⁸ lesson about understanding feelings, Rose asked “*Is it okay to feel angry*” (O:1), to which one boy replied, “*Yes – and then you go and get your mind jar*”.

In Daphne’s class the children were free to make as many mind jars as they chose. When I visited the room for my first observation I noted dozens of jars lined the window sill, all different sizes and filled with differing amounts of glitter and various colours of water. One small boy appeared to be fascinated by the air bubble which formed in the jar and Daphne told me he didn’t usually focus on something for that long. I noted that when one girl was hurt after some building blocks fell on her, she immediately reached for her mind jar and appeared to study it. Daphne explained, during our final focus group meeting, that the children themselves had instigated new ideas to practice mindfulness. One of those ideas involved the mind jars:

The children have actually grasped it and involved themselves and got new ideas – like the mind jars – now they evolved them into different ones – they’re everywhere – some of them are coloured and some of them are not because some didn’t want colour – some have bigger glitter – so they take those ideas [and evolve]. (M7:C1)

Some teachers chose a micro mindfulness practice to gain their students’ attention by having them focus on sound. I had purchased a Tibetan bell for use with the group during our third focus group meeting as a way of creating a mindful listening experience. Lucy purchased the same bell for use with her class, and when the children were on the mat she would instruct them to listen until they could no longer hear the sound. It appeared to be a way of centring the children as well as acting as a transition activity to the next lesson. Other teachers had children focus on environmental sounds such as birds or traffic. Rose played soft music while her class practiced soft belly breathing, immediately after coming in from lunch break.

⁸ Keeping Ourselves Safe is a New Zealand Police School Community skills-based personal safety programme which aims to help children cope with situations which might involve abuse (New Zealand Police, n.d.)

To summarise, micro mindfulness moments tended to be used by teachers as a means of centring the children by bringing their awareness to the present. Such moments were inclined to occur as transition times between activities or when the teacher wished to calm the class or individual children. Micro activities were also used independently by the children at various times throughout the day. Mindful breathing, mind jars and mindful listening appeared as the most frequently used activities of this type.

Meso mindfulness activities

These activities tended to be about 10-20 minutes in duration, as opposed to the 40 plus minutes 'macro' lessons. They featured more teacher talk and questioning, the purpose of which seemed to be not only to bring children's awareness to the experience at hand, but build on that awareness by having children express what they were experiencing. Meso mindfulness activities occurred more as short awareness lessons and some appeared to be categorised by the ethical, loving-kindness or loving friendliness element of mindfulness, as discussed in Chapter Two. When Rose had her class of five year olds lie on the mat and listen to soft music after coming in from lunch break, she instructed the children to think one happy thought that they shared with someone in the playground at lunch time, such as a kindness, or a word or gesture which made someone else, and themselves feel good (O:1). She explained during one of our focus group meetings that when she worked in a Catholic school it was a common practice to light a candle and say a prayer, and this was something she valued as an expression of loving-kindness (M5:C1). It appeared to me the 'happy thought' meditation was not dissimilar.

In a similar way, Daphne had taught her class of five and six year olds to access their still, quiet place inside, in a gentle and seemingly loving manner. She had expressed what appeared to be a deep desire to offer the boys in her class a strategy for accessing 'inner space' when they were experiencing turmoil. Here, we are discussing her use of the still, quiet place exercise (the bold typeface is Daphne's emphasis):

Laurie: *So the idea of accessing their still, quiet place and learning it is there and sitting with it there, is that new or is that something you have always done?*

Daphne: *No, that's something new cause I read the book [Kaiser Greenland, 2010] and I thought oh I **like** that, and I like that **for my boys** – I want to develop that for my boys so that when something isn't going right and they're racing and they're going to lash out and do something without thinking that they can actually go there first and they can think about that choice first. I would **love** to see that happen. (DB:1)*

During my first in-class visit, I observed how Daphne rang a chime bar, and the children immediately settled, and placed their hands on their hearts. I recorded the following dialogue:

Daphne: *Show Mrs Mazza-Davies how clever you are at finding that still quiet place inside you. Can you drive there? How do you get there, to that happy, snuggly place inside?*

Child: *We put our hand on our hearts, close our eyes and breathe and go to our quiet place in our hearts.*

[20 seconds in time lapses].

Daphne: *Some of us have gone way, way into that still, calm place inside. You can go there anytime you want. (DB:1)*

At our de-brief meeting afterwards, Daphne shared two concerns: the first appeared somewhat of an ethical concern: “Once they’ve stopped and been still, how do I invade that calm ... some of them have got it beautifully and you can actually see them ... I don’t want to interrupt that” (Daphne, DB). The stillness and quietness associated with the soft belly breathing and still, quiet place time appeared of great personal value to Daphne, and as she explained, enhanced her well-Being: “That’s probably why I don’t want to stop. Because when I stop with them, and I look around to see who is breathing, and I stop and I breathe, I don’t want to stop that – I want to keep going for just a little bit longer ... and the quiet – if I could transfer that to home and just have some quiet time [sighs] ... (DB:1).

She also expressed concern that there was no physical space in her room which the children could access away from the busyness of the class. She said she would discuss this with her class, and at our final focus group meeting, shared the following:

They wanted a mindful place – and it was a bit of a challenge cause the boys kind of wanted it dark and spooky and the girls wanted sparkly stars so those ideas are evolving about where we put it and where we take it and whether we take away the blocks and put it there. You know – just lots of conversations about where is a quiet, safe place, our quiet, still place. (FFG:C3)

Lucy's cross country training run appeared to take on the elements of a meso mindfulness session while immediately upon completion of the run she had the children stop, observe and then express the physical sensations they were experiencing. The children described sensations such as pounding hearts and throbbing teeth. Later, after they had returned to class and were resting, she asked them, "*How does it make us feel when we concentrate on our running or breathing?*" (O:1). Although the children responded by generating more adjectives such as sweaty and calm, it occurred to me that Lucy may have wanted to bring her students awareness to the *act* of being aware, or what Kabat-Zinn (2012) terms, simply resting in awareness or "awarnessing" (p. 147).

Pansy's meso mindfulness session had intended to draw her students' attention to awareness in what struck me as a very practical way. At the beginning of my second in-class observation, Pansy asked the children to think back earlier in the day to when they had been addressed by the deputy principal, Mrs Grills. She then asked the children to describe what Mrs Grills had been wearing that day. Their answers varied greatly, including a black dress with red roses on it, to a red dress with black spots. At our de-brief meeting, Pansy informed me that Mrs Grills had in fact been wearing a black cardigan, khaki coloured trousers and a bright, bold necklace. Of Pansy's class of 34 students, only one boy had apparently been close to an accurate description. When I met with five children from Pansy's class for our focus group interview, I asked them why their teacher had wanted to know what Mrs Grills had been wearing. The children replied it had been to see if they had been remembering – "*to see if our brains are working*" (Candy,

SFG:PC). They did not appear to have recognised this as an ‘awarenessing’ activity. In the discussion section following these findings, I draw attention to what I believe is the importance of children being made aware of the why and how of classroom mindfulness activities; in other words, that they become mindful of being mindful.

To recap, meso mindfulness activities seemed to be characterised as 10-20 minute sessions during which the teacher sought to bring elements of awareness to the activity, by encouraging children to observe and often to express what they were feeling about their experience. It was this ‘awarenessing’ which seemed to set meso activities apart from micro moments, the latter being far less teacher directed and aimed more at clearing the mind in readiness for the next session. Sometimes meso activities appeared to incorporate a loving kindness component in the form of a meditation such as Rose’s friendly thoughts meditation, or Daphne’s still, quiet ‘snuggly’ place meditation.

Macro mindfulness lessons

This final category I term macro mindfulness lessons is characterised by three main features: the length of the lesson (generally 40 plus minutes), the integration of the lesson with other curriculum areas, and the frequent use of children’s literature as a springboard to the lesson. Macro mindfulness lessons appeared to be teacher directed, comprise aims and objectives, and be followed with assessment type activities. The lessons generally followed a three stage structure: an introductory teacher led discussion, a lesson body where the teacher introduced a ‘new’ idea, and then the application of the ‘new’ learning with a follow up activity.

Both Sally and Pansy taught what they termed mindful art lessons – the sketching of a vase of daffodils. Pansy was the teacher in charge of art at the school, and had recently instigated a visit by an artist to come and teach the school skills involved in sketching. She saw the sketching lesson as an opportunity to expand on those skills, as well as a time she could incorporate mindfulness elements into the lesson, by having the children “*focus on those plants and having some time to think about what they could actually see, not what they thought they could see* –

having a look at shapes and colours and how things fit in ... perhaps it will make them more observant of more mindful of things around them” (DB:1). Pansy also identified the fact that as Daffodil Day⁹ was approaching, it would be an opportunity to incorporate a loving-kindness message by discussing the meaning of the daffodil icon for the Cancer Society. She conveyed the aim of the lesson to her class as *“doing something a bit different today – looking at something carefully and thinking inside ourselves what we can feel, see and smell ... a little bit of mindfulness by looking at mindful drawing ... looking at what’s in front and behind ...”* (O:1). I recorded that it took several children what seemed to be considerable time to settle into this activity, and some children seemed very reluctant to make a start on their sketch, but after 20 minutes, the class appeared to be working more attentively and quietly. Upon completion of the lesson, all children had produced a sketch. In the discussion section following these findings, I offer suggestions as to why the apparent behaviour difficulties and reluctance to settle to work may have occurred. However, later, during our final focus group meeting, the teachers themselves raised what I believe to be a valid point concerning the introduction of mindfulness-based practices into the classroom. Here, they are discussing difficulties they encountered when working with older children and mindfulness:

Pansy: I’ve found with the older kids that it actually takes more time to get into it – and with bigger [class] numbers too.

Lucy: In that book Laurie loaned me it explains that it’s harder for the older children to get into it as younger children will just comply but it is hard for some children yet these are the children which will possibly need it more.

Pansy: We could see the other day which children need it but weren’t possibly taking it on board as much as the other ones.

Fern: I think too that starting in a new year with the children – most of the way through the year the kids are like, “huh – what the hell are you doing?” (M7:C1)

⁹ Daffodil Day is a nationwide annual fund raising event aimed at raising awareness of cancer, and is a major funding source for the New Zealand Cancer Society (n.d.).

When Sally undertook her mindful art lesson, she sat at a table and sketched alongside the children. She had instructed one child to close the door of the room so no one could see into the corridor, adding, *“We don’t want any distractions when we are doing our sketching”* (O:2). The room stayed silent apart from twice when Sally vocalised what she was working on in her sketch: *“At the moment I’m just drawing some stems, and adding an outline ...”* and *“now before you start pulling in detail, sketch the vase ...”*. I was surprised at how focused and quiet the class appeared, but more so, at how Sally herself seemed totally engrossed in her own sketching. It was only when I began chatting with some children, after 40 minutes, that the lesson concluded. During our de-briefing session following the lesson Sally remarked how *“surprised”* (O:2) she was that the class had stopped sketching so suddenly. Given the room had stayed quiet for so long, I could only assume that Sally had been in a state of *flow* (as discussed in Chapter Two) – being one with the task at hand, she had completely lost track of time. When I asked Sally what it was about the session that she associated with mindfulness, she commented:

Sally: *Well for me sketching is something that I really enjoy, and I haven’t really done a lot of art since I went into tertiary study, and since I started working. I used to do a lot of art and I often have the children asking me can we do some sketching ... I basically picked it because I [Sally’s emphasis] like it and the children are frequently asking me if we can sketch and it’s something we can all enjoy.*

Laurie: *And how did you feel when you were doing it?*

Sally: *Great, because it was quiet for one, and it’s something that I enjoy doing, there was no stress, we didn’t have to rush to go anywhere – all we had to think about was the daffodils.*

Laurie: *Is this something you could put into your regular programme from now on?*

Sally: *I would definitely do sketching but I don’t know if it would be regular – there’s just no time to do regular, sustained periods of sketching.* (DB:2)

When I asked Sally's students if they knew why their teacher had taught them that lesson, Mary remarked: *"So when we get older and we are stressed or angry we can use that strategy – like mindful breathing or sketching"* and Sherrie added, *"Sketching is a good way to bring your mind down to that one thing"* (SI:SC).

The macro lessons observed in Rose and Hyacinth's classes focussed on mindful eating. During our third focus group meeting we had undertaken a mindful eating meditation using raisins and both teachers adapted this activity to suit the age/stage of their classes, using what appeared to be a language experience approach. Instead of taking one raisin and guiding the children through a sensory experience – seeing, feeling, smelling, listening and finally tasting, Rose allowed the children to eat one raisin and describe the experience. The children were then given another raisin, and this time Rose guided the children through a mindful eating meditation, which took 22 minutes. In this way, it appeared Rose was drawing the children's attention to the contrast between what she termed 'normal' eating and a more mindful way of eating. The exercise was followed by the children drawing what they felt during the experience. I questioned one five year old boy as to why he was drawing a 'muscle man', and he explained when he rolled the raisin in his fingers, it felt like a muscle.

Hyacinth guided her class of Year 3 and 4 students in an eating meditation using frozen blueberries, which she explained added another sensation to the experience. I record her guiding the experience, which seemed to centre largely on the sensation of temperature:

Feel how cold it is in your hand. Think about that. Think about nothing else. How deep does the coldness go in your hand? Hold your other hand on top without touching the blueberry. When do you start to feel the coldness? Roll the blueberry. Can you feel a cold trail? What's coming out? Lick your finger that had been rolling it. Now put it on your tongue. Feel how deep the cold goes down into your tongue. Press it on the roof of your mouth but don't bite it. Roll it around. How does it feel? When you are ready, squeeze it with your teeth. Now bite it through. Swallow ... (O:1)

The session was followed by a writing exercise in which the children described the experience using similes, such as ‘soggy, wet, freezing sugar’ and ‘like quick sand’ when describing the coldness sinking into the tongue. At our de-brief meeting later, Hyacinth shared her thoughts about how this type of macro mindfulness session could fit in with her regular programme: *“They really enjoyed today’s writing and I think they enjoyed it more than they often do ... we’re supposed to be doing environmental writing once a fortnight where they have an experience and draw and write about it”* (DB:1). On this occasion, the children appeared to greatly enjoy sharing their writing with each other; some still wanted to read their work aloud even after the bell had rung dismissing them for the day.

Daphne’s macro mindfulness lesson was designed to help children identify an emotion associated with a sensory awareness, and then share what they were feeling, because, *“some of them couldn’t even say how they were feeling, or what was inside”* (DB:1). Daphne had a jar containing a ‘smell’ and she instructed the children to sniff the jar and then *“go into your quiet, still place and think what that smell reminds you of”* (O:1). The children were asked not to share their ideas aloud, rather, to draw a picture of what the smell reminded them about, using whatever medium they chose. Later, the children shared their pictures and I recorded one child as saying the jar reminded her of cookies and cake, and mum (the jar had contained vanilla essence). Another child drew a birthday cake, while another drew himself on his scooter. Daphne explained later that she thought the scooter picture represented happiness and was associated with a *“happy smell”* (DB:1). She concluded the lesson with the children by saying, *“That smell made you feel lots of different things ... from one smell came so many feelings”* (O:1). At our de-brief session, she explained that the next day she intended bringing an unpleasant smell to school, again, to heighten their awareness of the emotions associated with the experience, and liken it to another time when they may have experienced the same emotion. For Daphne, the session was a result of *“my thinking about what you have said to us and what I’ve read and how I was going to put something together that I could sustain and use in my programme and it not be a stand-alone ... it ties in with our Keeping Ourselves Safe because I’m mindful that it has to fit into the programme* (DB:1).

As Keeping Ourselves Safe was a school wide programme being undertaken that term, all teachers were involved in teaching the programme. The picture books with mindfulness related themes that I read to the teachers at the beginning of our focus group sessions appeared to contain messages aligning to Keeping Ourselves Safe themes, such as understanding feelings. *The Invisible String* (Karst, 2000) and *Anh's Anger* (Silver, 2009) were read by all teachers to their classes. I observed macro lessons based on *Anh's Anger* in Lucy and Rose's class, and evidenced posters the children created based on *The Invisible String* in Pansy and Lucy's classes. The teachers appeared to have shared their enthusiasm with the wider school, as during our sixth focus group meeting, Lucy explained how other teachers not involved in the study were using some mindfulness activities and the books with their classes: "*I do think that we can take parts of it back to our syndicate meetings like I've done that with the mind jars and The Invisible Strings – I ran my whole assembly on what we've been doing for mindfulness this term ... I gave The Invisible String to Tammy the other day to read to Anna's class when she was in there, and she cried*" (FFG:C1). Later, I learned that copies of both books had been purchased as classroom resources for use in the junior and middle school syndicates.

To summarise, macro mindfulness lessons could be thought of as 'full' or complete lessons, generally lasting 40 minutes in length. These sessions were frequently integrated with other curriculum areas, and marked by the use of children's literature to help convey lesson objectives. They appeared to be teacher directed, comprise aims and objectives, and be followed with assessment type activities. They tended towards a three stage structure: an introductory teacher led discussion, a lesson body where the teacher introduced a 'new' idea, and then the application of the 'new' learning with a follow up activity.

Summary

The anagram CORE seems to encapsulate many of the core mindfulness elements incorporated into the activities designed by the teachers, such as centring, observing, recognising and expressing awareness. The activities fall into three broad categories I term micro, meso and macro mindfulness practices. I have

summarised the characteristics of each category, and its associated practices, in the following table:

Table 6: CORE mindfulness activities

| Mindfulness-based activity category | Characteristics | Examples of activities |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Micro | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief, succinct sessions • Designed to calm and clear the mind • Minimal teacher interaction • Sometimes used as transitioning activities between lessons • Sometimes used as independent activities by children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the breath (e.g., soft belly breathing, deep belly breathing, rocking the teddies to sleep) • Mindful movement (e.g., sun salute) • Mindful listening (e.g., Tibetan bell, environmental sounds) |
| Meso | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 – 20 minutes in duration • Designed to bring awareness to the experience • Designed to encourage students to express awareness • Some teacher talk particularly in the form of questioning to promote ‘awarenessing’ • Sometimes comprised a loving-kindness component | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy thought meditation. • Still, quiet, ‘snuggly’ place meditation • Body sensation awareness • Observing by recalling or remembering |
| Macro | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 plus minutes in length • Specific lesson aims and objectives • Distinct lesson structure: introductory teacher led discussion, a lesson body where ‘new’ idea is introduced, then application of the ‘new’ learning with a follow up activity • Frequently integrated with other curriculum areas or school programmes (e.g., Keeping Ourselves Safe) • Frequently incorporated children’s literature in the session | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindful art (e.g., sketching) • Mindful eating (e.g., raisins and frozen blueberries) • Sensory awareness (e.g., smell jars) • Expressing emotional awareness (e.g., through discussion or art activity) • Emotional awareness associated with the senses (e.g., anger) |

Discussion

CORE

Fundamentally, this research is concerned with exploring teachers' perceptions of well-being in relation to mindfulness-based classroom practices by addressing foremost the research question: *What is the nature of the lived experience of mindfulness in relation to well-being for teachers?* In seeking to address this, part of the data collection design entailed observing 13 class lessons. At the conclusion of each lesson I met with each teacher as part of a de-briefing time, where we were able to discuss about how they felt the lesson went, any 'surprises' that occurred during the lesson, and where the next lesson might lead (Appendix I lists the specific questions asked). One two-part question invited the teachers to share what it was about the lesson they associated with mindfulness, and which aspects of the lesson they believed may be particularly conducive to well-Being. Through the use of the CORE anagram, the previous section of findings presented the essence of the mindfulness-based activities created by the teachers. But the question remains: is there a relationship between teacher well-Being and mindfulness-based classroom practices, and if so, what is the nature of that relationship?

In seeking to address this question, some data in this section by way of teacher quotes has been presented which has not previously appeared in the CORE findings section. I consider this material to be so pivotal in addressing the research questions that I simultaneously present and interact with the data by way of this discussion. An important feature of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) involves the movement between the part and the whole of the hermeneutic circle – a small part of the text may be looked at in the context of the whole transcript while at the same time, the whole interview may be thought of from the perspective of the unfolding utterances being looked at (Smith et. al, 2009). In tethering these previously un-presented quotes to this discussion I believe I am honouring both my participants' lived experience, and the essence of this research in a way which otherwise may appear stilted, disconnected and undervalued.

Mindfulness, well-Being and the classroom: The lived experience

Although this research was concerned with the mindfulness/well-Being connection for teachers, the research experience has led me to conclude that it is not possible to address this without addressing the relationship for students as well – so close appeared the reciprocity of well-Being between teachers and their students. Therefore, throughout this section, I present my observations of the students and their opinions alongside that of their teachers, for in many ways, they appear interdependent.

The mindful classroom, student behaviour and teacher well-Being

In Section Two I wrote of the recurring theme of reciprocity and its prevalence throughout the findings. Teachers referred to themselves as weather makers, tone setters and atmosphere feeders when acknowledging the role they played in creating the classroom climate. I also stated that when teachers selected activities they personally found enjoyable, this generally was reflected in their students' mutual enjoyment of the activity, which in turn, had appeared to enhance teacher well-Being. However, I did note exceptions to this.

Rather than the teacher appearing omnipotent in setting the classroom tone, my visit to Pansy's class highlighted the power of the students' behaviour in influencing their teacher's well-Being. While many of the mindfulness activities designed by the teachers seemed to enhance their well-Being and that of their students, initially, this did not appear to be the case with this class. Pansy's mindful sketching activity (something she had identified as personally enjoyable) at first appeared as something many of the children did not wish to participate in. It took what seemed a considerable time for the children to settle – 20 minutes. During this time they appeared restless, un-cooperative, unsettled and noisy, and correspondingly, Pansy appeared agitated and frustrated. I offered to work with several children, while Pansy turned her attention to another group. Once the children settled to work, I recorded a notable shift in Pansy's demeanour. I logged the following entry in my research journal after I returned home from my first observation visit:

It was so obvious that once the children, later in the lesson, started responding and getting results and feeling good about what they were doing, she felt good about what she was doing and the tone in the class changed. Students became very complimentary of each other and she gave the kids lots of encouragement and credit and they were proud and showed each other 'oh look at mine' ... So reciprocity is the word – that reciprocal nature of everything that went on: when she felt good, they felt good and she responded and it was back and forth and back and forth ... (RJ:2)

In this instance, it appeared to me as though the students themselves set the tone and fed the atmosphere, and the teacher reflected this tone. It is not possible to discern from this observation why the children appeared so unwilling to sketch, but I did note a lack of confidence, perhaps self-consciousness among several children. When Pansy and I discussed this afterward, she revealed she believed part of the problem was the children were not given a regular time to develop art skills: *"I think it's something you'd have to do once a week for six or eight weeks so they're actually used to the process. When they were new entrants we used to do it once a week with the whole language type thing but now that's sort of gone out the window so there's no chance for stuff like that"* (DB:1). I believe Pansy was referring to the busyness of the timetable as an inhibitor to undertaking regular art, although I did not clarify this. Certainly for Sally and her class, as much as they seemed to enjoy the art making experience, she stated afterwards: *"I would definitely do sketching but I don't know if it would be regular – there's just no time to do regular, sustained periods of sketching"* (DB:2).

However, this reluctance to participate on the part of some children had occurred during Pansy's mindful breathing session also, which raised for me the possibility of a correlation between the mindfulness activities and the apparent behaviour problems. Pansy had identified this as a lack of respect: *"They don't respect themselves so they don't respect others"* (DB:2) but both Pansy and Fern had referred to the difficulties in working with older children: *"I've found with older kids that it actually takes more time to get into it ..."* (Pansy, M7:C1); *"... the kids are like, huh - what the hell are you doing?"* (Fern, M7:C1). Although it may not be possible to ascertain the exact cause of the behaviour issues with the class, one possibility worthy of consideration is the 'newness' of the breathing activity

coupled with the apparent lack of confidence during the art activity, which may have elicited feelings of self-consciousness among the pupils.

In their study of spirituality in the secular classroom, Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) identified three key themes as fundamental towards enhancing the spiritual dimension for children: a non-judgemental and non-self-conscious climate; communities of spiritual discourse; and deeply meaningful activities which initiate transcendent experience. Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) highlight the importance of creating classroom climates as non-judgemental, accepting and encouraging, where students feel invited and encouraged to share aspects of their lives which may appear spiritual in nature, and where learning opportunities are provided which foster peace and concentration. While this research did not focus on children's spirituality per se, it has explored teachers' perceptions of well-Being in relation to mindfulness-based practices, and as discussed earlier, well-Being as defined by the participants, can encompass a spiritual element.

There is little doubt many of the mindfulness-based activities such as mindful breathing, mindful art and the exploration of emotional awareness through the use of children's literature could be considered spiritual in so much as they provided what Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) term "opportunities for the deepest parts of children's lives to be touched" (p. 318). Yet as these findings suggest, not all children may appear amenable to all activities, at least, not initially.

Schoeberlein (2009) writes of what she terms "student buy-in" (p. 72), stating, even if a teacher is convinced in the value of mindfulness for the class, 'mindfulness' may sound foreign and strange. Although the practices may add novelty, they may also elicit resistance due to unfamiliarity. Importantly, the developmental stage and the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the class will strongly influence students' willingness to participate in something 'different'. Schoeberlein adds that typically, younger children (K-5) like participating in mindfulness activities out of curiosity or simply because the teacher presents them, whereas pre-teens are "acutely sensitive to doing things that might seem weird" (p.73). This may have been the case with some of Pansy and Fern's students, who were the oldest of the student participants. However,

even amongst the new entrant children, I observed some reluctance to participate, particularly in the mindful breathing exercise. About her five year olds, Rose concluded, *“there are three of them and they cannot lie still on the floor. So I often go over and put my hand on one little guy, but it’s such a mission. I got them to cross one leg over the other, and there’s two that actually can’t even lay there like that ... I would never have thought that that would have been the case”* (M5:C1).

According to Kessler (2000) from kindergarten through to high school, it is not uncommon to find a few students in every class who become agitated by periods of silence. Silence, Kessler contends, does not always bring peace. It is possible that silence is a chance to encounter inner turmoil, which in turn may offer young people a chance to make deep connections with themselves, to reach the core of their identity. However, given the apparent strength of the student/teacher well-Being link which this research seems to highlight, if mindfulness-based practices engender unease in some students, thereby creating tension for their teachers, is there value in such practices? For Kessler (2000), the worth is undeniable:

Encouraging our students to go “inward and downward,” we provide the empty spaces crucial to consolidating learning. Given the “outward and upward” thrust of modern culture and education, it takes courage for teachers to initiate this gateway. When we are willing to persist through resistance and even ridicule, silence and solitude can become catalysts for deep connection, and for the search for meaning and purpose, for transcendence, joy, and creativity. (p. 56)

Kessler adds that for those students who appear afraid of silence or stillness, and seem agitated by non-activity, artwork such as drawing or sculpting provides an opportunity for the rest of the class to engage with stillness. In light of this, perhaps when mindfulness-based practices are initially being introduced to a class, students need the option of stillness with silence, such as mindful breathing exercises, or silence with activity, such as mindful art exercises. However, this does not address what I perceived to be self-consciousness amongst Pansy’s students, which may be attributed to a lack of skill base due to there being *“no chance for stuff like that”* (Pansy, DB:1). According to Sally, *“there’s just no time to do regular, sustained periods of sketching”* (DB:2).

In retrospect, it may have proved prudent to have interviewed some of the children who displayed difficulty focussing and reluctance to participate, in order to ascertain their thoughts and feelings about the experience. My research design allowed for teacher nominated students to participate in the student focus group interviews, and typically, teachers tended to select children they felt would communicate willingly. Yet, interviewing those children who appeared unsettled may have provided rich insights – particularly given one of the claims of mindfulness education programmes is to increase students' capacity to pay attention (Mindful Schools, 2012; Kaiser-Greenland, 2010; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010).

Additionally, I now consider it would have been extremely valuable for me to have either been present when the teachers first introduced the mindfulness concept to their classes, or alternatively, to at least have discussed and perhaps practiced this in our focus group meetings, perhaps using role play scenarios. The data collection design could have allowed for this, but I considered it judicious the teachers work through this in their own time and in a manner of their choosing, as they knew their classes best. I also did not want the children to associate me with the mindfulness construct, or to see me as the 'mindfulness lady', believing the practices would have to be sustainable and workable and each class teacher was the most obvious guide as to how this occurred. However, had I been present as the mindfulness construct was introduced, it may have enabled me to gain further insight into the teachers' understanding of *why* they were initiating mindfulness with their classes, what mindfulness meant to them, and also to gauge the children's responses. When Fern stated, "*the kids are like, huh - what the hell are you doing?*" (M7:C1) it suggested little or no explanation was offered to her class. It occurred to me later that some of the children in Pansy's class may have responded more willingly to their mindful sketching activity had they been assured it was not an assessment of their art skills, rather a chance for them to be aware that they were practicing being aware. Comparably, Sally's class appeared focussed and settled throughout the duration of their mindful sketching lesson. When I questioned one of the students as to why they had participated in that lesson, Sherrie remarked "*Sketching is a good way to bring your mind down to*

that one thing” (SFG:SC), suggesting an awareness of a ‘mindfulness rationale’ for that lesson.

Awareness of awareness: Awarenensing

Although, as discussed, not all children appeared able to settle into periods of stillness and quietness, for the majority of students and their teachers, calmness, quietness and stillness were hallmarks of the mindfulness/well-Being experience. Sally explained that the breathing activities allowed her: *“A couple of minutes of down-time that I don’t normally have in the whole day ... I don’t have to listen to my voice and anybody else’s voice for that period of time”* (DB:1). She referred to the importance of quietness again during our second debrief meeting when I asked her how she felt about her mindful sketching lesson: *“Great, because it was quiet for one”* and then went on to add *“and it’s something that I enjoy doing, there was no stress, we didn’t have to rush to go anywhere – all we had to think about was the daffodils”* (DB:2).

Rose explained that the quiet, soft belly breathing time after lunch was something new for her class and seemed to hold value for her well-Being. Even though a few children were experiencing difficulty with the activity, Rose decided soft belly breathing time was worth pursuing: *“I will persist with it for a while – it’s so peaceful, there’s not a sound, nobody’s getting up to get a book or to do anything and it’s just absolute quiet”* (M5:C1) ... *It’s a quietening time in their little day as well as mine*” (DB:1). Similarly, Poppy shared, *“I take a minute to calm, and I take a minute to calm with the children”* (M7:C1).

For Daphne, when she participated in mindful breathing with her class, she didn’t want to stop, *“I want to keep going for just a little bit longer ...”* (DB:1). And for Libby, a five year old in Daphne’s class, *“I like holding my heart and breathing when Mrs Green dongs the bell ... I’m thinking about nothing – just calm thoughts”* (SFG:DC). It appeared the mindful breathing exercises inspired stillness and focus that both the teachers and the children appreciated. The question then arises – what is it about stillness and quietness which lead so many teachers and their students to identify this as enhancing their well-Being?

Teachers have long sought quiet, tranquil classrooms. As a teacher of young children for many years, I frequently tried to incorporate moments of stillness into my teaching day, primarily as respite from the noisy classroom, and certainly, many of the teachers in the study were familiar with a range of activities which promoted quietness. Poppy spoke of playing “*sleeping lions*” (M4:C2) with her class in times past; Pansy shared, “*we used to every afternoon, when the kids came in, put on relaxation music and they used to lay still*” (M4:C2) and several of the teachers were familiar with and used Brain Gym®¹⁰. Thus, in some respects, there appeared nothing radically new particularly about the mini mindfulness moments many of the teachers created for their classes. However, close analysis revealed the ‘newness’ appeared to lie not only in the essence of some of the activities themselves, such as the mind jars, but critically, in teacher and student awareness of why the activity was being undertaken, and how awareness of the activity could enhance well-Being. Lucy appeared to exemplify this awareness by ensuring each child had access to their own mind jar, located on top of each child’s desk. For Tom, a student in Lucy’s class, accessing his mind jar proved a way of clearing and re-focusing his thinking during reading. It was as if, as Hart (2004) suggests, through exploring her own contemplative mind, the teacher was able to help her students do the same. According to Hart (2004), it is through this mutual exploration that the teacher-student dynamic is enhanced, and ultimately, “the teacher’s own growth transforms the entire space in which education happens” (p.35). Thus, although some research suggests a mindful teacher is essential for the transmission of mindfulness (van Aaldern, et al., 2012), it appeared feasible that as a result of *teaching* mindfulness-based practices in the first instance, some teachers were able to internalise a mindfulness philosophy by bringing an intentional *awareness of awareness* to both the activities they were teaching, and to the reason they were teaching them.

According to Hart (2014b), Kabat-Zinn (2012) and McCrary-Sullivan (2000), perhaps the most fundamental injunction for learning is to pay attention, but rarely do we teach children the how of paying attention. Hart (2014b) suggests the

¹⁰ Brain Gym® refers to “a programme of the Educational Kinesiology Foundation (U.S.A) used to improve many different skills including listening, attention, memory, coordination and academic skills” (n. d., n.p.). I first became familiar with the activities in the mid-1990s, and used the exercises throughout my teaching career.

ability to deploy and sustain attention is both a fundamental skill needed for learning, and an outcome of contemplative inquiry. He states that as young people are increasingly blasted with “flashy information” (p. 248) and “threatened from within by high levels of anxiety” (p. 248) developing the sustained attention so characteristic of the contemplative approach is essential for learning. Hart (2014b) advises directing awareness to the breath by way of simple breathing activities at the beginning of a class or at a transition time, may help to develop “the muscle of attention” (2014b p. 249). As Kyle, one of Pansy’s students expressed about mindful breathing, *“it calms you and makes you forget about the stuff you have done that you don’t want to think about”* (SFG:PC).

Kabat-Zinn (2012) uses the word ‘awareness’ as if it were a present participle, as if it were the verb: awarenessing. In this way, awareness is no longer a noun suggesting a static state, rather it becomes a whole new dynamic, signifying a process rather than an end in itself. He explains that the value of mindfulness lies in paying attention in a different way, a larger way to the actuality of life as it unfolds moment by moment. He calls this “orthogonal rotation in consciousness” (p. 72) explaining that nothing is different, yet everything is different because we have rotated our way of seeing, being and knowing. Just as many of the participants had recognised present moment awareness as pivotal in their personal well-Being, they were now acknowledging its role in their professional well-Being, alongside that of their pupils. For example, what in past times may have been relaxation to music in order to gain a few moments of respite from the noise and busyness of the class, was now aligned to a mindful breathing meditation aimed at calming and centring self and emptying the mind. Activities such as tasting blueberries, now became eating meditations aimed at emptying the mind by focussing solely on the experience at hand, identifying every sensation and emotion elicited when interacting with the food in this way. In other words, there now seemed to be an intentional interaction with the present moment – an “orthogonal rotation in consciousness” (Kabat-Zinn, 2012, p. 72). Lucy explained it thus:

We’re being more mindful about doing them [mindfulness activities], so we might be doing mini things [micro mindfulness practices] but we’re mindful in our practice of “I’m going to put

this in here". It's a nice calming time – it makes me more mindful – it makes the children more mindful and we might have done some of these things before, but not in a way that we were mindful about it – it was just a chance to breathe before they went onto something else. (M6:C3)

For Rose, being mindful of mindfulness appeared to convey a cyclic quality, as if the more she became aware of awareness, the more inclined she was to become aware, as the following two excerpts suggest:

I also think it's given us a label now – there were things I never thought of as being mindful but now there's that label so that triggers something, that thought in your mind so that when you do do things like that you think oh – that's being mindful which I wouldn't have had a label for. And I think the more you label it, the more you probably use it and you are aware of it. (M7:C1)

I think it's that awareness isn't it in everything you do? And that now you are aware you are being like that – and that awareness appears anywhere – it appears in the garden, it appears wherever and you know that when you are eating and you are rushing from one place to another, you do actually stop and think there's no mindful eating going on here – I'm just running. And sometimes it makes you stop and become aware of that present moment. (M7: C1)

In the following excerpt, Hyacinth seems to express an awareness of where she believes her focus should be. Noteworthy is the recurrent use of the word 'focus', which appears to draw attention to her lived experience of awareness:

For me I think what this has actually done is put the focus where it should be – like in my own life. The focus of my life should be on my life. It should be on my life how I feel, how I respond making myself whole, I suppose. And in the classroom it has helped because it put the focus where it should actually be and that's on the children rather than on the stuff we have to get done ... when you are a relief teacher it's great – you can focus a little bit more on the kids ... you think ah, how can I actually focus on the children – and give them time to focus on themselves as well, rather than just getting stuff done. (M7:C1)

Emotional awareness and the reciprocity of well-Being

Rose, Daphne and Lucy appeared to transfer a mindfulness/well-Being connection to their choice of emotional awareness activities, as part of the school-wide health programme, Keeping Ourselves Safe. For Rose and Lucy, this involved an exploration of anger, because as Rose explained: *“I think mindfulness can be associated with all your different feelings, really. It’s not just one feeling – it can be a happy time, it can be a sad time”* (DB:1). Goleman (2014) writes that naming emotions accurately assists children to become clearer about what is happening inside. Inner focus, he suggests, helps us to understand and handle the inner world, a life skill that keeps us on track throughout life and can aid children in becoming better learners. According to Goleman (2014), the ability to be mindful of impulse, to stay focussed and ignore distractions, can be enhanced by the right lessons. Perhaps most significantly, the brain’s centres for learning operate at their peak when we are focussed and calm – as we become upset these centres work less well. In times of extreme agitation, we only focus on what is upsetting us, and learning shuts down. This appears to have been something Daphne was aware of, as her class of five and six year olds explored an activity intended to promote awareness of ‘feelings’.

Daphne’s ‘smell jar’ macro mindfulness lesson was designed to help children identify an emotion associated with a sensory awareness, and then share what they were feeling, because *“some of them couldn’t even say how they were feeling, or what was inside”* (DB:1). Yet there appeared something more to the motivation behind Daphne’s lesson. For Daphne, being able to teach emotional awareness seemed to be something she identified almost as having personal significance – beyond her professional responsibility. In one of our conversations, I noted what seemed a ‘blurring’ between Daphne’s professional responsibility, and her personal philosophy. Here, we were discussing her use of the ‘still, quiet place’ exercise (the bold typeface is Daphne’s emphasis). Note the personalisation of Daphne’s students as belonging to ‘her’:

Laurie: *So the idea of accessing their still, quiet place and learning it is there and sitting with it there, is that new or is that something you have always done?*

Daphne: *No, that’s something new cause I read the book [Kaiser Greenland, 2010] and I thought oh I **like** that, and I like that **for my***

*boys – I want to develop that for my boys so that when something isn't going right and they're racing and they're going to lash out and do something without thinking that they can actually go there first and they can think about that choice first. I would **love** to see that happen.*
(DB:1)

Daphne's referring twice to the boys in her class as "*her boys*" and her apparent desire to meet what she perceives as their needs, is a noteworthy example of a mindfulness-based activity building, which Fredrickson (2013) terms "positivity resonance" meaning love is not only reserved for those we are in close relationships with, but all we make contact with during the micro-moments of positivity resonance. Here, personal/professional well-Being philosophies appear to merge and the delineation between the two becomes fuzzy, for in aiming to meet her students' needs, Daphne is making the decision to use her autonomy for others – it is something she "*wants*" to develop, and something she would "*love*" to see happen. In this way, Daphne appears to express that in investing in her students' well-Being, she is advancing her own, and in many ways, the two appear inseparable. This point is emphasised by Palmer (2007) in his theory of identity and integrity in teaching which suggests one's inward and invisible sense of identity becomes known when it manifests itself in encounters with external and visible 'otherness'.

Awareness of the mind and well-Being: Mindful or mind full?

For all the teachers, emptying the mind created mind 'space', and it seemed the slowing down or stopping of incessant thinking was something many attributed to mindfulness: "*it's anything that stops the mind*" (Hyacinth, M5:C3). Critically, however, they now expressed an awareness of being aware of the importance creating mind space held in their well-Being, both in and out of the classroom. Sally expressed her lived experience of mindfulness as "*more stopping and less going*" (M7:C1), because "*it's made me realise how chaotic I am*" (M6:C3). Rose too reflected, "*on how chaotic my life has often been I've often just run – really, I've run*" (M6:C3). Pansy shared how she was now sleeping better, how, in effect she was in control of her thoughts: "*I can wake up now and I can think, no, I need to be asleep this is what I need to do – I'm not going to worry about that because I can't do anything about it now. And I'm actually sleeping much better*" M6:C1). As Kyle, one of Pansy's students explained during our student

debrief session, *“mindfulness is like a filter sucking all the things out of your head”* (SFG:PC).

Stone (n.d.) refers to a phenomenon known as “continuous partial attention” (n.p.) when discussing how many of us use our attention today. She explains this phenomenon is different from multi-tasking, which is characterised by a desire to get as many things done at one time as possible, in an effort to create more time for ourselves. To pay continuous, partial attention, however, is to pay partial attention, continuously, the essence of which means we want to “scan for opportunity and optimise for the best opportunities, activities, and contacts ... it is an always on, anywhere, anytime, anyplace behaviour that involves an artificial sense of constant crisis” (n.p.). Stone (2008) proposes we focus on how we manage our attention, encouraging us to notice what happens to our breathing when we access our email. She has coined the phrase “email apnoea” (n.p.) suggesting the shallow breathing many of us resort to while emailing, texting, or using laptops or smartphones – in fact, anytime we are in front of a screen. Breath holding, apparently, can contribute significantly to stress-related diseases. Additionally, an increase in our stress levels impacts our sense of emotional well-being as well as our physical well-being. In large doses, Stone (2008) warns, this may lead to a compromised ability to make decisions and think creatively; we become over-whelmed, over-stimulated and increasingly, we feel powerless. Our ability to control or manage our attention, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1996) is an all-important personal choice in the creative process, which involves making decisions about how we manage aspects of our lives, such as our schedules and our environments. As Hyacinth remarked about her ongoing divided attention, *“... you always feel slightly – not quite in the game and that effects how you feel about how you are performing ...”* (M1:Q8). According to Kabat-Zinn (2012), awareness of how we manage our attention provides perspective and balance because it is “our only capacity robust enough to balance thinking” (p. 31).

Summary

This section has discussed the lived experiences of the participants, both teachers and their students, as they explored teacher created mindfulness-based classroom practices. At the introduction of this section I questioned the nature of the well-

Being/mindfulness relationship for teachers. It appeared many of the activities undertaken by the teachers and their students can be said to have enhanced well-Being in as much as they helped create opportunities for stillness, presence, positivity, connectivity and importantly, awareness. Awareness of awareness, or ‘awarenessing’ – the intentional interaction with the present moment, explored here through many of the CORE activities involving sensory, cognitive and emotional awareness, appear to have highlighted for many participants the affect staying ‘present’ has on their personal and professional well-Being. Yet this section also highlighted an apparent anomaly, as it considered the effect of these practices on student behaviour and correspondingly, on teacher well-Being. Classroom climate, timing, and student readiness are advanced as significant considerations as to the acceptance, or otherwise, of mindfulness-based activities in the classroom.

Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the findings by way of three sections derived from three super-ordinate themes. The first two sections focused on participants’ perceptions of well-being firstly in their personal lives, and then in their role as classroom teachers. Major findings in these sections centred on the paradoxical nature of well-being as being both an experience and a state. Well-being experiences were often characterised by a non-cerebral ‘being’ mode of mind, and appeared to influence the overall well-Being state. The link between Well-being and well-Being appears to be awareness. Awareness may mean a cognisance of one’s thoughts and an understanding of the effect of thinking on the well-Being state. But awareness may also occur in another realm as ‘sensing’ – a kind of intuitive and inexplicable ‘knowing’ that arises far less from thinking and far more from being.

Authenticity, defined here as the essence of ‘true self’ has been explored in the context of the many roles we assume in life, and is closely linked to the notion of autonomy which in turn appears to influence the well-Being state. When teachers made authentic decisions, when they believed themselves to be autonomous, their well-Being appeared enhanced, thereby helping to create a positive classroom

atmosphere. Reciprocity of well-Being appeared evident in the classroom, as both teachers and their students tended to mirror one another's tone and mood.

The final section presented teachers' and students' perceptions of mindfulness and well-Being in direct reference to CORE mindfulness-based practices. For the majority of teachers and their students, calmness, quietness, stillness and a developing emotional awareness were hallmarks of the mindfulness/well-Being experience. This section drew attention to the importance of classroom climate, student readiness, timing and students' awareness of the purpose of mindfulness as substantial considerations as to the acceptance of mindfulness-based practices in the classroom. A major finding suggested awareness of how we manage our attention may be beneficial in providing the balance and perspective necessary so our 'thinking' mind does not rule our lives, thereby compromising our well-Being. Similarly, becoming mindful of the mindfulness construct appeared to offer for some participants, a means of intentionally interacting with the present moment.

Chapter FIVE

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

At its heart, this research sought to bring to light the essence of the well-being/mindfulness relationship for one group of primary school teachers. Through the fluid, dynamic process of hermeneutic circling, this study aimed to delve beneath the words to reveal the essence of my participants' ontological perspectives. At times, this process has proved particularly moving, as often the very themes explored touched deeply personal parts of my own life. In Heideggarian terms, my *dasein* or way of being in the world could not be isolated from my culture, social context or time. Thus, I became as much a part of the research as the participants.

This final chapter begins with an overview of the major findings as they relate to the two research questions: *What is the nature of the lived experience of mindfulness in relation to well-being for the teachers?* and *How do teachers' perceptions of mindfulness and well-being influence their identity, practices and beliefs?* This is followed by a discussion addressing the contributions this research makes to new knowledge concerning teacher and student well-Being in relation to mindfulness- based practices. Sections addressing implications for practice, theory and policy, and areas for further research are discussed. The chapter concludes with some final insights concerning the research process.

Overview of findings

In summarising the findings pertaining to the lived experience of mindfulness in relation to well-being for teachers, this research found teachers' personal beliefs regarding the essence and characteristics of well-being to be somewhat paradoxical in nature. In part, well-being was said to be associated with positive experiences, and these were frequently defined as times of connectedness, specifically, connections to place, nature, the senses, others and self. In this sense, well-being appeared much more than a 'mind-thing' or something

identified with through thinking. Such experiences were defined as holistic, all-encompassing sensory connections – moments in time when thinking seemed to stop and time did not matter. I likened these experiences to the hedonic or pleasure seeking, ‘feeling’ mind, and recorded this as Well-being, with the capitalisation emphasis on Well as in happy, content and positive. I term such positive experiences Well-being *capital*, suggesting it is possible to save or accrue ‘funds’ which can be safely deposited into the well-being *state* and drawn upon as required.

However, almost paradoxically it seemed, experiences which could not be deemed positive, such as death of a spouse or marriage dissolution were also identified as capital building, because they were seen to lead, in some instances, to an enhanced state of well-being, as they appeared to engender personal growth and for some, to illumine a connectedness to an ineffable source. Such a connection was experienced for some participants as an awareness of being ‘alright’ in the midst of grief and despair, a ‘soul connection’ to the essence of ‘true self’. In this sense, a eudaimonic well-being is reflected in the well-being state. I recorded this as well-Being, with the capitalisation emphasis on the Being; that undefinable yet undeniable awareness of a connection to an indeterminate something ‘bigger’.

This research advances the link between Well-being and well-Being to be awareness, or more specifically, the act of being aware, or awarenessing. A major finding reveals awareness of how we manage our attention may be beneficial in providing the balance and perspective necessary so our ‘thinking’ mind does not rule our lives, thereby compromising our overall well-Being. Similarly, becoming mindful of the mindfulness construct appeared to offer for some participants a means of intentionally interacting with the present moment, as summarised here, by Rose:

I think it's that awareness isn't it in everything you do? And that now you are aware you are being like that – and that awareness appears anywhere – it appears in the garden, it appears wherever, and you know that when you are eating and you are rushing from one place to another, you do actually stop and think there's no mindful eating going on here – I'm just running. And

sometimes it makes you stop and become aware of that present moment. (M7: C1)

In the classroom, this intentional interaction with the present was evidenced during mindfulness-based classroom practices, or CORE practices, defined in this study as those practices aimed at Centring, Observing, Recognising and Expressing awareness. I categorised these practices as micro, meso and macro mindfulness activities, characterised by the mindfulness elements embedded in each activity, the intended purpose and the length of time generally spent on each activity.

For most teachers, the mindfulness-based activities they devised for use with their students appeared to heighten their own overall well-Being state, seemingly because the very activities they chose, they themselves had identified as personally enjoyable and meaningful. While teachers often portrayed themselves as having very little professional autonomy, it seemed that when they chose to honour their ‘authentic’ selves, that is, when they addressed their ‘true’ nature by making decisions, selecting personally meaningful activities and tending to their own needs for reasons they alone deemed significant, they demonstrated autonomy, and this autonomy appeared a catalyst towards a heightened state of well-Being. Moreover, when teacher well-Being was enhanced, the flow on effect to pupils seemed considerable, as teachers identified their own mood as being mirrored in their students. However, classroom climate, timing, student readiness and *how* the mindfulness construct is introduced to students, particularly older students, are advanced as mitigating considerations as to the acceptance, or otherwise, of mindfulness-based classroom practices by students.

Contributions to knowledge

This study has contributed new knowledge through both its ontological exploration of teacher well-Being in relation to mindfulness-based practices in the New Zealand primary classroom, and in its hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. While overseas studies have focussed on various factors relating to teacher well-being, such as perceived control (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell,

2012), enhancing teacher well-being (Hills & Robinson, 2010; Klassen, Perry & Frenzel, 2012) and examining the impact of teacher well-being on students' academic performance (Klusman et al., 2008), there is a paucity of New Zealand based teacher well-being research. Additionally, overseas studies relating to mindfulness-based practices and teachers tend to rely heavily on quantitative measures, such as assessment scales and ratings. Roeser et al. (2012) and Zenner et al. (2014) call for phenomena finding investigations that use rich, ethnographic descriptions, such as case studies of exemplars, and other forms of qualitative assessment for instance, doctoral theses, which often contain supplementary information that could enrich the discussion. Such qualitative studies may highlight the nuances, subtleties and ambiguities of the lived experiences of participants in ways some quantitative approaches could not, thereby adding greater perspective to the field of mindfulness research in education.

The scarcity of New Zealand education based well-being research is particularly significant given the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) identifies hauora, the Māori philosophy of well-being, as one of four underlying concepts in the health and physical education learning area. And while teachers are expected to address this with their students, given the reciprocity of the teacher/student relationship, addressing teacher well-being would appear of paramount importance. Therefore, this study examined not only teachers' perceptions of well-being, but how their perceptions influenced their classroom practices, and in turn, what this meant for their students.

The hermeneutic (or interpretative) phenomenological methodology used for this research sought foremost to uncover the ontological experiences of the participants. As such, this research was far less concerned with *describing* the lived experiences of the participants as it was with *interpreting* the nature of their lived experiences. As a consequence, two original theories have emerged which I contend contribute to the existing literature pertaining to well-being in a generic sense, and teacher well-being in particular. In addition to these theories, a novel classification scheme for categorising mindfulness-based practices for use in the classroom known as CORE is outlined below.

The first theory, initially described as the Well-being/well-Being theory is defined in Chapter Four, Section One of the Discussion, and recapped in the Overview section of this chapter. The significance of this theory lies in the distinction of two separate yet interconnected well-being entities.

If, as the theory proposes, by ‘banking’ Well-being experiences we can help build Well-being capital, which may result in a robust well-Being state, it seems to suggest the importance of positive experiences in overall wellness. In itself, this is not new, as Fredrickson’s (2009) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions states that positivity builds resources for life. However, this current research builds on this by suggesting experiences which could not be deemed positive may also lead to an enhanced state of well-Being. Herein lies the ‘newness’ of this theory: even seemingly ‘negative’ experiences inducing feelings of despair and grief, such as the loss of a loved one or the dissolution of a marriage, can build the well-Being state because they may engender personal growth, and for some, illumine a connectedness to an ineffable source. This source, described as a ‘soul connection’ to the essence of ‘true self’, was defined by one participant as “*the very, very grain of you*” and by another as an ‘alrightness’ in the midst of grief and despair. Yet far from being a misleading term, by shifting the capitalisation emphasis between Well and Being, that is, between the experiences and the state, the word assumes an added breadth of meaning as it points to the emergence of a new dimension of consciousness – a new awareness, the Being in well-Being. Simply put, when I speak of Well-being, I am emphasising the role experiences play in affecting the well-Being state – ‘good’ and ‘bad’. When I speak of well-Being, emphasis is placed on ‘Being’ as consciousness itself: formless, boundless and timeless. In this way, Being can be said to precede experience because one’s Being is ‘bigger’ than any possible experience: wellness is transient – Being is infinite. Reduced to the simplest of terms, the essence of all ‘well-being’ is pure Being, and Being, by its very nature is ‘well’.

However, there is one caveat: Being denotes awareness, specifically, an awareness of one’s Being. Therefore, this theory suggests that ‘well-being’ may simply be defined as awareness of awareness between the Well and the Being aspects of one’s life, that is, between the experiences and the state. With direct

reference to this study, this awareness has been evidenced as mindfulness – the intentional interaction with the present moment, or the Being in the moment. In the following section of this chapter I expand on this theory, and its implications for classroom practice.

In Section Two of Chapter Four the super-ordinate theme of authenticity is presented and its link to the notion of autonomy as it relates to teacher well-Being is explored. Through their numerous and frequent use of puppetry and circus metaphors, several teachers indicated a perception of powerlessness and subjection, which appeared to have a direct effect on how they perceived their well-Being. This study revealed however, that when teachers were able to honour their authentic selves, that is, when they made decisions, selected activities and tended to their own needs for reasons *they* deemed significant, as evidenced through their choice of mindfulness-based activities, their well-Being state appeared enhanced. Even seemingly inconsequential acts of autonomy, such as deciding to forgo the usual classroom timetable in favour of ‘fun’ activities such as art, appeared crucial to a teacher’s sense of autonomy. Such decisions did not appear to be made flippantly, rather, through awareness that this choice would influence their own well-Being and in so doing, directly influence the well-Being of their pupils.

While the authors of a quantitative study (Grenville-Cleave & Boniwell, 2012) measuring perceived control and well-being rated teachers significantly lower than other professionals, their data had been analysed with four separate themes relating to control, as autonomy; authenticity; connection to others; and resilience. The results showed connections, and being able to put students first, were what really mattered to teachers. This qualitative study, however, suggests it may not be prudent to separate autonomy and authenticity in terms of their effect on teacher well-Being, as the two appear not only interconnected, but highly interdependent. It is here this study contributes new knowledge to teacher well-being: teacher well-being can be said to encompass an awareness of the continuous interplay between authenticity and autonomy – I term this awareness *authenonomy*. The *authenonomous* teacher is not only aware of this interplay, but is able to act upon it. Autonomy, however, does not preclude connection and

belonging. Indeed, the social constructivist positioning of this thesis posits meaning is constructed through social and cultural contexts, and the authenonomous teacher, by definition, is a social being within a social context. Clearly, connections mattered to teachers, but it was being able to make decisions about those connections which appeared of paramount importance to the teachers in this study. For instance, when professional judgements concerning the needs of their students arose from a place of authenticity, that is, from an awareness of what the teachers themselves deemed the students really needed, (as opposed to fulfilling a requirement) then teacher well-Being seemed to be enhanced; the teacher appeared both authentic by acknowledging her own judgements, and autonomous in being able to carry out those judgements, and a sense of social cohesion ensued. In this sense, the teacher can be said to have been authenonomous. Perhaps Daphne exemplified this best when she made the decision to use her insight and autonomy for others, stating *“Oh I like that, and I like that **for my boys** – I want to develop that for my boys ... I would **love** to see that happen”* (DB:1).

While this study referred specifically to authenonomy in relation to teacher well-being, given the recurring theme of teacher/student reciprocity and its prevalence throughout the findings, the *authenonomous classroom*, by definition, would be one mirroring the themes of authenticity and autonomy in both teachers and students. I suggest there is great scope for further research into the area of the authenonomous classroom or whole school ‘collective’ authenonomy and its role in well-Being.

Implications for classroom practice

In Chapter One I questioned whether mindfulness-based practices could be considered a conduit towards well-being as identified by the New Zealand curriculum. The curriculum definition of health education states: “Students build resilience through strengthening their personal identity and sense of self-worth, through managing change and loss, and through engaging in processes for responsible decision making ... Students use these skills and understandings to take critical action to promote personal, interpersonal, and societal well-being”

(Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 23). The application of the Well-being/well-Being theory appears to relate to this learning area of the New Zealand curriculum, particularly with reference to understandings relating to the promotion of personal well-being.

As stated, the theory suggests well-being may simply be defined as an awareness of a *shift in awareness* between the Well and the Being aspects of one's life, that is, between the experiences and the state. As teachers and students contemplate their own definitions of well-Being, themes such as those identified in the curriculum as personal identity, self-worth and the management of change and loss could be considered through the application of this theory, by shifting awareness between the Well and the Being aspects of their lives. Critically, the concept of personal identity would need to be expanded to illumine for students an awareness of the separation of thoughts about themselves, to being the *watcher* of the thoughts about themselves. This would necessitate an awareness of the internal dialogue concerning 'me' and 'my life' as simply an internal dialogue, and not the essence of Being. In many ways, this shift could be seen as being at complete odds with what we normally equate the role of education to be, for it would entail teaching both teachers and students how *not* to think – a total transferral from 'doing' to 'being'. Given the ever increasing thrust towards digitally enhanced classrooms, and the growing emphasis on raising student achievement, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, this may appear contradictory to educational goals. Yet these suggestions act as a timely reminder to education policy makers, and school leaders, that teachers need to look within to reveal the inner-being, and in so doing, recognise and grow inner peace and strength within their students. As Palmer (2007) so articulately expressed, "The self-knowledge that comes from these reflections is crucial to my teaching, for it reveals a complexity within me that is within my students as well" (p. 24).

Mindfulness-based classroom practices such as those evidenced in this study are far more characteristic of 'being' than 'doing' or 'thinking'. I have termed such classroom practices CORE activities, as they focussed on some common, core elements of mindfulness. In the following section I elucidate this classification and its implications for classroom.

At the outset of this study I questioned the feasibility of implementing mindfulness-based classroom practices into the busyness of the everyday classroom and an apparently over-crowded curriculum, without such practices being perceived as yet another added 'extra'. Section Three of Chapter Four detailed some of the numerous and varied mindfulness-based activities the teachers devised for use with their students. The CORE anagram summarises the essence of thinking behind many of the classroom practices, as the teachers aimed for students to Centre, Observe, Recognise and Express awareness. As a result, three broad categorisations emerged, which I have termed micro, meso and macro mindfulness practices. In categorising the activities in this manner, I have created a framework which may assist teachers in implementing mindfulness-based practices into their short and long term planning in practical, manageable and creative ways.

In the first instance, the categorisations themselves serve as identifiers as to the characteristics of each activity. For example, micro equates with brief, small or short activities which teachers could use to calm and centre their students. Activities such as mindful breathing and mindful listening may be implemented as transitioning activities between subject areas, and require minimal teacher talk or instruction. Meso, as in mid or middle, implies activities of 10 – 20 minutes in duration. Such activities are characterised by more teacher interaction in the way of questioning to promote both physical and emotional 'awarenessing'. Activities such as happy thought or loving-kindness meditations and body sensation awareness exemplify meso activities. Macro mindfulness practices may be considered 'full' lessons, comprising a lesson structure of an introductory teacher led discussion, a lesson body and a follow up activity where the 'new' idea or learning may be demonstrated. Macro lessons may be integrated with other curriculum areas, such as health. Because the categorisations serve as identifiers to the nature of the activity, they may prove helpful both in daily and long term planning. For example, simply slotting the term 'micro' into a daily plan may serve to remind teachers to take five minutes to practice stillness, mindful breathing, or mindful listening. In a similar way, macro lessons could be integrated into the long term planning of health units for example, as was evidenced by the integration of emotional awareness lessons into the school-wide

Keeping Ourselves Safe health programme. In short, the terminology itself may serve as a simple identifier as to the nature of the mindfulness-based practices.

In creating the CORE framework, however, I do acknowledge an inherent danger lies in the perception that mindfulness may be reduced to a series of short activities or longer lessons which teachers ‘do’ with their students. Mindfulness is both a construct and a practice: fundamentally, it is a way of Being. As previously stated, the mindful classroom demonstrates a continuous interplay between an awareness of awareness, authenticity, autonomy, and student and teacher well-Being. This may necessitate the recalibration of teaching techniques and teaching and learning philosophies to reflect the intentional regulation of awareness. Yet the reciprocity of the teacher/student relationship is such that by selecting and implementing CORE practices of their own choosing, teachers may be addressing not only their own well-Being, but that of their students. Essentially, CORE practices may serve as both a means of exercising “the muscle of attention” (Hart, 2014b, p. 249) as students’ awareness is brought to the how of paying attention, and as a catalyst to more mindful mode of Being for both teachers and their students, a more mindful classroom. As one young student expressed about mindful breathing: *“It calms you and makes you forget about the stuff you have done that you don’t want to think about”* (SFG:PC). For another, the ‘mind jar’ was used as a strategy to clear and refocus his thinking: *“I normally use it when I read and some words I can’t figure out and I use it and I feel calm, and I try again and I get it right”* (SFG: LC).

This is not to say, however, that all students in all classes readily accepted all the mindfulness-based lessons their teachers introduced. For some students, practices necessitating stillness, such as mindful breathing, or focussed attention, such as mindful sketching seemed to initiate restlessness or discomfort. Yet for the most part, the majority of students appeared willing to participate, receptive to the mindfulness construct, and to greatly enjoy the practices. Thus, the findings of this study support the idea that it is possible to teach what McCrary Sullivan (2000) terms “habits of attending” (p. 211) with “keen eyes and fine sensibilities” (p. 212). However, one fundamental question remains unanswered: how do we teach students to *want* to become aware? According to Bolte Taylor (2009) we

can *choose* to “step to the right” (p.147), that is, into the consciousness of the right hemisphere, and in so doing, access the ‘being’ mode of mind. Yet how do we teach this choice? While it appears mindfulness-based practices can be taught, is there a readiness component, or an ‘awakening’ of sorts required within each teacher and each individual student before such practices can be taught and received? Or could it possibly be that ‘awareness’ is an innate need in each of us awoken by just the ‘right’ trigger, at just the ‘right’ time? Furthermore, although we may assume a mindful teacher is essential for the transmission of mindfulness, is it possible that as a result of teaching mindfulness-based practices, a teacher may begin to internalise a mindfulness philosophy, and ultimately, embodying mindfulness? In other words, could *teaching* mindfulness itself be a pathway to mindfulness?

Fundamentally, I believe the value in such questions lies not in their answers, but in the nature of the questions themselves. Such questions suggest no absolutes – many things are possible. In much the same way, we connect with ‘the possible’ when we teach; our students represent infinite possibilities. Correspondingly, in teaching mindfulness-based practices, it appears we teach to the possibility that such practices teach skills of attending, as well as touching the awareness within. While this appears to have occurred for some teacher and student participants in this study, it is not possible to ‘know’ for certain. Perhaps, however, for the authenonomous teacher, the possibility may be certainty enough.

Implications for further research

The findings of this study raise implications for both phenomenological research practices, and professional teaching practices.

As a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher, understanding my own way of ‘being in the world’ was vital to uncovering and interpreting the essence of the well-Being/mindfulness phenomenon for my participants. Because of this, the context of my research was not peripheral, rather, it was central. I reasoned we may well be sharing some very personal opinions and insights and I wanted our meeting atmosphere to be one of warmth and acceptance. Palmer (2007) suggests

that if we want teachers to grow, we must “do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives – risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract” (p. 12). As a teacher, I was not altogether certain the school staffroom engendered conditions conducive to revealing inner most thoughts and feelings. Although I offered the option of meeting at the school, the participants enthusiastically accepted the invitation to attend meetings in my home.

Throughout our seven meetings, it was not unusual for participants to express their enjoyment at attending the meetings. During our final focus group session, I recorded the following comments concerning the nature of our meetings as “*the ideal place ...*” (Pansy, M7:C2), because they are “*out of the [school] environment, and it’s been nice to have to leave school at four o’clock*” (Lucy, M7:C2); “*there’s no rules, there’s no set criteria or set boundaries – there’s no norms ... they [the meetings] gave me well-being*” (Pansy, M7:C2); “*you’re allowed to speak freely*” (Fern, M7:C2); and “*freedom of speech*” (Sally, M7:C2).

In short, I believe in and of themselves the meetings became well-Being meetings, and a significant contributing factor to this was the setting. In inviting participants into my home, I was in a sense, inviting them into my innermost sanctum, and in so doing, I may have been closing the “illusionary gap” (Etherington, 2004, p. 32) between researcher and participants.

While I am not proposing all phenomenological investigations occur in a researcher’s home, I do recommend researchers carefully consider the importance of setting in their investigations, as they seek to establish relationships of authenticity, trust and confidentiality with their participants. However, such decisions should be made in complete awareness of issues relating to credibility, quality and most importantly, any situation or practice which could be interpreted as researcher coercion.

In this study I sought to address issues of credibility and quality in the first instance by seeking coherence between the research topic, the methodology, the

data collection methods, and the method of analysis, in this case, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Inherent in IPA principles is the expectation that the researcher demonstrates considerable personal commitment by the degree of attentiveness given to the participants during data collection (Smith et al., 2009). In offering the participants the option to meet in my home, they were able to evidence both my commitment to the research, and the value I placed on their participation. The final word belongs to Hyacinth: *"It's been the only meeting I look forward to – probably ever ... we're thinking about ourselves and how we can reach ourselves, cause you don't get much time to do that"* (M7:C2).

As the super-ordinate themes of personal and professional well-Being, authenticity and autonomy emerged, and the findings relating to CORE practices were revealed, I began wondering as to the feasibility of developing a mindfulness/well-Being professional development model for schools, addressing both staff and student well-Being. However, in reference to the authenonomous theme of these findings, it would be critical such programmes be classroom-based, whereby teachers themselves became phenomenological researchers, seeking to uncover the essence of their own lived experiences and those of their students in response to mindfulness-based practices. I foresee several significant benefits of such a model, which could build on this research while at the same time, address some of the limitations of this study.

First, because the research itself *is* the staff development programme, the research sample would in all probability be much larger, more culturally diverse and more gender representative than this study could allow for, thereby offering a much greater breadth of findings. As Zenner et al. (2014) advise, little is known about the feasibility of integrating mindfulness-based interventions into the school routine, or similarly, the acceptability of different programme elements, suggesting great scope for any such classroom or school based research.

Additionally, this could also address the question of sustainability of the mindfulness-based practices beyond the formal intervention period as, in essence, the staff development programme could span a minimum of one full school year rather than one school term, as was the case with this research. Vitally, if each

school were to develop its own mindfulness research programme, the programme would be tailored to meet the socio-cultural context of the school. Whilst the principles of mindfulness would be consistent, the delivery and integration could be personalised to meet the specific character of each school. As Egan (2000) suggests, when addressing the spiritual well-being of a school, “more important than any programme, is collective vision (meaning and purpose) that is shared and fostered by the whole school community. Such things as school charters, stated ethos, and special character go some way in beginning this process” (p. 111).

New Zealand’s rich cultural diversity lends to the development of culturally responsive mindfulness-based practices. Particularly relevant to the New Zealand setting are Māori practices, such as waiata (songs) and karakia (prayer)¹¹ as suggested by Whitehead (2009). Equally, mindful movement practices such as yoga and tai chi could honour diversity and promote inclusiveness. The point is this: the route to mindfulness may not necessarily be the sanitised, standardised, ‘one size fits all’ commercial market place model becoming increasingly evident within the western education system; it is highly likely the mindfulness pathway traverses multifarious terrain.

In addition, if each teacher were to develop a programme specific to their own well-Being and that of their students, the model would be arising from a place of authenticity, and in developing and implementing their model, each teacher would be autonomous. This rests heavily, of course, on the assumption that each teacher would feel comfortable and confident in the development and integration of mindfulness-based practices in their classroom. Whilst all teachers willingly participated in this study, some reactions do raise concerns relating to teacher confidence and the introduction of mindfulness into their classrooms. Fern’s comment “*I think too that starting in a new year with the children – most of the way through the year the kids are like, “huh – what the hell are you doing?”*” (M7:C1) seems to suggest she may have encountered a ‘kick-back’ from her students which may be why she opted for me not to observe her teaching her

¹¹ In mainstream schools, karakia or prayer incorporates Māori values and beliefs of gratitude, appreciation, thanksgiving and respect, and is often viewed as a way in which Maori retain their identity through a practice central to their culture (see Fraser, 2004a, for an in-depth explanation of spirituality and Māori values in secular schools).

lessons. This then speaks to further research needs addressing the specifics of *how* mindfulness is introduced into classrooms. While each teacher, within each school would require their own rationale for introducing mindfulness-based practices, there may be certain protocols and practices common to all which could prove helpful in gaining what Schoeberlein (2009) terms “student buy-in” (p. 72). Although I was not present when teachers introduced the mindfulness construct to their classes, I now consider it would have been extremely valuable for me to have either been present or alternatively, to at least have discussed and perhaps practiced this in our focus group meetings, possibly using role play scenarios. Exactly *how* mindfulness is introduced to students may be key in helping to establish not only their understanding of the construct, but their acceptance and willingness to participate in such practices.

Finally, the options for creating well-Being staff development programmes from within schools themselves are many and varied, but the traditional top-down professional development models familiar to many teachers would be incongruous with the findings of this study. However, the scope for such well-Being professional development and more research is wide, and in New Zealand, long overdue.

Final thoughts

This research sought to explore teachers’ perceptions of well-Being in relation to mindfulness-based classroom practices. At times the process has proved particularly poignant, as often the very themes explored touched deeply personal parts of my own life concerning love and loss. Throughout this process, however, I have endeavoured to maintain a reflexive engagement with my participants’ accounts, while at the same time, remaining mindful of an enduring triple hermeneutic as the reader engages with my attempts to capture and interpret the essence of my participants’ ontological experiences, as expressed to me, by my participants.

Kabat-Zinn (n.d.) suggests, “It’s a form of meditation to try to string words together to actually speak your truth in the present moment in a way that might

resonate in the heart of another”. If there is an enduring ‘truth’ in this research, perhaps it resides in the juncture between the known and the unknown, between the certain and the uncertain: this is the place of stillness, the place beyond mind.

It is my great hope that this thesis reveals the ‘truth’ of my participants’ experiences, and in so doing, speaks to the hearts of those who connect with it:

Each person’s life – each life-form, in fact – represents a world,
a unique way in which the universe experiences itself.
And when your form dissolves,
a world comes to an end –
one of countless worlds.
(Tolle, 2005, p. 283)

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was sought for this research project from the University of Waikato, Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. A separate ethics proposal was submitted to the Committee on March 16, 2012. Approval was granted April, 2012.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Taha Wairua

Welcome to the Gallery of Taha Wairua or the Dimension of Spirituality.

In this Gallery, Taha Wairua is the greatest gift given by Io, the Supreme Being, to Mankind. Listen to these word pictures, see the conceptual sketches and behold the mural thoughts.

Taha Wairua is:

the timeless twinkle of celestial lace in a
crystal-crisp night sky;
the warm, open smile of an innocent child;
the calm, caring touch of a faithful friend;
the denial of pleasures to give to another;
and the protection of basic principles
for the families of Nature and Human-kind.

Taha Wairua is also:

the gleeful joy of the roaring surf;
a half-halo rainbow on a clouded rain-swept sky;
the pristine gold of an untrodden beach;
the hypnotic quality of natural masterpieces;
the spiralling beauty of Bird and People song;
and the fractured reflections of a mosaic raindrop.

It is an unforgettable cry of birth;

the magical moment of natural death;
and the sobering, hallowed anguish from crucified Humanity.

Taha Wairua allows each person, in time, to see their true inner selves and to
amend deficits in a more and enlightened way.

Everyone has some Taha Wairua but rarely is it used all day and every day.
Some people deny its existence and endure a life-time of spiritual emptiness.
Others mis-use it and are denied further riches to their lives.

Taha Wairua is the God-force that transcends all man-made boundaries.

It can be found behind a grotesque façade, in a wretchedly deformed container,
or tragically mirrored across a brutally shattered window.

It is the most difficult gift to receive but the easiest to use.

It is the only gift that is indescribably beautiful with a magnificent purity that
beautifies the environment.

It also shows as a quiet incandescence in the eyes of those so afflicted.

Taha Wairua makes the intolerable, tolerable;

the biased, objective;

despair, hopeful;

and mankind God-like.

It is the seed for World PEACE,

the power for brotherly and sisterly LOVE,

and the crucial element for the MATURITY of mankind.

Thus are some of the treasures in this Gallery.

(Te Roopu Awhina o Tokanui, 1987, p. 5).



Appendix B: Letter to principal

June 5 2012

Kia Ora _____

My name is Laurie Mazza-Davies and I am an experienced teacher, having taught for 16 years at the primary school level. I have always been keenly interested in research that informs our teaching practices, and previously investigated classroom practices to assist gifted students in reading, as part of my Master's research. I am currently a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) student at Waikato University. The PhD requires students to investigate and provide significant new insights into a research topic. This research leads me to investigate a topic of great importance to me, that of well-being.

The title of this research project is *Mindfulness in the classroom: An exploration of teachers' perceptions of well-being in relation to mindfulness-based classroom practices*. It has been given the approval of the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Ethics Committee.

Overview of the research topic

Well-being is a component of the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum. It is my intent to investigate this area as it appears to be a neglected area in the field of research. I will be exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences of well-being in relation to mindfulness-based practices.

What is involved for participants?

Approximately six teachers will be invited to participate in this research. They will be invited to share openly their experiences of well-being, and to participate in and critique some mindfulness-based practices. It is not necessary that they know what mindfulness is – we will be exploring this, together. This will involve openly conversing, and possibly writing their thoughts, or art-making. As a group, we will explore some mindfulness-based activities. Teachers will then adapt or create some of their own activities, and use them in their classrooms with students. These activities will serve to foster the hauora strand of the health and physical education curriculum and are therefore of direct relevance to children's education and the New Zealand curriculum. Experiences, thoughts and insights will be shared at our regular group meetings.

Timeframe

I would like the study to begin week one term three and last approximately 10 weeks. The study will require teachers attend group meetings (approximately one to two hours per week) for six weeks. These sessions will be audio taped. On invitation, I would like to visit and observe in each classroom twice during a four week period, after the initial six weeks, at a time that suits each teacher. Each observation will be followed by a teacher debriefing session, where we will discuss the lesson observed. I would also like to withdraw six children following each observation for a brief group meeting, again discussing the nature of the lesson. I anticipate the debriefing sessions, group meetings and my classroom observations to be highly supportive in nature. These sessions are not about critiquing teacher planning or teaching, rather they are an opportunity for teachers to share their experiences regarding the mindfulness experience in relation to well-being.

The following table details the amount of contact time and the nature of the activity teachers will be participating in:

Proposed composition of ten week schedule

| Phase One | Week | Contact | Activity |
|-----------|------|--|---|
| | 1 | meeting | well-being exploration |
| | 2 | meeting | mindfulness – the construct explored |
| | 3 | meeting | mindfulness – activities for adults |
| | 4 | meeting | mindfulness – activities for children explored |
| | 5 | meeting | mindfulness – activities for children explored and critiqued |
| | 6 | meeting | mindfulness activities planned for classrooms |
| Phase Two | 7 | optional meeting | teachers teaching own activities |
| | 8 | observation and de-briefing with individual teachers | teachers teaching activities - Laurie observing |
| | 9 | observation and de-briefing with individual teachers | teachers teaching activities - Laurie observing |
| | 10 | final focus group meeting | open-ended questions considered; discussion centred experiences |

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality

The school, teachers and students will not be identified in this research, and pseudonyms will be used in all transcribed materials and the final written thesis. Participation is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without any reasons given. The information received by participants will only be used for academic purposes and will be presented in my PhD, during academic presentations, and possibly published in academic journals. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that digital copies of Doctoral theses be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons. The information contributed will be transcribed by myself and shown to the teachers. They will be given the opportunity to change, amend or clarify any of their own raw data. After this, only my research supervisors and I will view the transcripts. Once the research is completed, the data will be stored securely for a period of five years and then destroyed.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

In terms of benefits, teachers will be contributing to a new body of knowledge, and in so doing, be given the opportunity to explore aspects of their teaching and the curriculum. This exploration may elicit new discoveries and insights, and may in some way challenge their thinking and teaching philosophies. Through group exploration of the mindfulness phenomenon, opportunities for collegial sharing will be offered.

I see this as a valuable opportunity for teachers to participate in a research project which will contribute to an understanding of teacher well-being, an area of neglect in current New Zealand research. The information produced as a result of this study will make a contribution to the wider teaching community and educational research in New Zealand. All participants will receive a one to two page summary of the main conclusions of the research at the conclusion of the project.

How do I participate in the study?

If you are interested in participating in this study, could you please approve this project through your school Board of Trustees, and fill in the attached consent slip and I will collect it at your convenience. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this study or your participation in it. If you have any concerns, this research project is being supervised by Associate Professor Deborah Fraser, and Professor Roger Moltzen (Dean of Education), Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. Contact details are:

Deborah Fraser: (07) 838 4466 extension 7726, or email: deborah@waikato.ac.nz
Roger Moltzen: (07) 838 4695, or email: rim@waikato.ac.nz

My sincere thanks

Laurie Mazza-Davies

Phone:

Email:

Appendix C: Consent form to be complete by principal

I have read and understood the nature of the research project and agree to participate in this study. I agree with the following statements:

- I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time.
- I understand that the school, teachers and students will not be identified in this research, and pseudonyms will be used in all transcribed materials and the final written thesis.
- I understand that the data collected in this research will be used for academic purposes and will be presented in a PhD thesis, and during academic and professional presentations, and possibly published in academic journals. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that a digital copy of Doctoral theses will be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons.
- I understand the information contributed will be transcribed and shown to teachers, who will then be given the opportunity to change, amend or clarify any of the information supplied.
- I understand all participants will receive a one to two page summary of the main conclusions of the research at the conclusion of the project.
- I understand only the researcher and the researcher's supervisors will view the transcripts. Once the research is completed, the data will be stored securely for a period of five years and then destroyed.
- I understand that this research project is being supervised by Associate Professor Deborah Fraser, and Professor Roger Moltzen (Dean of

Education) Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. If I have any concerns, I may contact them. Contact details are:

Deborah Fraser: (07) 838 4466 extension 7726, or email: deborah@waikato.ac.nz

Roger Moltzen: (07) 838 4695, or email: rim@waikato.ac.nz

Please sign and detach the form below.



I _____ (please print)

have read the attached Principal Information Letter and Consent form, and have had the nature of this research explained to me.

I **consent** / **do not consent** to the involvement of teacher volunteers from this school.

Signature _____

Date_____



Appendix D: Teacher participant information

[Date]

Kia Ora

My name is Laurie Mazza-Davies and I am an experienced teacher, having taught for 16 years at the primary school level. I have always been keenly interested in research that informs our teaching practices, and previously investigated classroom practices to assist gifted students in reading, as part of my Master's research. I am currently a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) student at Waikato University. The PhD requires students to investigate and provide significant new insights into a research topic. This research leads me to investigate a topic of great importance to me, that of teacher well-being. The title of this research project is *Mindfulness in the classroom: An exploration of teachers' perceptions of well-being in relation to mindfulness-based classroom practices*. It has been given the approval of the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Ethics Committee.

Overview of the research topic

Well-being is a component of the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum. It is my intent to investigate what appears to be a neglected area of research, teacher well-being in New Zealand. I will be exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences of well-being in relation to mindfulness-based practices.

What is involved for participants?

You will be invited to share openly your experiences of well-being, and to participate in and critique some mindfulness-based practices. You do not need to know what mindfulness is – we will be exploring this, together. This will involve openly conversing, and possibly writing your thoughts, or art-making. As a group, we will explore some mindfulness-based activities. You will then adapt or create some of your own activities, and use them in your classroom with your students. Experiences, thoughts and insights will be shared at our regular group meetings.

Timeframe

The study will begin week one, term three and last approximately 10 weeks. During this time, you will be invited to attend our group meetings (approximately one to two hours per week) for six weeks. These sessions will be audio taped. On your invitation, I would like to visit and observe in your classroom twice during a four week period, at a time that suits you. Each observation will be followed by a

debriefing session, where you and I will discuss the lesson observed. I anticipate the nature of these group meetings and my classroom observations to be highly supportive in nature. These sessions are not about critiquing your planning or teaching, rather they are an opportunity for you to share *your* experiences regarding the mindfulness experience in relation to well-being. I would also like to withdraw six children following each observation for a brief group meeting, again discussing the nature of the lesson.

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality

The school, teachers and students will not be identified in this research, and pseudonyms will be used in all transcribed materials and the final written thesis. Participation is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without any reasons given. The information received by participants will only be used for academic purposes and will be presented in my PhD, during academic presentations, and possibly published in academic journals. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that a digital copy of Doctoral theses will be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons. The information you contribute will be transcribed by myself and shown to you. You will be given the opportunity to change, amend or clarify any of the information supplied. After this, only my research supervisors and I will view the transcripts. Once the research is completed, the data will be stored securely for a period of five years and then destroyed.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

In terms of benefits, you will be contributing to a new body of knowledge, and in so doing, be given the opportunity to explore aspects of your teaching and the curriculum. This exploration may elicit new discoveries and insights, and may in some way challenge their thinking and teaching philosophies. Through group exploration of the mindfulness phenomenon, opportunities for collegial sharing will be offered.

I see this as a valuable opportunity for teachers to participate in a research project which will contribute to an understanding of teacher well-being, an area of neglect in current New Zealand research. The information produced as a result of this study will make a contribution to the wider teaching community and educational research in New Zealand. All participants will receive a one to two page summary of the main conclusions of the research at the conclusion of the project.

How do I participate in the study?

If you are interested in participating in this study, please fill in the attached consent slip, and I will collect it. My contact details are below. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this study or your participation in it. If you have any concerns, this research project is being supervised by Associate Professor Deborah Fraser, and Professor Roger Moltzen (Dean of Education), Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. Contact details are:

Deborah Fraser: (07) 838 4466 extension 7726, or email: deborah@waikato.ac.nz
Roger Moltzen: (07) 838 4695, or email: rim@waikato.ac.nz

My sincere thanks

Laurie Mazza-Davies

Phone:

Email:

Appendix E: Teacher participant consent form

I have read and understood the nature of the research project and agree to participate in this study. I agree with the following statements:

- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time.
- I understand that the school, teachers and students will not be identified in this research, and pseudonyms will be used in all transcribed materials and the final written thesis.
- I understand that the data collected in this research will be used for academic purposes and will be presented in a PhD thesis, and during academic and professional presentations, and possibly published in academic journals. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that a digital copy of Doctoral theses will be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons.
- I understand the information I contribute will be transcribed and shown to me. I will then be given the opportunity to change, amend or clarify any of the information supplied.
- I understand that any work samples I may produce during the course of this study will remain my property. Copies of any works produced by me may be used for data collection purposes.
- I understand only the researcher and the researcher's supervisors will view the transcripts. Once the research is completed, the data will be stored securely for a period of five years and then destroyed.
- I understand that this research project is being supervised by Associate Professor Deborah Fraser, and Professor Roger Moltzen (Dean of Education) Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. If I have any concerns, I may contact them. Contact details are:

Deborah Fraser: (07) 838 4466 extension 7726, or email: deborah@waikato.ac.nz

Roger Moltzen: (07) 838 4695, or email: rim@waikato.ac.nz

Please sign and detach slip below, and I will collect at a mutually agreed time.



I have read the attached Participant Information Letter and Consent form, and had the nature of this research explained to me.

I _____
(please print)

consent / **do not consent** to be involved in this project.

Signature _____

Date _____



Appendix F: Information for parents of student participants

[Date]

Kia Ora

My name is Laurie Mazza-Davies and I am an experienced teacher, having taught for 16 years at the primary school level. I have always been keenly interested in research that informs teaching practices, and I am currently a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) student at Waikato University. The PhD requires students to investigate and provide significant new insights into a research topic. This research leads me to investigate a topic of great importance to me, that of teacher well-being.

The title of this research project is *Mindfulness in the classroom: An exploration of teachers' perceptions of well-being in relation to mindfulness-based classroom practices*. It has been given the approval of the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Ethics Committee.

Overview of the research topic

Over the past six weeks I have been working with your child's teacher investigating their perceptions and experiences of well-being. My aim has been to capture and interpret the 'lived-experiences' of these teachers.

What is involved for your child?

Your child's teacher will be teaching a series of well-being lessons, and I will be observing two of these lessons. Well-being is a component in the health and physical education learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum. As part of the data collection process, I would like to invite your child to participate in a group discussion to take place after each of the two observations. Your child will be one of six students I will meet with as a group. At this meeting I intend asking some open-ended questions about the lesson they just participated in, and their reactions to the lesson. Some examples of the questions I will be asking are:

- Tell me about what you did during your lesson today.
- Do you know why your teacher taught the lesson today?
- What were you thinking about during the lesson today?
- Was there anything you particularly liked/disliked about today's lesson?

It may be possible that during the course of their lesson, your child produces some work samples. With your child's consent, I may like to take copies of their work

samples as part of the data collection process. I envisage the group meetings taking approximately 15 minutes to 25 minutes.

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality

The school, teachers and students will not be identified in this research, and pseudonyms will be used in all transcribed materials and the final written thesis. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that a digital copy of Doctoral theses will be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons. The information received by participants will only be used for academic purposes and will be presented in my PhD, during academic presentations, and possibly published in academic journals. Only my research supervisors and I will view the interview transcripts.

Participation in this study

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if for any reason they do not wish to participate, they will be excused, with no questions asked.

If you are happy for your child to participate, please fill in the attached consent form, and return to your child's teacher. I require signatures from both yourself and your child on the attached form. I would ask that you kindly explain this letter to your child, and their part in this research. I will be explaining it again to them when we meet, and reiterating their role in the study is completely voluntary.

I see this as a valuable project for all those concerned, and will contribute to an understanding of teachers' perceptions of well-being and how to foster it in the classroom. My contact details are listed below, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this study or your child's participation in it. If you are happy for your child to participate in this project, please fill in and tear off the attached consent form and return it to your child's teacher. This research project is being supervised by Associate Professor Deborah Fraser, and Professor Roger Moltzen (Dean of Education), Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. Contact details are:

Deborah Fraser: (07) 838 4466 extension 7726, or email: deborah@waikato.ac.nz
Roger Moltzen: (07) 838 4695, or email: rim@waikato.ac.nz

My sincere thanks

Laurie Mazza-Davies

Phone

Email:

Appendix G: Consent form to be completed by parent(s)/caregiver(s) of student participant

I have read and understood the nature of this research project and agree to the following statements:

- I have explained the nature of this research to my child, and he/she understands their role in this project.
- I understand that my child's participation is voluntary, and that they can withdraw at any time. My child understands this also.
- I understand that the school, teachers and students will not be identified in this research, and pseudonyms will be used in all transcribed materials and the final written thesis.
- I understand that the data collected in this research will be used for academic purposes and will be presented in a PhD thesis, and during academic presentations, and possibly published in academic journals. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that a digital copy of Doctoral theses will be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons.
- I understand only the researcher and the researcher's supervisors will view the transcripts of this research. Once the research is completed, the data will be stored securely for a period of five years and then destroyed.
- I understand that any work samples my child may produce during the course of this study will remain my child's property. Copies of any works produced may be used for the purpose of data collection.
- I understand that this research project is being supervised by Associate Professor Deborah Fraser, and Professor Roger Moltzen (Dean of Education) Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. If I have any concerns, I may contact them. Contact details are:

Deborah Fraser: (07) 838 4466 extension 7726, or email:
deborah@waikato.ac.nz

Roger Moltzen: (07) 838 4695, or email:
rim@waikato.ac.nz

Please sign and detach the slip below and return to your child's teacher:



I have read the attached Participant Information Letter and Consent form, and
I/We (name parent(s)/caregiver(s))

_____ (please print)

consent / **do not consent** (circle one) to the involvement of my/our child.

Name of student

_____ (please print)

Signature of parent(s)/caregiver(s))

Signature of student

Appendix H: Additional information for teacher participants

Kia Ora!

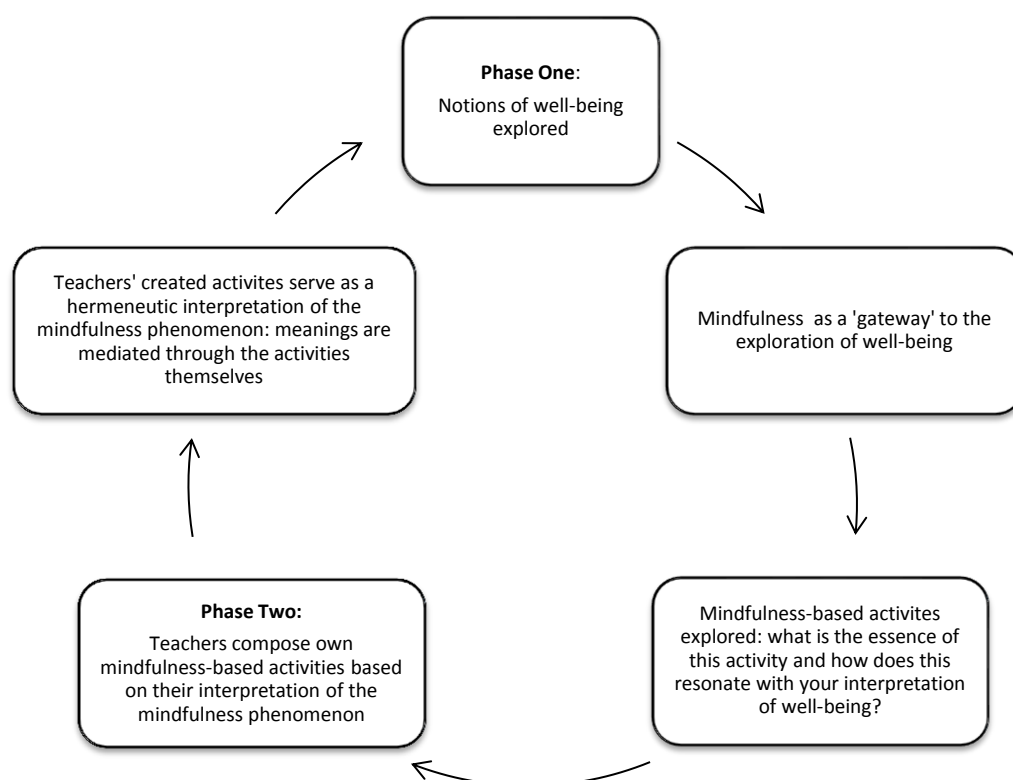
A very warm welcome to our first group meeting. I extend my grateful thanks to you for your involvement in this project, and trust you will find it a satisfying and worthwhile experience. You have been given a Participant Information Letter and an accompanying Participant Consent Form. Please refer to your Participant Information Letter once more, and ensure you are familiar with:

- The overview of the project
- Your involvement in the project
- The time frame of the project
- How issues of anonymity and confidentiality will be addressed (including your right to withdraw from the project at any time)
- The benefits of participating in this project

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide you with additional information concerning the structure of the project, as well as the schedule of questions we will be considering regarding the nature of well-being.

This project comprises a two phase design structure, as described below:

Two phase design structure



As you can see, Phase One comprises the exploration of well-being, and the mindfulness construct. At this time we will be exploring mindfulness-based activities for both adults and children, and considering the relationship between well-being and mindfulness.

The second phase is given over to your own composition of mindfulness-based activities which you will be asked to try with your class. This phase lasts approximately six weeks. The teaching of these activities will be at your discretion, but I anticipate you will want to practice several short exercises per week. Upon your invitation, I would like to observe in your classroom twice during the six week period. The purpose of these observations is in no way to rate your ability to teach mindfulness, rather, I will be an interested observer, recording the classroom activity. Afterwards, we will have a de-briefing session, where we will chat about the session and I will ask you some questions regarding how your experience teaching that particular lesson. I would also like to withdraw six children following each observation for a brief group meeting, again discussing the nature of the lesson.

The structure of the two phases is outlined in the following table. Please note the nature of our weekly contact, and the weekly activity we will be undertaking:

Proposed composition of 10 week schedule

| Phase One | Week | Contact | Activity |
|-----------|------|--|---|
| | 1 | meeting | well-being exploration |
| | 2 | meeting | mindfulness – the construct explored |
| | 3 | meeting | mindfulness – activities for adults |
| | 4 | meeting | mindfulness – activities for children explored |
| | 5 | meeting | mindfulness – activities for children explored and critiqued |
| | 6 | meeting | mindfulness activities planned for classrooms |
| Phase Two | 7 | optional meeting | teachers teaching own activities |
| | 8 | observation and de-briefing with individual teachers | teachers teaching activities - Laurie observing |
| | 9 | observation and de-briefing with individual teachers | teachers teaching activities - Laurie observing |
| | 10 | final focus group meeting | open-ended questions considered; discussion centred experiences |

I anticipate our weekly meetings to occur after school, at a mutually agreed time and place, and to last from one to two hours. The nature of these meetings will be mostly a time of discussion and an exploration of the well-being and mindfulness themes. From time to time I will offer readings or audio tapes to listen to at home. The purpose of any home-based exercises will be to enhance your familiarity and understanding of the mindfulness practice, thereby assisting you in composing your own classroom exercises, as well as enlightening you to the mindfulness phenomenon.

Below you will find the schedule of questions we will be discussing at our first meeting. You may like to consider these questions again at your leisure:

Schedule of Interview Questions

Open ended research questions to be used Phase One: Week One

- Tell me about a personal well-being experience. Can you identify the elements of this experience?
- Are there universal elements of well-being?
- Are there conditions that promote of well-being? Identify these.
- Are there degrees of well-being? Identify these.
- Place well-being on a continuum, starting with 'despair' at the low end, and leaving open the possibility of a state higher than well-being at the high end.
- Are there states of well-being?
- Is well-being a constant?
- Is well-being an emotion as opposed to a state?
- What is your understanding of well-being as defined by the New Zealand curriculum?

I hope this additional information has been helpful in clarifying any issues you may have regarding the project and your role in it. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions whatsoever.

Many thanks

Laurie

Phone:

Email:

Appendix I: Schedule of interview questions

a) Open ended research questions to be used Phase One: Week One

- **Tell me about a personal well-being experience. Can you identify the elements of this experience?** (This particular question will form a large part of the discussion for this meeting, and for this reason, has been given added emphasis and set apart from the following questions).

* * * * *

- Are there universal elements of well-being?
- Are there conditions that promote of well-being? Discuss these.
- Are there degrees of well-being? Identify these.
- Place well-being on a continuum, starting with ‘despair’ at the low end, and leaving open the possibility of a state higher than well-being at the high end.
- Are there states of well-being?
- Is well-being a constant?
- What is your understanding of well-being as defined by the New Zealand curriculum?

b) Questions to be asked of teachers at debriefing sessions following lesson observations:

- What was the main idea behind today’s lessons?
- I noticed you used the phrase ... quite often during the lesson. Can you tell me more about your thinking behind this?
- What outcomes did you expect from today’s lesson? To what extent (or otherwise) were they met?

- What was your thinking behind your choice of activity for today's lesson, that is, what was it about that particular activity that made you associate it with mindfulness? What aspects of today's activity would you say were particularly conducive to well-being?
- In preparation for today's lesson, did you 'picture' the students responding in a particular way? If so, did the way you anticipated their responses influence your choice of activity and how you taught it? Why?
- How will today's lesson impact/influence the next lesson you teach?
- What surprises emerged for you in the teaching of the lesson?
- If you had to title today's lesson, what would it be called? Why?

c) Questions to be asked of teachers at final focus group meeting:

- How comfortable (or otherwise) were you in teaching your mindfulness-based lessons?
- Tell me about how you 'felt' during the teaching of your lessons.
- Do you think your lessons were a fair representation or interpretation of what you believe mindfulness to be?
- Can you compare your mindfulness-based teaching lessons with other lessons you may have taught on well-being?
- Can you think of a metaphor to interpret your experiences with mindfulness?
- Based on your personal experiences, if you had to explain 'mindfulness' to someone, what would you say?
- What would you say is the relationship between mindfulness and well-being?
- In what way might mindfulness influence your 'everyday' teaching, that is, will your experiences with mindfulness influence your future teaching at all?

- Has this experience with mindfulness in any way influenced your personal beliefs/practices?

d) Questions to be asked of students at focus group interviews/meetings:

- Show me how you felt about participating in today's lesson. (Children will have access to paper, pens, craft material, symbols depicting a range of emotions, and several puppets, and if they choose, may draw or enact their thinking).
- Tell me about what you did during your lesson today.
- Do you know why your teacher taught the lesson today?
- What were you thinking about during the lesson today?
- What do you think is understood by the term 'well-being'?
- What do you think is understood by the term 'mindfulness'?
- Tell me about the ... you made in class today
- Can you tell me about another lesson you may remember that reminded you of today's lesson?
- Was there anything you particularly liked/disliked about today's lesson? Why?