

The contribution of the practice of mindfulness to stress
reduction among school teachers:
a qualitative study of Irish primary teachers

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This work is dedicated to the memory of
Jacinta O'Brien and Pat Duffy,
two wonderful friends
and
inspiring academics.

Abstract

The contribution of mindfulness towards occupational stress is an under-researched aspect of primary school teaching in Ireland and internationally. The purpose of this research is to investigate the consequences for teachers who practise mindfulness. A qualitative approach was used to explore the occupational stressors experienced by primary school teachers and the contribution that mindfulness makes toward stress reduction. The research, involving interviews with 20 primary school teachers in urban and rural schools throughout Ireland, was carried out in 2013.

The research provides evidence of teachers' ability to respond to occupational stress by internally regulating thoughts and emotions. The consequences of such internal self-regulation proposed by the study include the development of internal teacher attributes, a contribution to professional practice and significant classroom outcomes which contribute to teacher coping skills and resilience. The literature review exposed that there were few frameworks or models relevant to mindfulness and teaching. The 'Mindfulness in Teaching Model', which is presented in this thesis, addresses this gap.

Few qualitative research studies have been conducted in Ireland or internationally on how mindfulness impacts on teachers' lives. This thesis serves to illuminate, for the first time, how the practice of mindfulness affects the effectiveness and professionalism of primary school teachers in Ireland.

Keywords: mindfulness, teachers, stress, stress reduction, self-care

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CERD	Centre for Educational Research and Development
CAQDAS	A computer aided qualitative data analysis system, e.g. Nvivo8.
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
Croke Park hours:	The name given to public sector negotiations which resulted in the provision of a Public Service Agreement known as Croke Park Hours. It provides for an additional 36 hours of Continuing Professional Development per school year at primary level, additional hours to be dedicated by each teacher within their contract. The terms of the agreement became operative for primary schools in February 2011.
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). The Action Plan for Educational Inclusion was launched in May 2005 and remains the Department of Education and Skills' policy instrument to address educational disadvantage. The action plan focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). DEIS provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage.
DES	Department of Education and Skills

EAL	English as an Additional Language teacher. A support teacher for children whose first language is not English.
ETNS	Educate Together National Schools. Educate Together is an independent NGO and the patron body of a growing network of schools throughout Ireland which have a multi-denominational focus and are run according to the Educate Together Charter.
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
Gaelscoil	Irish-medium school
Gaelscoileanna	Irish-medium schools – plural of Gaelscoil above. Gaelscoileanna Teo. is a national, voluntary organisation supporting the development of Irish-medium schools at primary and post-primary level.
Golden Time	A short period, e.g. five minutes, with the teacher at the teacher's table towards the end of a day.
HSE	Health Services Executive
KIMS	Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills, a 39-item self-report that measures four mindfulness skills including observing, describing, acting with awareness and acceptance without judgment.
MAAS	Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale. The trait MAAS is a 15-item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of mindfulness, namely, a receptive state of mind in which attention, informed by a sensitive awareness of what is occurring in the present, simply observes what is taking place.
MBCT	Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy

MBSR	Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. This is an eight week mindfulness programme devised by Jon Kabat-Zinn to help people manage stress and be at ease with life.
MBT	Mindfulness Based Therapy
MT	Mindfulness Training
Nurture Room	A space in which to work creatively with children who are particularly vulnerable
PERMA	Acronym for wellbeing model comprising of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement.
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
Safety Flower	An artificial flower used by staff in some schools to alert another staff member that one is in need of help or support. The flower is given to a child, who does not know its significance, to bring to another teacher who will recognise that the teacher requires assistance in some form.
SEC	Social and emotional competence
SNA	Special Needs Assistant. A classroom assistant who supports a particular pupil who exhibits specific needs.
Stillness corner	A corner in the classroom where a child is invited to go to take some quiet time. The corner has three rules: a pupil can choose to go to the corner; when there the pupil cannot disrupt others; the pupil taking quiet time cannot be disrupted by the teacher or other pupils.

TCI	Teaching Council of Ireland
Teacher time	A child is offered five minutes at the end of the day at the teacher's desk. S/he can play or talk, read a book or chat with the teacher. Its purpose is in the building of teacher-pupil relationships.
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
Traffic Lights	A behaviour system in place in some schools in which there are 'traffic lights' in each class. Each child has a peg with his/her name on it. If a child is acting out s/he goes to green. If the behaviour continues s/he goes to yellow. If they eventually get to red they are required to take time out. With a second red they have to spend time in another class. If they get red three times they have to go to the principal and their parents are brought into the school for consultation.
The Vigil Continuous Performance Test	A test used with children and adults to measure sustained attention or vigilance.
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

1. Introduction

In this thesis a model of effective mindfulness practice is developed through an empirical study and by building on the work of Roeser et al. (2013). Conducted in the context of primary school teaching in Ireland, the research aims to offer insight into the contribution that mindfulness practice could make to stress reduction within the profession. In doing so, it is the intention to advance knowledge and understanding of teachers' responses to stress and the development of wellbeing.

The research was undertaken from April to June 2013, and culminated in extensive qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 20 primary school teachers throughout Ireland. The basis of the study is the value of mindfulness in the promotion of professional wellbeing and an ability to develop competently through a process of 'internally directed learning' (Korthagen, 2009: 2).

Mindfulness is known for its capacity to reduce stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Carmody et al., 2009). It is therefore a significant choice of strategy to address teacher stress, although there are many other strategies that teachers can choose from to enhance wellbeing and deal with occupational challenges. The research is set in the context of primary and elementary teachers globally experiencing stress, governments and agencies aware of its existence and consequences, and children's learning being impacted by their teachers' competencies and wellbeing (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). In an occupation that has great potential for human flourishing and self-fulness (Higgins, 2010), the connection between mindfulness and stress reduction in primary teaching is gaining credibility as a valuable strategy (Gold et al., 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013; Csaszar and Buchanan, 2015).

This brief introductory chapter presents an introduction to the thesis, sets out a rationale and objectives for the study and details the research questions for exploration. It also discusses the philosophical underpinnings and the positionality of the researcher.

1.1 RATIONALE

The experience of occupational stress is not new with countless stressors impacting on those in the workplace. It points to an increasing need in many occupations to manage stress, both to reduce illness and to improve health and occupational effectiveness. Teaching is no exception with extensive international literature identifying the

prevalence of teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Darmody and Smyth, 2010; Kalyva, 2013). There is growing concern about teacher wellbeing and the need to incorporate personal and professional strategies in order to maintain resilience (Cottrell, 2013).

This study is contextualised in a teaching climate that is impacted upon by global unrest, national economic downturn and a ‘performativity’ upturn (Lynch et al., 2012: 61) that prioritises literacy, numeracy and accountability. The research is perhaps fitting and relevant in view of consequential ongoing changes in schools and curricula, as well as alterations in teachers’ working conditions, increased workloads and reduced resources triggered by cutbacks (Nunan, September 2013). Some of the most common effects of excessive workload are stress and burnout, leading to ill health, low job satisfaction and diminished ability to engage with pupils (Kyriacou, 2000; Roeser et al., 2013; Csaszar and Buchanan, 2015). Central to this research is an acknowledgement of the ‘emotional labor’ (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009: 3) of supervising up to 35 children of varying abilities and needs in one room at one time and the need for effective resources to deal with the cognitive and socio-emotional challenges therein (Roeser et al., 2013). Amid such an ‘attention-intensive’ atmosphere (Roeser et al., 2013: 2), the study argues that mindfulness, with its focus on consciousness, attention and awareness of one’s moment-to-moment experiences (Kabat-Zinn, 2001) could be one such resource and a response to current circumstances and individuals’ experiences.

Although its historical roots are embedded in the Buddhist tradition, it is evident that mindfulness practice has changed in recent years. Many who practise it in the West do so as a secular practice due to its psychological and health benefits (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Increasingly substantiated research reveals it as a support to reducing stress, anxiety and depression while increasing motivation for lifestyle choices (Ludwig and Kabat-Zinn, 2008). Relative to its professional value, Roeser et al. (2013) describe mindfulness for teachers as delivering the capacity to ‘monitor their internal reactions to emotionally evocative situations’ thereby creating awareness of potential emotional reactivity and need for calm prior to response (Roeser et al., 2013: 1). While research in a teaching context is in its infancy, most studies to date have focused on student wellbeing (Albrecht et al., 2012). The foremost enquiry in this research is to consider an understanding of mindfulness in the workplace. Investigating primary school teachers is pertinent although the findings could apply equally to other occupational groups.

A recurring theme in relation to mindfulness is its capacity to reduce stress, and to enable a person to live in the present (Kabat-Zinn, 2001) and take charge of internal thinking patterns (Farb et al., 2007). The focus of mindfulness on thoughts, emotions and body sensations parallels the humanistic psychology perspective that argues that emotions, intellect and body collaborate towards self-actualisation (Radu, 2010), one of the keystones of the humanistic approach (Ryback, 2006). Given importance within humanistic psychology, which became prominent in the 1960s, mindfulness became known in the world of psychology and science in the 1970s drawing on existentialist thought coupled with phenomenology (Colman, 2010). According to Aanstoos et al. (2000), humanistic psychology adopts a holistic approach to human existence through investigations of the ‘nature of the self, self-actualization, health, creativity, being, becoming, individuation, and meaning’ (Aanstoos et al., 2000: 6). It incorporates values, freedom, personal responsibility, tragedy, human potential and spirituality (Aanstoos et al., 2000). Emanating from the work of Carl Rogers in the mid-1900s which focused on the power of listening deeply to oneself as a means of healing and freedom (Rogers, 1961), so too mindfulness is a way of being and listening deeply to self (Cigolla, 2011), in times of both stress and wellbeing. This is reflected in psychology and is concerned with understanding emotions, traits and institutions, and facilitating the pleasant life, the engaged life, and the meaningful life (Carr, 2011: 40).

The humanistic perspective has influenced and guided this research. Borne out of the work of Rogers (1951, 1961), and Maslow (1968, 1970), the research is underpinned by the humanist view which highlights an individual’s inward exploration toward subjective experience, an inherent motivation toward optimal functioning, and a context in which individuals’ ‘innate motivation toward self-actualization would find expression and their presenting problems would resolve’ (Carr, 2011: 343). Mindfulness, being a way of ‘looking deeply into oneself in the spirit of self-inquiry and self-understanding’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 12) and ‘thinking in terms of *wholeness* and *interconnectedness*’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 151) (author’s emphasis) is infused with elements of subjective experience. These key factors have informed the aims, objectives, design and process of the research.

From a humanistic perspective, the focus of the current study is on the teacher as an individual with his/her unique ‘meanings and interpretations’ (Cohen et al., 2000: 8) relative to the practice of mindfulness in teaching. One of the main reasons that the humanistic theory was chosen as an underpinning approach was its focus on a ‘person-centered approach’ (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994: 123) and its recognition of the

individual's natural inclination to move towards 'growth, maturity and positive change' and in the direction of self-actualisation (Smith et al., 2003: 477). It also upholds that teachers, as individuals, are conscious; 'aware of being aware' and have 'choice' and 'responsibility' (Greening, 1998: 11) with regard to their behaviour and thinking processes, such behaviour being associated with their inner feelings, self-concept (Rogers, 1961) and their responses in stressful situations.

In recent years the presence of positive psychology has afforded a legitimate focus on emotional wellbeing and happiness in professional practice with happiness and wellbeing identified as the derived outcomes of this field of psychology (Seligman, 2004). Emanating from humanistic psychology it is described as a 'science of subjective experience' (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 5) that contributes to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions (Gable and Haidt, 2005: 103). Akin to the potential of mindfulness to reduce stress and increase wellbeing (Kabat-Zinn, 2001), the focus of positive psychology is to begin to accelerate a 'change in the focus of psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life' (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 5). What these traditions have in common is that they all reinforce the centrality of individual experience and awareness of one's immediate experiences.

With this underpinning the focus of the research was to explore the beliefs, feelings, emotions and concerns of primary school teachers. The research questions emerged from the literature review. They sought to understand the processes which enabled wellbeing in teaching while facilitating stress reduction through mindfulness practice. This required a study of both teaching and mindfulness practices.

1.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Acknowledging the reality of stress in teaching and the need for effective coping skills and responses, this thesis investigated the contribution that mindfulness practice made to primary school teachers. The study comprised a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with 20 primary school teachers. It posed the question: How might the practice of mindfulness contribute to stress reduction in teaching? Put differently: How might mindful teaching contribute to greater wellbeing and ease in teaching? It dealt with pertinent issues through the following research questions:

1. In what ways do primary school teachers practise mindfulness?
2. In what ways can mindfulness impact on professional practice?

3. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on workload management?
4. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues?
5. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on classroom management?

1.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT

This study focused on the stressors experienced by primary school teachers located in the Republic of Ireland. The criterion for participation in the study was to have practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months. It was the contribution of this practice that was the focus of the current research. From a humanistic perspective, Rogers (1951) and Maslow (1968) argued that, with its capacity to explore how people think and feel, the subjective perception and understanding of the world was more important than objective reality. Considering this capacity of humanism to gain insight into individuals' behaviour through qualitative methods and unstructured interviews, it was the chosen approach (Newby, 2013) for research into the experience of primary school teachers in Ireland.

Current working conditions for teachers have been impacted upon by recently imposed economic and commercially driven changes. The realities of global and national recessions alongside recent performativity concerns are associated with larger class numbers, increased demands in teachers' working conditions and concerns regarding children's educational standards (Ó Foghlú, 2014). The introduction of additional numeracy and literacy hours for children, and supplementary professional development for teachers, with additional paperwork and workload, all combine as potential sources of stress within a profession that is 'saturated' with relationships (Roeser et al., 2013: 168). It points to the importance of teacher wellbeing and the need for effective stress management strategies for socio-emotional competence in relation to teacher, pupil and classroom outcomes (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009) in primary schools.

The Irish education system includes state-funded primary schools, special schools and private schools. Religious, non-denominational, multi-denominational and Gaelscoileanna (Irish-medium schools) are each state funded. For historical reasons most primary schools in Ireland are parish based and under religious patronage (Coolahan et al., 2012). While the State provides free primary education, 96% of schools are owned and under the patronage of religious denominations and almost

90% of these are owned and under the patronage of the Catholic Church (Irish Government News Service, 2014). In January 2014 there were 3,154 primary schools in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2014) serviced by 32,175 primary school teachers (Department of Education and Skills Statistics Section, 2013). Of these schools, 2,862 were Catholic, 234 other denominations and 58 multi-denominational Educate Together schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2014).

The Catholic Church played a key role in the establishment of education and schools from the beginning of the state in 1922, and slowly education shifted from the ‘Catholic Church-State nexus to encompass teacher unions, parent organizations and other managerial bodies’ (Lynch et al., 2012: 30). However, with a decline in vocations the subsequent decrease in religious personnel to tender additional care and social service, ‘effectively as a gift to the state’, created a void that required the development of a middle management structure for lay teachers (Lynch et al., 2012: 38). It is sometimes proposed that the neoliberal education reform movement was opposed in Ireland. However, it is argued that prior to neoliberal reforms a system of local management and ‘consumer choice’ existed (Power et al., 2013: 10). The impact of such neoliberalism on the practise of management in Irish education has exposed ‘markets in education’ (Tormey, 2007: 180) or the commercialisation of education (Lynch et al., 2012). This type of new managerial structure has moved to a framework where ‘people are ultimately instruments in the achievement of an end’ (Lynch et al., 2012: 85) and which has resulted in a primary school system that is diminishing the traditional caring model of teachers and principals due to the imposition of business models in education (Lynch et al., 2012) and the appearance of ‘performativity’ (Sugrue, 2011: 61). This is evidenced in the introduction of additional mandatory non-contact hours for teachers alongside Whole School Evaluations (WSE) (King, 2012) and incidental or unannounced inspections in primary schools which examine teaching and learning, management and leadership quality in schools (Hislop, 2012), and which are commonly a stressor within the primary school system.

Economic and commercially driven structural changes in teachers’ terms and conditions are potentially new contributors to teacher stress at social and psychological levels. Recent years have been challenging for everyone involved in education in Ireland with greater student numbers, an economic crisis and concerns regarding educational standards (Ó Foghlú, 2014). The general financial crisis and the government’s austerity policy have resulted in significant changes in teachers’ terms, their conditions and pay, and the circumstances of their pupil population (Nunan, June

2013; Nunan, September 2013). The Department of Education and Skills pays teachers' salaries (Department of Education and Skills, 2014). As public sector employees, educationalists are among those who have been 'shown the greatest wage declines' in recent years (O'Farrell, 2013: 18), with public spending on education receiving a dramatic reduction from 13.7% of Irish government spending in 2011 to 9.4% in 2013 (OECD, 2013). Such cuts have implications for school budgets, resources and teaching personnel, thereby resulting in added responsibility and strain on teachers in the classroom.

At this time there is increased accountability through extra paperwork, standardised test results and the inception of the new school self-evaluation format together with what is referred to as 'death by initiative' (Cottrell, 2013), where so many social issues are expected to be solved in schools. These are arguably constraints to teachers' performance, time and wellbeing. With an already loaded curriculum, time is at a premium with additional time required for each new proposal. Additional workload creates increased time pressure and can have negative effects with consequential raised stress levels (Pickering, 2010) prompting a mismatch between teacher demands and resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) in the care and teaching of children.

An important aspect of the Catholic tradition in education was its strong focus on pastoral care for children (Lynch, 1989). Currently, the care and accountability agenda for teachers in Ireland is supported by The Education Act (1998), holding principals responsible for the creation of a school environment which 'promotes professional development of teachers' (Department of Education and Skills, 1998: 24), echoing employer responsibility for 'a duty of care' to employees (Dunne, 2000). However, current evidence of an increased focus on child literacy and numeracy within Irish primary schools could be seen as endorsing performativity. This is the consequence of poor results in the Progress in International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey (PIRLS) (Thornton, 2014; Morgan, 2015). With minimal guidance in terms of what to sacrifice in order to give added attention to these areas within the curriculum this type of situation leaves teachers with time and workload pressures which constitute additional stress and strain (Pickering, 2010).

Professional development and increased time spent on the development of skills in classroom time (Department of Education and Skills, 2011) were promoted in 2013 to

the exclusion of teachers' personal development. At this time the Department of Education and Skills accepted applications for Continuing Professional Development programmes and indicated that it would not consider applications that focused on the personal development of teachers, which of course has an implication on teacher health and wellbeing and teacher awareness and self-care (Department of Education and Skills, 2013). Such policy changes made by the Department of Education and Skills have undermined the Department's credibility among teachers, thus contributing to occupational stress (Nunan, 2013).

The current study explored teachers' concerns relative to workplace stress. The participants were either class teachers or learning support teachers and were employed in a mixture of rural and urban schools. Some schools were designated DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools, indicating that they were considered disadvantaged by a Department of Education and Skills categorisation; others were Irish-speaking schools (Gaelscoileanna), Educate Together schools, or regular primary schools. The interviewees were predominantly female with two male teachers and represented a variety of ages and teaching experience. Each interviewee was questioned by the researcher who was cognisant of her values, experiences and previous knowledge. It is important to disclose the researcher position relative to the research as 'how we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on ... [what] ... we bring to the research' (Creswell, 2007: 179). The next section will address the researcher's positionality.

1.4 THE RESEARCHER

The value of bringing my biography to the study (Cousin, 2010) is as a means of researcher openness and reflexivity (Kirby et al., 2006). With a personal practice of meditation and mindfulness for over 30 years, which I came to through prolonged hospitalisation and serious illness, I am aware of my long-standing association with the subject area of the research. As a freelance practitioner for many years and a part-time lecturer in a third level institute, the dissemination of mindfulness is sometimes incorporated into my work. CPD in Ireland is expertly delivered and supported among the teaching population. One initiative is what is known as 'summer courses' which is a wide range of CPD courses approved by the Department of Education and Skills, and delivered throughout the country both face-to-face and online. The Mayo Education Centre, a teacher support centre in the West of Ireland, is host to such courses. In 2011, I was invited by its director to design a course, 'Developing Mindfulness and Wellbeing in Primary School Children', for delivery online and face-to-face. I did so in

collaboration with a colleague. The emphasis of the course was twofold. It was to deliver mindfulness training to teachers and to instruct them to introduce mindfulness to children in the classroom. This thesis is linked to these courses as it was in their design and delivery that my awareness of teacher stress was raised. Thus I considered the value of an evidence-based study.

Not being a member of the primary teaching profession and at the same time delivering CPD to its members I could be seen as both an insider and an outsider (Kirby et al., 2006) and am cognisant of that. It is important to disclose my own beliefs as they have influenced the choice of research and the process from its initiation, including the development of research questions, methodology, analysis and research conclusions (Bryman, 2008). Having practised mindfulness with positive effect for most of my life I am aware that my viewpoint and values relative to mindfulness have the capacity to influence emergent data and findings. Thus, it is essential for me to approach the research with ‘a sense of “newness” to elicit rich and descriptive data’ (Creswell, 2007: 269). It is also pertinent that I engage in a process that Creswell refers to as ‘bracketing’ (Creswell, 2007: 269) by setting aside my beliefs, feelings and perceptions in order to remain open and thereby ensure an investigation that is both valid and reliable (Miles et al., 2014). In relation to this and in accordance with the University of Lincoln’s guidelines (University of Lincoln, 2012), all data has been retained lest a question of bias requires examination by a third party at a later time. Seventeen of the participants were unknown to me during the research. The other three I had met on one occasion.

Additional issues of positionality are discussed in Chapter Three of the thesis.

1.5. OVERVIEW

In Chapter Two occupational stress and mindfulness are interrogated with particular reference to the teaching population. The chapter explores the current primary school climate in Ireland which is contextualised in an educational system rooted in Catholicism (Lynch et al., 2012), an economic atmosphere cloaked in austerity measures (Ó Foghlú, 2014) and a curriculum that is slowly being influenced by performativity (Sugrue, 2011). These can be seen as contributors to recent alterations in resources, responsibilities and personnel, giving rise to additional stress and strain for teachers. The chapter argues the importance for teachers to be mindful of their self-care needs in order to maintain resilience and self-fullness (Higgins, 2010), whilst also

acknowledging the humanistic approach of striving towards growth and self-actualisation (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1968). The chapter traces the current reputation of mindfulness as a stress reduction strategy and its application to wellbeing and stress reduction in teaching. It draws on the axioms of intention, attention and attitude (Shapiro et al., 2006) to suggest that teachers can choose their responses to thinking and behavioural patterns in everyday activities. Finally, the chapter argues the need for a guiding theoretical framework for mindfulness in teaching and critiques the development of such by drawing on the model and theory of change by Roeser et al. (2012, 2013).

Chapter Three describes the methodological design for the study. This chapter identifies the preference for a qualitative approach in order to understand the teachers' subjective views (Morrison, 2007). Underpinned by a humanistic perspective, the choice of semi-structured interviews was chosen to access the teachers' views and experiences, their understanding of the world, and the incidence of stress and stress reduction in their teaching. In Chapter Four an analysis of the data utilising an inductive process based on a Miles and Huberman framework (1984) for qualitative data is outlined relative to each of the research questions. The way in which teachers were introduced to mindfulness is examined alongside the outcomes of such practice. The stressors experienced by teachers are studied by identifying external and internal sources of stress suggesting that some can be impacted upon by mindfulness practice and others are out of their control. The capacity of mindfulness to address internal challenges pointed to self-awareness and the self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and sensations with a sense of kindness and care creating a response to stressful situations.

A discussion of the findings is at the core of Chapter Five. Mindfulness is situated within a broader context of teacher, classroom and school identifying the interconnection and correlation of each. Two outcomes are identified which underpin the mindfulness including teacher self-regulation and attributes alongside a contribution to professional practice. This chapter draws the findings together, presenting the new knowledge and discussing their integration into the Roeser et al. (2013) model. Attention is drawn to the addition into the model of teachers' internal experience of mindfulness and the development of specific attributes identified by them.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, provides a summary of the study inclusive of an application of the findings, limitations and recommendations for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to discuss literature relating to the experience of stress among Irish primary school teachers and the contribution of mindfulness toward stress reduction within this professional cohort. The analysis of literature broadly considers the research, applications, tensions and debates relative to mindfulness and occupational stress in the professional and primary school teaching context. It examines the contributors to occupational stress, pressure and anxiety in an educational field and the use of mindfulness as a strategy to address occupational health risks that primary school teachers face today. Generally the examination of literature considers national and international sources. The availability of research from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom has enhanced the review and points to an acute awareness of stress and its dangers to personal and professional health and wellbeing. Though there are many strategies to respond to occupational stress, the mindfulness strategy was chosen for exploration in this research. Due to limited literature related to primary school teachers it can be concluded, from the increasing research into stress and mindfulness in the medical and professional arena (Chaskleson, 2011), that it is significant to apply the findings of this research to primary school teachers.

This literature review focuses on several key areas that inform the research. It argues that the levels of stress in primary teaching require significant stress reduction strategies to assist teachers towards occupational wellbeing. Literature relevant to stress is explored and integrated into a section on teacher stress, which is dealt with at a local and global level. It identifies teaching as a profession inclusive of innumerable stressful experiences which teachers sometimes struggle to manage at physical, mental and emotional levels (Pickering, 2010). Thus it points to the need for adequate ways of managing it, first by being able to identify it and then resolve it. This is followed by a section which examines mindfulness and argues its value as a strategic stress reduction technique. It aims to give the reader a broad understanding of its origins and applications whilst also interrogating it in a medical and neuroscience context in which it was initially researched. Such research has given credence to the inseparable link between body and mind, suggesting mindfulness as a potential stress reduction technique (Baime, 2011). The final two sections contend that mindfulness is a practice

applicable to teacher stress and wellbeing, making a case for a model for mindfulness intervention in primary school teaching. The chapter conclusion draws together the important elements of the various sections in an effort to summarise how the literature informs the study of mindfulness and stress reduction in primary school teaching in Ireland.

2.2 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS DEFINED

Uncertainty is sometimes cited as the only certainty in a complex and ever-changing world. A myriad of strong feelings and responses are invoked through experiences of constant change (Le Cornu, 1999; Harris, 2008), which require understanding and appropriate expression in order to sustain high quality teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 2000). Some workplace cultures expect employees to have the capacity to deal easily with whatever develops, for example reduced staffing or additional curriculum expectations from the Department of Education. Chaskleson refers to this type of expectation as ‘a painful delusion’ (Chaskleson, 2011: 58) which potentially contributes to an annual economic loss of millions of pounds through workplace stress and depression, identified by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2009).

The literature shows that studies on stress have not identified one common definition. It suggests, however, that the basis of occupational stress is a combination of personal, organisational and social factors including role, leadership and relationships, (Netterstrøm and Bech, 2010) culminating in a disagreeable emotional state (Miller and Fraser, 2000). Stress is ‘complicated to conceptualize, being a subjective phenomenon’ (Ling Mei and Yazdanifard, 2012: 203), and a process involving dynamic, rapid and constant changes with continuous review and feedback (Lazarus, 1991).

The popularisation of the term ‘stress’ is attributed to Hans Selye in the 1950s (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Following extensive physiological studies on stress responses, he defined it as ‘the nonspecific response of the body to any demand, whether it is caused by, or results in, pleasant or unpleasant conditions’ (Selye, 1984: 28), an aspect common to teaching (Kyriacou, 2000). His thinking attributed stress to environmental changes producing internal and individual behavioural, psychological (Selye, 1975) or physiological responses (Selye, 1984). He identified the term *stressor* as the stimulus or the event that creates the stress internally or externally (Selye, 1984), and

differentiated between *distress* and its association with negative feelings and unpleasant physical states and *eustress* which is pertinent to motivation, positive responses and healthy physical states (Selye, 1974). Thus, excessive stimulation can cause distress while eustress generally results in manageable levels of stress (Le Fevre et al., 2003). Eustress is now identified as a process of responding positively to stressful events as well as the positive outcome of this process, and is associated with the Yerkes-Dobson Law which indicates that a certain level of stress produces productivity and effectivity until an optimum level is reached (O'Sullivan, 2011). However, it is important to regulate stress at an optimum level. This is why this study focuses on the more challenging stressful experiences pertaining to unpleasant responses with the potential to transform towards eustress. Suggesting that 'the most important stressors are emotional, especially those causing distress' (Selye, 1984: 370), Selye suggested that the same stressor can bring about different responses in different individuals.

In the same period Lazarus and Folkman (1984) focused on occupational stress and identified stress as an imbalance between demands and resources or a situation when pressure exceeds one's apparent ability to deal with it at an operational and professional level – the insistence on performativity aligned with a reduction in staffing in the Irish educational context being a case in point. Lazarus and Folkman suggested that individuals do not respond directly to the stressor, but rather take personal responsibility and control, forming a transaction between the individual and the environment, notably the teacher and the demands. Referred to as the Transactional Model, this perspective indicates that individuals, or teachers, discover how to manage the stressors and use their own ability to improve their particular situations (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

From a similar viewpoint the Health Realization, or Innate Health model, questions the causes of stress and the nature of thought processes in determining a response to potentially stressful external circumstances (Mills, 1995). These models propose that the cognitive factors in stress relate to thinking quality, implying that, with insight into the nature of thought and experience, everyone has the potential to access natural and positive perspectives towards wisdom and calmness, despite the circumstances (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Mills, 1995).

Alternatively, neuroscientists have classified stress in scientific terms identifying neurological and chemical responses generated from internal thinking processes

alongside external stimuli (Dispenza, 2007; Hanson, 2013). Stress in this context is categorised as the body moving out of its normal homeostatic balance. It thus categorises the stressor as that internal or external aspect that upsets the ‘normal chemical balance of the body’ with the stress response of the individual attempting to return to normal homeostatic balance (Dispenza, 2007: 267). This questions the human ability to activate mental and physiological stress responses by simply thinking about a past or future experience (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Dispenza, 2007).

Two decades after the popularisation of the word stress, the term burnout was coined; it became an important work phenomenon. In the 1980s Freudenberger identified burnout as inner stress and exhaustion resulting from failure, loss of power and unmet needs (Freudenberger, 1980). During the same period it was identified as ‘a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that could occur among individuals who, like teachers, do “people work” of some kind’ (Maslach and Jackson, 1982: 3). It was associated with a mismatch between the worker and the work place (Maslach and Leiter, 1979), the teacher and the classroom. Depersonalisation is noted as one of the traits of burnout (Maslach and Jackson, 1982), alongside the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours at work in normal individuals (Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998). This results in emotional exhaustion (Csaszar and Buchanan, 2015), distress and lack of motivation or put simply ‘a lack of hope’ (Goutas, 2008: 1). Though experienced across many professions, this study focuses on primary school teacher stress.

The natural physical survival tactics of fight, flight or freeze are called upon in response to stress or danger. At a mental or emotional level these have the capacity to become self-criticism, self-isolation or self-absorption (Germer, 2009). While this can be self-destructive or sometimes self-protective, Neff offers an alternative view towards wellbeing integrating self-compassion. Her work counter-proposes these attributes, suggesting the promotion of self-kindness as opposed to self-judgment and criticism, common humanity within experiences in place of self-isolation, and awareness of the present moment in a clear and balanced manner rather than self-absorption or rumination (Neff, 2009). Applied to teaching it encourages teachers to stop and relate to oneself with kindness, to realise that s/he is not alone and to work in a mindful and focused manner. Neff suggests that such attitudes create psychological wellbeing and culminate in a self-compassionate frame of mind towards self and others in the acknowledgement of suffering and the desire to alleviate it with kindness and non-judgmental attitude (Neff, 2003; Neff, 2009). Self-compassion is considered a natural

attribute with a desire to be safe and happy, and to live with ease and curiosity (McKee et al., 2006; Germer, 2009). It is aligned with humanistic psychology through its association with Rogers' unconditional positive regard and Maslow's B-perception (Neff, 2003). These three aspects, with similar themes of self-acceptance and non-judgmental recognition of the self and others, point to valuable teacher attributes. Individuals exhibiting self-compassionate traits reveal increased self-esteem, happiness, optimism and connection with decreased anxiety, fear, rumination and minimal tendency to berate due to failure (Neff 2009). Such compassionate characteristics could challenge teacher responses to increased occupational demands by drawing on personal proactive responses towards self-care.

A new compassionate response termed 'tend and befriend' has recently been identified. It suggests that tending focuses on a protective response to experience while befriending focuses on 'a social response to connection and care' (Germer, 2009: 85). This garners an ability to manage and regulate distress and have greater control over one's responses, thereby gaining a capacity to take compassionate action (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). While mindfulness practice can lead to self-compassion (Kabat-Zinn, 2001), Germer suggests that, when a person is stressed and in intense emotional pain, s/he can 'make the implicit quality of compassion explicit' and respond with self-kindness in a meaningful way (Germer, 2009: 90). Thus, it could offer possibilities to teachers in the midst of a changing teaching environment and within a profession which is acknowledged as having significant occupational stress levels (Kyriacou, 2000; Darmody and Smyth, 2010; Nic An Fhailigh, 2014).

2.3 STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

In the Irish context, the health, safety and welfare of employees, inclusive of teachers, are enshrined in legislation where employers are obliged to identify and protect employees from risks to health, safety and welfare (Government of Ireland, 2005). This applies to employee safety from work-induced stress injuries. Arguably the impact of stress on organisations and governments from an economic perspective is grim. Throughout the European Union the cost of stress-related illness is estimated at €13 billion inclusive of re-training costs, sick pay, insurance and recruitment (Health and Safety Authority, 2009). Concurrently, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work points to the UK cost of workplace stress, anxiety and depression as being in excess of £530 million (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2009). Traditionally, the Health and Safety model is framed as a problem-solving approach to

health with a positive health culture within organisations being ‘relatively underdeveloped’ (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2011: 17). Taking a health focused approach is becoming evident in the literature. Since the turn of the century new attitudes have emerged. Stokes (2006) refers to a positive focus on health as a culture of wellness (Stokes et al., 2006). Similarly, Crimmins (2009) proposes a culture of health (Crimmins and Halberg, 2009). The World Health Organisation’s definition of a healthy workplace focuses on a collaboration of workers and managers in the pursuit of health, safety and wellbeing for all and a sustainable workplace (World Health Organisation, 2010). From a similar health culture perspective the Enterprise of Health network defines a healthy organisation as:

one whose culture, management, working climate and other business practices create an environment that promotes the health, effectiveness and performance of its employees (Enterprise for Health, 2012: 63).

From this health perspective the culture within an organisation is associated with an important factor in behavioural change requiring organisational adaptability, flexibility and productivity, which in turn calls for workers to possess a certain degree of physical and psychological wellbeing (Peterson and Wilson, 1998). A Culture-Work-Health model develops a positive response to workplace stress with an emphasis on balance between both employee health and organisational health (Peterson and Wilson, 2002). This perhaps requires attention to stress reduction becoming ‘a major managerial objective in the next decade’ (Ling Mei and Yazdanifard, 2012). That does not mean that organisations and schools are always in a position to determine some of the factors which would make them healthy organisations. Individuals may have potential to manage themselves with little control from an external or organisational perspective. In recent years, however, governments internationally are recognising the value of exploring subjective wellbeing with the intention of measuring progress effectively, incorporating policy decisions and increasing citizens’ wellbeing and flourishing (Huppert and So, 2013).

Mindfulness, which has been proven as a stress reduction model (Hyland, 2010; Siegel, 2011b; Kabat-Zinn, 2012), may be a useful low-cost stress management technique. It is interesting to note that corporate organisations like Google, Yahoo, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Apple Computers and Deutsche Bank are currently introducing mindfulness training as optional staff CPD programmes. From a similar position of organisational development, Dolman and Bond (2011) point to the benefits

of mindfulness at an organisation level in reducing the costs of staff absenteeism, improving cognitive functioning, enhancing employer-employee-client relationships and improving staff health and wellbeing (Dolman and Bond, 2011). While it is now being endorsed by the National Health Service in the UK (Black County Partnership, 2014), it may also be a useful low-cost stress management technique for teachers and their schools (Winzelberg and Luskin, 1999).

2.4 STRESS IN TEACHING

The literature indicates that school teachers in Ireland experience a high level of stress and burnout (ASTI, 2007; Darmody and Smyth, 2010). Such stress and burnout takes a serious toll on teachers, students, schools and communities. In times of political and economic uncertainty, schools find themselves at the interface of the educational system and the social, emotional and behavioural fallout of persistent human stress and distress (Harris, 2008). It is no surprise to find consensus in the literature that stress and the response to emotional challenges is evident within the profession (Chan, 2002; Jepson and Forrest, 2006; Hobson et al., 2009). Teacher stress is defined as:

the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher (Kyriacou, 2001: 28).

This definition correlates with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model, referred to earlier, where the subjective internal awareness and evaluation link with external environmental demands in determining a teacher's individual stress response.

The negative impact of stress on health and wellbeing within the profession and its implication for career development has been highlighted by many (Rieg et al., 2007; Ozan, 2009; Gold et al., 2010). Both stress and depression are evident (Kyriacou, 2001; Newkirk, 2009; Ozan, 2009). Further to this, there appears to be general agreement that stress is one of the biggest occupational hazards facing Irish teachers today, accounting for almost 40% of work illnesses and absenteeism (Condon, 2011). Thus, stress could be interpreted as an impediment to teaching, signposting the importance of identifying effective strategies to address and reduce it as a potential obstacle to health and wellbeing.

Few countries hold statistics on the effects of stress (Goutas, 2008). However, there is evidence of a focus on its prevalence in some European countries. Nearly 20% of 257 comprehensive school teachers, in 16 medium-sized schools in England, who participated in a questionnaire survey investigating the prevalence, sources, and symptoms of stress in teaching considered the job to be very or extremely stressful (Kyriacou, 2001). In a Maltese study 34% of 710 primary school teachers interviewed reported a similar stress response (Borg and Riding, 1991). From a gender perspective it is notable that, in his qualitative study of 196 primary school teachers from 14 schools in Cyprus, Ozan concluded that traits of apathy and a decrease in personal success were experienced equally by both male and female Cypriot teachers who suffered burnout. In the same study slightly more female teachers experienced emotional exhaustion than their male colleagues (Ozan, 2009).

Two studies within the past decade throw light on the Irish situation. A quantitative study on stress in teaching was conducted by the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI). This study included 270 teachers in mid-career, 97% of whom were in their thirties (ASTI, 2007). It indicated the main stressors as lack of time for preparation and administration, teaching students of mixed abilities, and relationships with students, particularly those with behavioural challenges. Three years later a mixed method study on job satisfaction and occupational stress was conducted with 1,916 primary school teachers and 898 primary school principals (Darmody and Smyth, 2010). Although the focus of this study was with primary school teachers, it is interesting to compare the similarities and differences in both studies. The ASTI survey (2007) did not indicate the percentage of teachers experiencing stress. However, the Darmody and Smyth study concluded that 45% of primary teachers and 70% of primary school principals experienced daily occupational stress (Darmody and Smyth, 2010). Interestingly, it also concluded that 18% of male teachers and 8% of female teachers indicated that they were not at all stressed. However, for those who were stressed there were many sources.

2.4.1 CAUSES OF TEACHER STRESS

Emerging themes from both Irish studies referred to in the previous section indicate that teaching multi-ability and multi-grade classes and relationships with students, colleagues and parents contribute to the highest stress levels among teachers. The findings show that, when primary teachers and the pupils in their school are happy, there are lower stress levels (Darmody and Smyth, 2010). In other studies, challenging interpersonal relations and poor communication alongside elements of insufficient

support and a lack of community experience are cited as stressors (Schlichte et al., 2005). Within an educational system that is changing at an increasingly swift pace the experience of stress is considered to be ‘socially embedded’ (Ling Mei and Yazdanifard, 2012: 198). The literature suggests that teachers’ jobs are ‘saturated’ (Roeser et al., 2013: 168) with relationships with pupils, parents and staff members which can contribute significantly to stress and require considerable regulation of emotional and attentional resources (Roeser et al., 2013). Many authors have emphasised high levels of stress relating to teacher-pupil relationships (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1978; Borg and Riding, 1991; Manthei and Gilmore, 1996; Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2001). A qualitative study of workplace stress and coping mechanisms among 15 secondary teachers in Ireland identified the relationship with disruptive students as particularly challenging (Kerr et al., 2011). This concurs with the qualitative research conducted with 100 teachers in Britain identifying that it was not only the disruptive student behaviour that caused increased levels of stress, but the relationship between the student and the teacher in general (Ralph and Brember, 2002). Teachers working in ambiguous or autocratic environments generally perceived higher levels of stress, while those who experienced good collegial relations and regular consultation experienced lower stress levels (ASTI, 2007; Evans, 2009).

However, it is not only the teacher-pupil relationships that are potential stressors. Differing voices of concern regarding teacher relationships with both colleagues and school administrators were raised throughout the literature. Challenging interpersonal relations and poor communication aligned with elements of insufficient support and a lack of communal experience were cited as direct causes of stress (Schlichte et al., 2005). Brown et al. (2002) suggest that a breakdown in such working relations among teachers creates dissatisfaction in the workplace leading to poor organisational health (Ralph and Brember, 2002). Studies carried out by Chan (2002) and Kelly and Colquhoun (2005) focus on the responsibility of school administrators to effect change regarding stressors in the workplace. Broadly they agreed that school leadership and administration have a role in stress levels among school teachers. However, Kelly and Colquhoun (2005) upheld the perception that it is the school administrator’s duty to create opportunities to manage workplace stressors. It is argued, however, that occupational wellbeing and engagement, traditionally interpreted as job satisfaction, enjoyment at work and approval of the organisational culture (Martin, 2006), are also determined by workplace participation (Martin, 2006; Martin and Marsh, 2008). This implies a level of employee engagement ‘in the life of the organisation’ (Parker and Martin, 2009), thus attributing responsibility for self-care and organisational wellbeing

to each employee. Considering the multi-layered relationships and responsibilities experienced by teachers it was considered pertinent to explore the contribution of the self-selected strategy of mindfulness to occupational relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues.

The literature also concerns itself with the stressors of inexperience, unclear status perception and the conflict between advice and expectations encountered by newly qualified teachers, rendering them particularly vulnerable to stress (Rieg et al., 2007). Interestingly, satisfaction levels among teachers in Ireland were reported to be highest at the stage of commencement, to decline following some years of teaching and to rise again later in the career (Darmody and Smyth, 2010). Other literature debates the influence of induction on collegial environments, leadership and management styles, suggesting that work environment, leadership styles and consultative processes have the capacity to contribute positively or negatively to stress levels (ASTI, 2007; Evans, 2009).

It is considered that, in the early years of their profession, occupational stress is 'particularly gruelling' for teachers (Roeser et al., 2012: 168). Emotional stress and inadequate emotional management skills are cited as the primary cause of teacher dissatisfaction and contract termination (2005); it is estimated that 50% of teachers leave the profession in the United States after five years (Jennings, 18/11/2011) and 45% leave New York public schools in the same period (Senior, 2006). Barmby (2006) observed that respondents in a study of 246 teachers in England and Wales referred to excessive workload and pupil behaviour as a reason to avoid entering the teaching profession. 27% of the same research participants indicated that they will have left the teaching profession within ten years due to stress and workload (Barmby, 2006). Concurrently, an Irish study indicated that 40% of disability retirements from teaching were ascribed to stress, depression and anxiety, while 11% of teachers retired on the grounds of ill health (Fitzgerald, 2008).

Teaching can be an emotive profession, creating 'considerable emotional labor' pertaining to the emotional energy and control required in relational interactions (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009: 3). Furthermore, such emotional exhaustion has the potential to create 'cynical and callous' teachers (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 492) sometimes culminating in job dissatisfaction, lack of wellbeing and emotional exhaustion (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Schutz and Zembylas, 2009). Therefore, teachers need effective coping strategies. Teachers 'must deal with their own self-

esteem issues and they are responsible for their own personal development' (Duffy and Darmody, 1994: 200). It is noted that there are many texts indicating teachers' awareness of the importance of self-awareness, regulating emotional responses and raising self-esteem with its impact on classroom management, stress management and job satisfaction (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). While research suggests that many factors contribute to occupational stress in teaching and particular coping mechanisms help to deal with stressful situations (van Dick and Wagner, 2001), some suggest that few teachers have the skill to respond to situations (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Roeser et al., 2013) and require 'high order skills and mind-sets' to manage 'high stress professions like teaching' (Roeser et al., 2013: 3). The best initial approaches to stress are identified as problem management and personal awareness (Chan, 2002). Some authors point to the value of self-worth in teaching and suggest that classroom climate and lower stress levels are indicative of teacher self-esteem and teacher wellbeing (Le Cornu, 1999; Huang and Ming, 2007; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009).

2.5 TEACHER WELLBEING

It is interesting that almost half a century ago Postman and Weingartner advocated that 'the beliefs, feelings and assumptions of teachers are the air of a learning environment', determining 'the quality of life within it' (Postman and Weingartner, 1969: 31). It is suggested, however, that the best classroom climate is typified by:

low levels of conflict and disruptive behavior, smooth transitions from one type of activity to another, appropriate expressions of emotion, respectful communication and problem solving, strong interest and focus on task, and supportiveness and responsiveness to individual differences and students (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009).

The literature holds a consensus that school classroom climate is impacted upon by teachers' feelings about themselves and the relationships they develop with their students (Le Cornu, 1999; Poulou, 2007; Harris, 2008; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Many authors point to the social and emotional competence of teachers, identified by Jennings and Greenberg (2009: 492) as setting the 'tone of the classroom' and creating the most favourable social and emotional environment for student co-operation. This reflects the thinking of Le Cornu who advocates the need to address both the physical and the socio-emotional aspects in order to ensure that the

teaching and learning environment is ‘positive, stimulating, caring and safe’ (Le Cornu, 1999: 3).

It is clear, however, that the main causes of stress experienced by a teacher are particular to him or herself and depend on the specific ‘complex interaction between his or her personality, values, skills, and circumstances’ (Montgomery and Rupp, 2005: 464). Montgomery et al., in their meta-analysis on the diverse causes and effects of stress in teaching, acknowledge that a teacher’s level of emotional and cognitive wellbeing can be influenced by his or her perception and interaction with a particular stressful situation and the impact of the ‘coping mechanisms, personality mediators, and the environmental structure’ (Montgomery and Rupp, 2005: 464). It is argued that effective coping strategies are fundamental in protecting teachers from the negative effects of daily demands in the classroom and maintenance of wellbeing, resilience (Cooper et al., 2001; Martin and Marsh, 2008; Morgan 2015) and buoyancy (Parker and Martin, 2009).

The literature clearly indicates the prevalence of stress within the teaching profession. While there is much discourse about the levels and types of stressors relevant to the teaching profession, a clear implication is the requirement of self-regulatory coping tools and the development of resilience and coping strategies (Roeser et al., 2013). Meanwhile, occupational wellbeing is gaining importance with increased significant research (Dodge et al., 2012) that is also relevant to the teaching profession. The literature suggests that the concept of wellbeing at work is ‘ill defined’ (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2014). However, a definition that draws together many aspects of previous definitions suggests wellbeing as ‘the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced’ (Dodge et al., 2012: 230). It encapsulates the availability of physical, social and psychological resources to attend to physical, social or psychological needs indicating that if the resources are present wellbeing is maintained (Dodge et al., 2012). This is an important feature for teachers considering the demands of a busy classroom on a typical school day. It is also important considering the results of a study indicating that 40% of the variation in wellbeing is ascribed to intentional activity, the other 60% being ascribed to genetics and circumstances (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). It indicates that individuals and teachers have some aspect of choice in enhancing their wellbeing and welfare.

At the core of positive psychology is wellbeing with a goal of measuring and building human flourishing (Seligman, 2012). It is suggested that this can be learned. Seligman

(2012) suggests the PERMA model which draws on a broader perspective and includes five measurable elements that contribute to wellbeing. These comprise positive emotion (feeling happy and hopeful), engagement (being present in what we do), good relationships, meaning (recognising purpose and engaging in activities outside ourselves), and achievement (a feeling of success) and can be chosen and learned as a means of enhancing wellbeing. This is not simply to create happiness but to enable human flourishing and an awareness of what is chosen for its own sake (Seligman, 2012). Indeed, it is suggested that the development of PERMA is a plausible national goal which if engaged in could certainty implicate the wellbeing of teachers (Seligman, 2013).

Freud suggested that teaching is one of the impossible professions (cited in Felman, 1982). Commonly referred to as a vocation, a calling, an altruistic or noble service, such selfless service is untenable with the potential to burnout or drop out (Higgins, 2010). A genuine challenge is to:

imagine the fate of the teacher struggling to be self-ful in the midst of a task that is overwhelming, an environment that can be deadening, and a professional culture that secretly prizes self-abnegation (Higgins, 2010: 2).

Higgins assesses the traditional dominant view of teaching as an altruistic profession, suggesting that such a view is held by both the public and the teaching profession itself. Until recently Ireland, with its Catholic tradition, held strong anecdotal evidence of teaching as a vocation with many teachers referring to 'getting the call' when they secured a place in teacher training colleges. Higgins suggests the altruistic view of teaching is unethical because it is unsustainable. He uses the metaphor of a jug that, if full at the beginning of the year, slowly empties and has the capacity to leave the teacher emptied and burned out at the end of year. He challenges teachers to pay attention to their needs and aspirations and to 'learn better the geography of their own souls' (Higgins, 2010: 72). Asking the first-person question, 'What am I doing in the classroom?' is a requirement of good teaching and self-development in order to support the self and consequently pupils' self-development (Higgins, 2010: 173). The 'dominant vocation' (Higgins, 2010: 150) is one of personal growth and increased competence for further growth where teaching itself constantly connects teachers with queries about the 'ends and means of human development' (Higgins, 2010: 248). In this it is useful for teachers to bring to the profession a commitment to 'self-cultivation ... ongoing growth, and their various practices, styles, and tricks for combating the

many forces that deaden the self and distract us from our task of becoming' (Higgins, 2010: 2).

Drawing on the philosophies of both Aristotle and Socrates, who promote the need for spiritual flourishing, Higgins argues that teachers must hold an identity of teaching as a source of human flourishing and, at an ethical level, as a profession that is 'self-ful' (Higgins, 2010: 171) rather than self-less. Teaching, therefore, has the potential to be a source of joy, motivation, patience and self-worth. Drawing on Aristotle he proposes that one of the key dynamics of incremental growth in teaching is that of phronesis, the cycle of action, dialogue, self-reflection and growth, encouraging teachers to be phronetic, self-caring and reflective practitioners (Higgins, 2010).

Keeping this in mind there may be a need to shift from a stress focus to one of flourishing and wellbeing, which lies at the heart of positive psychology (Style, 2011) and humanistic psychology and emphasises the positive rather than the negative aspects of humanity (Carr, 2011). It is suggested that the dawn of positive psychology brought with it for the first time a united scientific focus that examined what instigates flourishing, thriving, human strengths and happiness in healthy people, at both individual and community levels (Henry, 2006; Carr, 2011).

While research suggests that there are many strategic responses to occupational stress in teaching, this thesis argues that mindfulness has the capacity for stress reduction, wellbeing and flourishing. The next section explores mindfulness and its approach to stress reduction for primary school teachers.

2.6 MINDFULNESS

Although the term mindfulness is considered to be central to Buddhist teaching (Hanh, 1999), a form of mindful practice is found in different forms in almost all spiritual traditions and practices (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). The word mindfulness is translated from Pali as 'awareness, circumspection, discernment, and retention' (Shapiro, 2009: 556). Despite its Buddhist roots it has, in recent years, been secularised and introduced into Western culture (Richards et al., 2010), where today it is considered to be associated with psychological wellbeing (Bishop et al., 2004; Richards et al., 2010; Schoormans and Nyklíček, 2011). An increased interest in mindfulness and its development has taken place over the past four decades (Black, 2010), evidenced by the number of

publications and empirical research in medicine, psychology, education and business sectors.

The concept of mindfulness has been related to two different traditions. There is that which is originally rooted in and influenced by Buddhism and uses meditative practices and there is another perspective initiated by Ellen Langer, and rooted in the field of psychology (Langer, 2013). While both aim to situate awareness in the present, Langer's concept of mindfulness is void of meditation and adopts a more secular and behavioural approach focusing on environmental factors (Albrecht et al., 2012). It supports 'a state of mind that results in drawing novelty distinctions, examining information from new perspectives, and being sensitive to context' (Langer, 1993: 44) suggesting that any situation or environment can be noticed from 'many possible perspectives on the same situation' (Langer, 1993: 44). It entails paying attention to external and environmental stimuli and being mindful of what is happening as opposed to being mindless or passive in response (Langer, 2013). Both perspectives of mindfulness focus on attention.

However, Langer's concept of mindfulness has little focus on the internal experience, while that which has its origins in the Buddhist tradition relates to internal and external awareness and a mindfulness meditation practice (Hanh, 1999). It centres on a purposeful moment-to-moment awareness of internal and external stimuli, with acceptance and without judgement or attachment to the outcomes (Shapiro, 2009; Albrecht et al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2012). With a focus on the internal experience, this contrasts with Langer's approach which suggests changing one's behaviour in response to external stimuli (Compton and Hoffman, 2012). Being interested in teachers' internal as well as external experiences, this study focuses on that mindfulness which incorporates a mindfulness meditation practice as a means of focusing attention and was interested in determining the type of practice being used by teachers.

Though some consider it to be an innate and inherent human quality that can be practised in daily life without formal training (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Albrecht et al., 2012), others consider it as a 'skill' (Bishop et al., 2004: 234) learned through prescribed training methods (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Gold et al., 2010; Chaskleson, 2011). Mindfulness is variously referred to as an attribute of consciousness (Brown and Ryan, 2003), compassionate awareness (Williams et al., 2007) and 'a path of observing ourselves to find ourselves' (Rosenbaum, 2009). It is described as a practice

that entails ‘a dynamic process of learning how to cultivate attention that is discerning and nonreactive, sustained and concentrated’ (Shapiro, 2009: 10). Hanh offers a somewhat broader description that incorporates attending to the present moment in a way that is ‘inclusive and loving’ and which ‘accepts everything without judging or reacting’ (Hanh, 1999: 64). However, there has been much dialogue relative to its definition.

2.6.1 MINDFULNESS DEFINED

Broadly there is agreement throughout the literature that mindfulness encompasses presence, attention and non-judgmental attitude and acceptance (Grabovac et al., 2011; Siegel, 2011b; Kabat-Zinn, 2012). It is suggested that researchers have a ‘consensus understanding’ that mindfulness denotes ‘maintaining awareness of an attention on one’s surroundings’ (Richards et al., 2010: 251). Despite this, some authors pointed to the absence of an operational definition (Bishop et al., 2004; Shapiro, 2009; Richards et al., 2010) and to the challenge of conceptualising it in a way that is compatible with its multidimensional nature, philosophical roots, and scientific method (Shapiro, 2009). Considering the lack of clarity, a consultative group of 11 Canadians participated in a series of meetings in 2004 to establish a consensus on the different components of mindfulness and to collaboratively develop a testable, operational definition. The resulting definition suggested that mindfulness is the:

non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is (Bishop et al., 2004).

According to Shapiro et al. (2006), the popularly cited definition of mindfulness of ‘paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 4), is embodied by three axioms of intention (I: why a person chooses to be mindful or engage in mindfulness practice), attention (A: the capacity to notice internal and external moment-to-moment experiences) and attitude (A: an approach to experiences with curiosity, acceptance and a non-judgmental stance) (Shapiro et al., 2006), which correlate closely to the definition being utilised in this study with primary school teachers. A two-component definition integrating these qualities was used, where mindfulness was regarded as a state-like quality that is maintained when intentional attention is developed in an open and non-judgmental manner (Bishop et al., 2004). The definition used states that mindfulness is:

- (a) the intentional self-regulation of attention to facilitate greater awareness of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions; and
- (b) a specific quality of attention characterised by endeavouring to connect with each object in one's awareness (e.g., each bodily sensation, thought, or emotion) with curiosity, acceptance, and openness to experience (Lau et al., 2006: 1447).

This definition takes a broad approach. Thus, the components of intention, attention, attitude and awareness were taken into consideration within the study. Intention in this definition refers to motivational awareness of why teachers practise mindfulness and specifically their intent relative to stress reduction. Attention itself relates to training the mind to focus on moment-to-moment awareness of what is happening as it happens, as a teacher in the classroom and with occupational tasks. Attitude within the definition refers to the *how* of paying attention relative to acceptance, care (Shapiro et al., 2008) and paying attention with curiosity and 'affectionate attention' (Kabat-Zinn, 2012: 53). Thus, the study is associated with teachers' attitudes and approaches to professional experience and explores their experiences of the process and outcomes of mindfulness.

2.6.2 MINDFULNESS AS PROCESS

From the definitional perspective, mindfulness is both a process, through mindfulness practices, and an outcome, by virtue of mindful awareness or disposition. Shapiro (2009) and Bishop et al. (2004) propose a two part model of mindfulness, each relating to these two aspects. Bishop et al. (2004), in an effort to measure mindfulness from a psychological perspective, suggest that mindfulness involves both self-regulation of attention and a particular orientation of experience. What Shapiro notes as 'mindful awareness' (2009: 556), correlates with the 'Self Regulation of Attention' Bishop et al (2004: 232), both of which are characterised by an awareness of current thoughts, feelings and sensations, or the outcome. It involves the capacity to maintain attention on an intended focus and switch attention with awareness to a new focus as opposed to living on 'auto pilot' (Robins et al., 2012: 118). The second component, Shapiro's 'Mindful practice' (Shapiro, 2009: 556), compares with Bishop's 'Orientation of Experience' (Bishop et al., 2004: 232) – the systematic practice of paying attention with an attitude of curiosity, acceptance and care cultivated in mindfulness meditation practices as a means of gaining insight into one's own mind and its processes. Described somewhat differently in relation to a bad feeling, there are two stages. Firstly, there is an 'external trigger' and secondly, 'the way the mind makes things

worse by the way it reacts' (Layard and Clark, 2014: 231). Teachers of mindfulness respond in a 'friendly approaching manner' observing themselves from the outside as opposed to becoming a 'prisoner' of thoughts and feelings (Layard and Clark, 2014: 231). This relationship with feelings and 'cognitive maps' (Rogers, 1961: 157) is valued from a humanistic perspective as a person 'being received, welcomed and understood as he is' (Rogers, 1961) whilst also changing relationships with thought, feelings and difficulties.

Such awareness-raising and self-regulatory strategies are important for the effective management of teacher stress and teaching practice (Roeser et al., 2013). At the same time, effective coping strategies offer the capacity to recover more easily and to 'conserve physical and mental energies that are then available to invest in effectively managing, relating to, motivating, and teaching students' (Roeser et al., 2013: 2). The literature is not exclusive of coping strategies relative to mindfulness. It also identifies other self-regulatory strategies, for example, 'Active Mood Management' with its combination of 'relaxation, stress management, cognitive and exercise techniques'. This method has the capacity to attain increased energy and decreased tension, citing exercise as the most beneficial mood-regulation strategy (Thayer, 1996: 131).

One means by which the practice of mindfulness might impact on psychological symptoms and functioning is through awareness of one's internal experience. Robins et al. (2012) suggest that, rather than engaging in 'the "internal chattering" of the mind or other contents of awareness' (Robins et al., 2012: 118), individuals practising mindfulness objectively observe thoughts, emotions and sensations from a distance as a means towards awareness and insight into 'habitual tendencies of thinking, which then allows them to alter negative patterns of thinking and/or react differently to them' (Robins et al., 2012: 118). In a comparable manner this process has been referred to as reperceiving. This implies the capacity one has to reperceive an experience leading to the ability to disidentify, namely to become less identified with an experience, thus seeing it clearly and objectively and leading to self-regulation and indirect change (Shapiro et al., 2006). This may have application to teachers in the classroom. In an occupation that demands working with an average of 25 children at once in one classroom (Brennan and Riegel, 2013), stress may well be due to the inherent socio-emotional demands of such a situation (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009). The 'uncertain and attention-intensive nature of teaching' (Roeser et al., 2013: 2) which requires an ability to solve problems and 'make hundreds of decisions "on the fly" each day' (Roeser et al., 2013) while relating to children of varying ability and maturity could well

benefit from the ability to disidentify and reperceive in the midst of a job that requires flexibility and creativity (Roeser et al., 2013). While mindfulness or ‘insight meditation’ (Lau et al., 2006: 1448) uses meditation and concentrative practices, it is suggested that the focus of attention remains ‘unrestrictive’ (Lau et al., 2006: 1448) thereby creating self-awareness of the present moment, inclusive of bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings. The definition being utilised within this study accepts a quality of attention, self-focus and self-regulation characterised by openness and acceptance of the present moment experience relative to the classroom, staffroom and teachers’ professional practices.

2.6.3 DEVELOPMENTS IN MINDFULNESS

The literature points to a wealth of information indicating the application of mindfulness to medical and more recently educational and professional contexts. Current research into mindfulness focuses on its impact on physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing (Carmody et al., 2009; Richards et al., 2010), the brain’s response to mindfulness practice (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Lau et al., 2006; Pigni, 2010), and how personal and professional development is impacted by its use within educational settings (Sears and Kraus, 2009; van den Hurk et al., 2010). Research in 2007 gained insight into this in Toronto using an eight-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme by researching the activity in the brain in an endeavour to ignore destructive narrative dialogue. It discovered that participants were able to ‘resist narrative mind wandering’ (Farb et al., 2007: 316) and discursive thinking from ongoing sensory flow of the here and now and could train their minds at will between immediate experience and conceptual thinking (Farb et al., 2007). Some years later Siegal (2011), referring to this research as an indication of the ability to develop discernment, suggested that it ‘may be a crucial step in disentangling the mind from ruminative thoughts, repetitive destructive emotions, and impulsive and addictive behaviours’ (Siegel, 2011b: 139). Conversely, teachers who gain the ability to cope with cognitive and socio-emotional challenges increase resilience and coping skills while conserving both mental and physical energy (Roeser et al., 2013).

Many researchers have highlighted that mindfulness has also produced positive effects on emotional wellbeing and present moment awareness (Bishop, 2002; Baer et al., 2004). Others have noted many qualitative and quantitative studies reporting positive effects on attentional control using the MBSR programme (Anderson et al., 2007; Cusens et al., 2010; Chiesa et al., 2011), the most well-known and internationally researched training programme available (Cusens et al., 2010). The MBSR

programme also has extensive research-based evidence for its effectiveness in a diversity of medical, occupational and educational settings and has been found useful in a variety of conditions and symptoms (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Owing to the development of the MBSR programme, Kabat-Zinn is credited with being principally responsible for ‘transforming the original spiritual notion of mindfulness into a powerful and ubiquitous therapeutic tool based on forms of meditation and mindful practices’ (Hyland, 2010: 526). This has been unfolding at the same time as neuroscientific research into mindfulness, which has had a profound impact on the development and credibility of mindfulness.

2.6.4 MINDFULNESS AND NEUROSCIENCE

Alongside the secularisation of mindfulness another reason for its status in Western culture is neuroscience, that is, brain science research (Chaskleson, 2011), which contributes insight into how and why mindfulness supports resilience in teachers (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). The literature indicates significant research demonstrating the ‘changeability of the brain’, the relationship between the mind and the brain (Johanson, 2009) and the prospect of conscious awareness modifying the structure of the brain (Ryback, 2006). In the past two decades the most notable findings in neuroscience point to an acknowledgement that the brain is constantly ‘reorganising its function and redeploying available resources to meet life’s demands for adaptation’ (Hirshberg, 2011: 6). Modern neuroscience indicates that a person’s ability to direct attention contains within it the capacity to shape the brain’s firing patterns, as well as ‘the power to shape the architecture of the brain itself’ (Siegel, 2011a: 39). Referred to as neuroplasticity (Hirshberg, 2011; Hanson, 2013) or neural plasticity (Cozolino and Sprokay, 2006; Siegel, 2007), it reflects the ability of neurons to change their structure and relationships to one another in an experience-dependent manner and according to environmental demands (Buonomano and Merzenich, 1998; Cozolino and Sprokay, 2006). Thus, ‘new connections among neurons are formed, new patterns or networks of neural firing develop, and in some areas of the brain, new neurons are even developing’ (Hirshberg, 2011: 5). These findings suggest that due to the brain’s neuroplastic ability people can consciously change the brain architecture as a means of promoting brain health and life quality (Meiklejohn et al., 2012), thus using the brain to change the brain (Wehrenberg, 2010). The practice and experience of mindfulness enhances neuroplastic brain changes, demonstrating how the mind changes the brain (Johanson, 2009), which is relevant to specific characteristics in teaching. New research into neurobiology suggests that mindfulness practice has the capacity to enhance attention, emotional self-regulation and flexibility (Siegel, 2010), create

improvement in mood and anxiety symptoms, compassion and kindness (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Hirshberg, 2011; Siegel, 2011b) and relationships with others (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Siegel, 2007), all notable attributes of stress reduction and effective teaching in primary education.

The aspects of the brain that are affected by mindfulness practice are also associated with executive functioning and emotional regulation (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This overarching term of executive functioning is inclusive of cognitive processes relevant to teaching and comprising planning, problem-solving, multitasking, an ability to sustain attention, mental flexibility and resistance to interference (Chan et al., 2008). Fundamentally, research is currently pointing to mindfulness training impacting on resilience and increased brain function in adults, culminating in some essential functions practised in day-to-day teaching (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). It is thus pertinent in this research to explore the ways in which mindfulness impacts on professional practice in primary school teaching, not least due to the stress associated with planning, workload and time constraints.

2.6.5 CONTRA-INDICATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

While mindfulness has received much recognition it also has its challenges. Rosenbaum (2009) warns against mindfulness becoming a technique rather than a way of being and questions if, in the Western world, it is becoming divorced from the original Buddhist practice (Rosenbaum, 2009). He encourages a ‘practice of empty mindfulness rather than “useful” mindfulness’ (Rosenbaum, 2009: 210). Kabat-Zinn, however, repeatedly indicates that, despite its Buddhist roots, the MBSR programme is a secular application of mindfulness, and a practice of focused attention rather than part of a religion (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Williams et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2012). It is evident from the literature that the larger part of mindfulness research examines individuals who have participated in an MBSR programme (Grossman et al., 2004), though studies investigating other forms of meditation do exist (Winzelberg and Luskin, 1999; Tang et al., 2007; Zeidan et al., 2010; Dolman and Bond, 2011). They indicate that different forms of meditation can develop and increase levels of mindfulness in everyday lifestyles (Shapiro, 2009). That said, this study focuses on the practice of mindfulness learned from varying avenues, inclusive of MBSR.

At a practical level, the time commitment of eight two to three-hour tutor-led group MBSR sessions can prove unsuitable to work places where time is a constraint. Courses are often pursued during lunch break and followed by daily practice for 45–60

minutes (Klatt et al., 2008). From a comparable perspective, mindfulness practice has been deemed as ‘quite effortful’ in its requirement and the need to ‘self-select’ into it (Dolan and Kahneman, 2014: 153). At the same time, ‘time, motivation and commitment’ are necessary in order to become a long-term practitioner (Brown et al., 2015: 214). However, shorter weekly and daily commitment to mindfulness practice and mindfulness training have similarly indicated significant decreases in perceived stress levels and increased ability to pay attention (Klatt et al., 200; Jha et al., 2010).

Despite the many benefits of mindfulness, exceptions point to the apparent lack of benefits in relation to attentional control (McMillan et al., 2002; Anderson et al., 2007; Chambers et al., 2009; Heeren et al., 2009). Two particular studies highlight the speculation about the role of basic attentional function within mindfulness practice. One study intended to test the premise that mindfulness involves sustained attention, attention switching, non-directed attention and inhibition of elaborative processing used The Vigil Continuous Performance Test as a measurement to assess participants’ sustained and selective attention and impulsivity. In what they suggested was the first study specifically relating mindfulness to attention, they conceded that MBSR did not indicate improvements in attentional control (Anderson et al., 2007). The results of 39 participants who were randomly assigned to an eight-week MBSR programme and a 33 strong control group, showed that in post-study testing, both groups performed similarly in attentional control, while it also showed helpful effects of mindfulness on present moment awareness (Anderson et al., 2007). A later study used The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), which is designed to assess a receptive state of mind in which attention, informed by a sensitive awareness of what is occurring in the present, observes what is taking place. Participants carried out daily mindfulness practices while attending weekly mindfulness sessions that guided participants in breath awareness, the body scan, mindful movement and awareness practices in kindness. (Check Appendix 9 for explanation of these techniques.) Using subjective and objective methodology to explore these mindfulness interventions, the researchers also concluded with ‘null findings on the attention measure’ relative to mindfulness (Cusens et al., 2010: 75). Another disadvantage of mindfulness, concluded through behavioural and neuroimaging studies, suggests that high scores on a measurement of mindfulness, using the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), inhibited learning by undercutting the automatic learning processes that lead to developing good and bad habits. The study construed that mindfulness practitioners had slower reaction times in targeted events suggesting that paying too much attention or being too aware of stimuli and what one is doing in particular automatic learning events might inhibit

implicit learning (Stillman et al., 2013). However, the literature alludes to its contribution to stress reduction emanating originally in a medical context and developing from there to other disciplines.

2.7 MINDFULNESS AND STRESS REDUCTION

The foremost objective of this research is to develop understanding of the contribution of mindfulness to stress reduction in primary school teaching. Thus far, literature points to a paucity of studies relative to teachers and countless studies related to medical and therapeutic perspectives. This section examines literature related to mindfulness and stress reduction, much of it relative to the medical setting where research into mindfulness originated. It can be seen that the literature suggests that various psychological and medical conditions have been impacted upon by the practice of mindfulness strategies. Many researchers point to the significance of mindfulness in response to psychological and stress-related disorders such as depression, anxiety and other mood related symptoms in both adults and students (Tang et al., 2007; Caldwell et al., 2010; Christopher and Gilbert, 2010; Kimbrough et al., 2010). In the past five years several systematic reviews have been completed to obtain a better understanding of the impact of mindfulness practice.

A comprehensive meta-analysis, searching articles in many languages up to May 2013 and focusing on 209 studies, inclusive of 12,145 participants, evaluated the pre- and post-effects of mindfulness-based therapy for physical and mental conditions, psychological disorders and non-clinical population (Khoury et al., 2013). It concluded that mindfulness was significantly effective for a variety of psychological problems including anxiety and stress and moderately effective for depression (Khoury et al., 2013). Those findings were consistent with evidence from other meta-analyses specific to depression and anxiety in 2010 (Hofman S. et al., 2010) and 2012 (Vøllestad et al., 2012). Hofman (2010) conceded that their study quality was low with only 16 controlled studies out of 39, and comprised 140 participants who used Mindfulness Based Therapy (MBT), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) or MBSR for a range of medical and mental health disorders. It agreed with the moderate effectiveness of mindfulness stated in the 2012 study (Vøllestad et al., 2012), considering its findings to be both encouraging and supportive of the use of mindfulness for anxiety and depression in clinical populations, while concluding that the pattern of results suggests that, while mindfulness may not be diagnosis-specific, it may address processes that occur in various disorders by changing a myriad of

emotional and evaluative dimensions specific to wellbeing (Hofman et al., 2010). A systematic review in 2011 concurred with this, reporting that evidence supported MBSR for improved mental health and also acknowledging lack of control groups and long-term follow up in several of its 72 studies (Fjorback et al., 2011). These and other meta-analyses add to a growing body of evidence indicating that mindfulness may be useful in changing cognitive and affective processes that underlie many medical issues. These include a decrease in a variety of symptom measures for conditions including anxiety, stress and depression although at the same time raising concerns for conclusive evidence (Klainin-Yobas et al., 2012; Vøllestad et al., 2012). However, it is evident that it takes time for such responses. Findings suggest that experienced mindfulness practitioners respond with ‘less effort and less distress to emotional provocation’ (Brown et al., 2015: 216).

In this section, literature that may further understanding within the medical context has been considered. There is no meta-analysis in the literature concerning the application of mindfulness to stress reduction among teachers as a professional body. However, the NHS launched a report examining evidence of the effectiveness of mindfulness-based therapies. Acknowledging that ‘much, if not all, illness is influenced by stress, mental attitude, and behaviour choices’ (Mental Health Foundation, 2010: 9) with 13 million working days lost annually in the UK due to depression, anxiety and stress, the Mental Health Foundation advocates the practice of mindfulness towards improved attention, job performance, productivity, satisfaction to enable improved collegial relationships and ‘a reduction of work-related stress’ (Mental Health Foundation, 2010: 7). While no such review has been initiated by the Health Services Executive (HSE) in Ireland, the HSE does advocate the implementation of mindfulness to manage stress, work, anxiety and depression (Health Services Executive, 2013). Evidence shows that school teachers experience depression (Kyriacou, 2001; Newkirk, 2009; Ozan, 2009). Differing from the symptoms of stress, depression occurs when short-term and long-term strategies to respond to stressful situations are not developed sufficiently. They lead to ‘a state of hyper arousal, reacting repeatedly to even insignificant stressors with tension, irritability and anger’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 262) or feeling ‘dead and stuck’ (Siegel, 2010). Several studies using the MBSR programme with adults attending stress reduction clinics have demonstrated useful responses (Kabat-Zinn, 2001).

A study conducted with 82 undergraduate students (Zeidan et al., 2010) and another with 166 college students (Caldwell et al., 2010) exhibited positive conclusions in relation to mindfulness and aspects of depression, while another conceded its value

(Christopher and Gilbert, 2010, 10–23). The former studies agreed that the practice of mindfulness had helpful effects both physically and psychologically. Although showing no particular improvement in attention and information processing, Zeidan et al. (2010) concluded that brief mindfulness training had beneficial effects on self-regulation and mood states including tension, confusion and anxiety, depression and fatigue.

Caldwell et al. (2010), indicating that psychological distress is widespread in college students, used mindful movement as a mindfulness practice, and concluded improvements in physical and mental mood, depression, sleep, self-regulation, self-efficacy and perceived stress. On the contrary however, results from a separate study with 365 college students (Christopher and Gilbert, 2010) yielded different findings. Christopher and Gilbert (2010) measured the four behaviourally oriented factors of the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS), a self-appraisal mindfulness research tool that measures:

- Observing or Attending to internal and external stimuli;
- Describing and labelling phenomena non-judgmentally;
- Acting with Awareness in which undivided attention is focused on one thing at a time; and
- Accepting or allowing present moments or events to occur without judging them (Baer et al., 2004).

Although the results for Observation indicated satisfaction with life and Acceptance without Judgment indicated improved depression symptoms, the conclusion suggested that aspects of mindfulness may offer little in terms of predicting one's satisfaction with life and depression symptoms relative to other self-appraisal and cognitive predictor variables (Christopher and Gilbert, 2010).

A separate innovative study, noted as the only mixed methods study conducted to date, explored symptoms of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder while practising mindfulness (Kimbrough et al., 2010). It utilised the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), a 15-item scale designed to assess 'individual differences in the frequency of mindful states over time' (Brown and Ryan, 2003: 824). Statistically significant changes, measured on the MAAS, were observed in each of the outcomes while the qualitative data indicated participation in mindfulness to be favourable in a

safe environment. Kimbrough et al. (2010) point out that many suggest improvement in depressive symptoms is indicative of a decrease in ruminative thoughts and regulated emotions which occur through ‘a shift toward a non-judgmental and de-centered view of one’s thoughts’ (Kimbrough et al., 2010: 28). While the participants of this particular study were not teachers, its findings may be significant for teachers experiencing anxiety or ruminating thought processes. With an increased capacity to witness thoughts, rather than be immersed in their content, increased psychological flexibility, enhanced emotional regulation and reduced rumination follow (Brown et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2007), which is an important ability for teachers in an emotion-laden and busy classroom. This being said, Hanson (2013b) cautions that mindfulness is over-rated in Western society with the possibility of getting stuck in present moment thinking, and holding on to negative thoughts with an inability to replace them with positive resources.

The literature shows that the practice of mindfulness is infiltrating into areas beyond medicine and health care. It is moving into the arenas of business, sport, justice systems, social services, childbirth, universities and education (Shapiro, 2009; Chaskleson, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2011; Kerr et al., 2011; Napoli and Bonifas, 2011) and in some instances is integral to the school classroom (Hart, 2004; Haight, 2010). While evidence points to the teaching profession experiencing stress as an occupational hazard (Kyriacou, 2001), the practice of mindfulness by teachers is in its infancy. There has been little research into the potential value of exploring a contribution of the practice of mindfulness towards stress reduction among primary school teachers.

2.8 MINDFULNESS FOR TEACHERS

Although in the initial stages in Ireland, the practice of mindfulness in schools is now being used more regularly throughout the world (Albrecht et al., 2012). Research into the specific impact of mindfulness on teachers is also in the early stages. While many authors have highlighted the negative impact of stress within the teaching profession (Kyriacou, 2001; Goutas, 2008; Darmody and Smyth, 2010), few consider the effect that mindfulness may have in addressing such stress towards growth and potential. It may well be a ‘palliative technique’ (Kyriacou, 2001: 30) aimed at reducing the feelings of stress and changing perspective on a situation. Recent decades of research into neuroscience, medicine and psychology indicate evidence that adults can benefit both personally and professionally from the reflective mind-body discipline of mindfulness (Chaskleson, 2011; Dolman and Bond, 2011).

Teachers may practise mindfulness with the intention of effectively managing daily teaching routines and/or to deliver the practice to pupils (Albrecht et al., 2012). Globally, it is being used increasingly as a means of enhancing both teacher and pupil wellbeing (Greenberg and Harris, 2012) in what is considered an emotional occupation (Morgan et al., 2010). Meiklejohn et al. (2012), exploring the rationales for bringing mindfulness to both teachers and students, suggest that teachers' personal mindfulness practice can increase their sense of wellbeing and self-efficacy and lower the risk of burnout due to emotional exhaustion. Many researchers have proposed that the development of resilience and coping strategies enables effective responses to cognitive and socio-emotional events in the classroom (Kitching et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2010; Jennings et al., 2011; Roeser et al., 2013).

One of the key components of teaching is that of classroom management (Marzano et al., 2004), enabling the establishment of a positive environment, good communication, co-operation and a commitment to teaching (Charles and Senter, 2011) with decreased stress, anxiety and fatigue (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This may require high levels of social and emotional competence to set the tone of the classroom through the development of teacher-pupil relationships that are supportive, encouraging, affirming and respectful and thus contributing to lower levels of stress and increased wellbeing (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 492). The humanistic perspective is of interest in this regard. Rogers' person-centred approach (1951) suggests that therapists who are congruent, and not motivated by internalised states of worth, have the capacity to offer unconditional positive regard to their clients in their endeavour for growth and wellbeing. This perhaps points to the importance of teachers demonstrating unconditional positive regard towards children, which Rogers viewed as one of their basic needs (1951) from significant people in their lives.

It may also be enhanced by the teacher's personal demeanour and non-verbal communication. Although little research has been carried out on non-verbal communication, the idea that 'compassionate communication is the cornerstone of clinical care' suggests that people who are calm may trigger a sense of calm, relaxation and peace in others and in their surroundings (Kemper and Shaltout, 2011: 1). Additionally, teachers who develop greater mindful awareness, self-regulatory skills and strategies pertinent to self-care and classroom management can become role models for their students (Roeser et al., 2013).

A quantitative study specifically exploring mindfulness and primary school teachers evaluated the impact of the eight-week MBSR programme on stress, anxiety and depression. It sourced 11 self-selected teachers in Wales (Gold et al., 2010). The results following the programme showed that ‘most teachers’ had suffered emotional distress prior to participating in an MBSR programme (Gold et al., 2010: 187). However, benefits accrued in terms of personal well-being, a decline in mental health problems and a greater ability to cope with the demands of teaching in a modern primary school (Gold et al., 2010). The study by Gold et al. focused specifically on the MBSR programme and did not include participants whose mindfulness practice emanated from other sources.

Using a mindfulness group and a control group, a separate quantitative study of 113 elementary and secondary school teachers in western Canada and in the western United States in 2009 and 2010 explored whether a 36-hour mindfulness training programme, aimed at teaching mindfulness and self-compassion, was effective for coping with and reducing workplace stress and feelings of burnout. Its conclusions were measured at an assigned three-month follow up through survey, blood pressure levels, pulse rates and mindfulness training programme evaluations. They indicated that teachers who participated in mindfulness training (MT) demonstrated focused attention and working memory capacity, self-compassion and lower levels of stress and burnout. In contrast to its benefits, the physiological indicators of stress that were measured did not show significant differences in the mindfulness group when compared to the control group. A ‘teacher mindfulness training logic model and theory of change’ (Roeser et al., 2013: 2) emanated from the study and will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Overall both of these studies concur, with their results demonstrating that teachers may benefit from mindfulness training relative to workplace stress, personal wellbeing, and greater ability to respond to the challenges of present day teaching in schools. (Gold et al., 2010; Roeser et al., 2013). The core of both studies was Kabat-Zinn’s MBSR programme. The current study takes wider approaches incorporating teachers who learned mindfulness through an MBSR programme and others who learned through on-line training or were self-taught from books, CDs and other resources. It includes teachers who have practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months. Considering that mindfulness is intended to give long-standing as well as short-term gains (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Gold et al., 2010), this study addresses an established practice of mindfulness among primary school teachers. Currently there is a widely

shared recognition of the need for programmes of integrity and the value of such programmes in influencing change (Jennings et al., 2011; Roeser et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013). Nevertheless, few programmes are established and available to primary school teachers in Ireland; thus Irish teachers have learned mindfulness through varying avenues.

As mentioned earlier the practice of mindfulness can lead to increased self-compassion and psychological wellbeing, impacting on increased self-esteem (Neff, 2009) and the building of strong supportive relationships that embody trust and closeness (Shapiro, 2011). Thus the practice of mindfulness points to the capacity to build qualities that enhance healthy social interactions (Shapiro, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1994) and to approach interpersonal differences as challenges rather than threats (Kabat-Zinn, 1996), increasing the ability to respond and decreasing emotional reactivity (Meiklejohn et al., 2012: 8). The development of self-regulatory skills to respond to the cognitive, emotional and social demands of teaching may help teachers to 'conserve precious motivational and self-regulatory resources' (Roeser et al., 2013: 16) for use in teaching and building relationships rather than coping and defensive responses, thus reducing stress over time (Roeser et al., 2013). This capacity to be with pupils and improve the 'felt sense' (Meiklejohn et al., 2012: 7) in the classroom is a key outcome of teachers' mindfulness practice. While reducing stress and anxiety (Brown and Ryan, 2003), the practice of mindfulness also has the capacity to assist with unpleasant tasks, considering that 'it is the judgments and expectations about the experience that make something unpleasant, not the experience itself' (Kernochan et al., 2007: 66). The practice of mindfulness and consequent awareness of the internal responses, judgments and expectations of experiences 'loosens their hold ... making them less unpleasant' (Kernochan et al., 2007: 66) which also engages with the unpleasantness associated with challenging pupils and an ability to become calm, thus reducing antagonism (Kernochan et al., 2007).

The self-regulatory resources may also help teachers to develop greater awareness, presence and engagement with compassion and listening skills that help to increase healthy relationships and teacher wellbeing (Meiklejohn et al., 2012: 7). One of the key advocates of humanistic psychology upheld that greater personal growth and development occurs in teachers 'the more they own and accept their inner reactions' (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994: 65). This was later reflected by Palmer in promoting the inner life of the teacher, suggesting that teaching with the whole person and educating from the heart is better teaching. He referred to '*heart* in its ancient sense, as the place

where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self' and encouraged teachers to have the courage to keep their hearts open, particularly when challenged in a given situation (Palmer, 1998: 11).

Teachers would like to believe that their teaching is more effective because of their mindfulness practice, but there is little specific research currently to support this, though there is evidence of it creating a move toward more student-centred teaching (Kernochan et al., 2007). There is also little evidence in the literature of a conceptual framework for mindfulness in an educational context and with particular relevance to the classroom teacher in primary schools, and certainly Irish primary schools. The development of a daily practice like the sitting meditation practice or meditation before or during class is considered a way of becoming mindful while teaching (Kernochan et al., 2007). Becoming aware of the breath can be a reminder of the present moment in the classroom (Kernochan et al., 2007; Albrecht et al., 2012). Furthermore, it may be that, in the care of others, some teachers who embody a mindful attitude and way of being for their personal wellbeing become curious about how they can teach similar practices to their students. The practice of mindfulness with children is a newly evolving approach with current research suggesting that it is acceptable and feasible (Haight, 2010; Albrecht et al., 2012; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Pupils experience stress for various reasons. With such stress as a catalyst, schools globally are acknowledging the value of enhancing children's social, emotional, mental, spiritual and cognitive wellbeing (Albrecht et al., 2012). Considered by some as an innate human quality (Albrecht et al., 2012), and practised in the ordinary aspects of daily life with or without formal training, some teachers naturally bring mindfulness into the classroom (Albrecht et al., 2012). They may also use what Meiklejohn et al. refer to at the 'toolbox approach' (Meiklejohn et al., 2012: 8), bringing tips and techniques that they have learned themselves to the classroom to benefit children's learning and development. Some authors, however, warn of the importance of teachers practising and embodying mindfulness in their own lives prior to imparting it to pupils (Whitehead, 2011; Albrecht et al., 2012). Such personal practice presents teachers with a capacity to be more aware of their own emotions and actions (Whitehead, 2011) and to transform communication and relationship skills resulting in greater comfort and effectiveness for both pupils and teachers (Albrecht et al., 2012).

2.9 TOWARDS A MODEL FOR MINDFULNESS INTERVENTION IN TEACHING

The absence of a guiding theoretical framework for the analysis of mindfulness interventions has been noted by many (Albrecht et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2012). However, a number of researchers have focused on the development of a model applicable to the classroom teacher for young children. This section looks at existing models exploring their value and limitations.

The earliest model specific to mindfulness and the elementary school teacher was proposed by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) (see Figure 2.1). It emphasised the significance of the teachers' wellbeing alongside social and emotional competence (SEC) within their teaching routines and the development of teacher-pupil relationships, classroom management and the implementation of a social and emotional programme with the children. Put forward as the 'prosocial classroom meditational model' (2009: 491) it implied that the teachers' wellbeing and social and emotional competence influence both pupil and classroom outcomes. Often working in very stressful and emotionally demanding circumstances, emotional and social competencies, or lack thereof, are suggested to be pivotal to the outcomes. While this model suggests teacher competencies are pivotal to student and classroom outcomes and equally students' social, emotional and academic outcomes impact on teachers and classroom climate, it fails to indicate the types of interventions necessary in the development of such critical competencies.

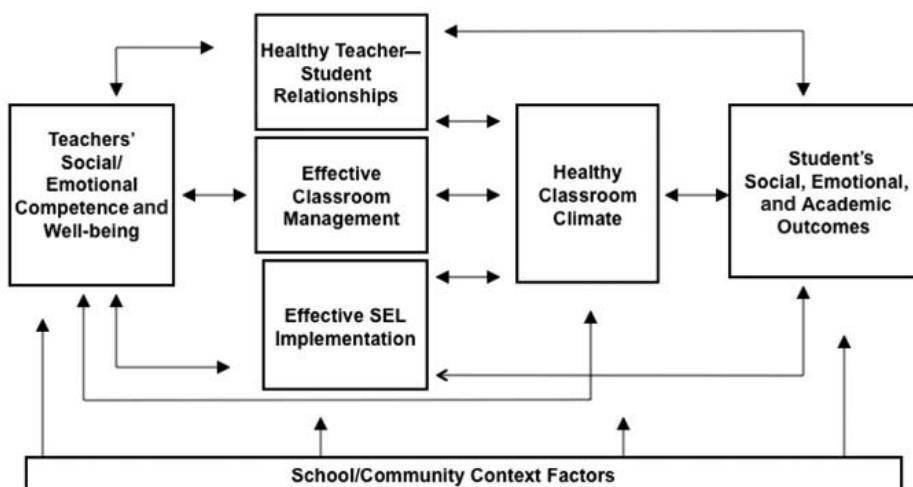


Figure 2.1: The prosocial classroom: A model of teacher social and emotional competence and classroom and student outcomes (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009)

A later hypothesized model (see Figure 2.2) suggests commitment to and engagement in a mindfulness training (MT) intervention in the development of mindfulness and

'habits of mind' (Roeser et al., 2012: 167). The model points to enhanced occupational health and wellbeing culminating in greater teacher engagement and reduced absenteeism, constructive relationships, effective classroom management and pupil teacher relationships and subsequent encouraging student outcomes. A particular strength of this model is its clarity of action. It includes a specific initiative of teacher professional development, MT, and identifies teacher outcomes.

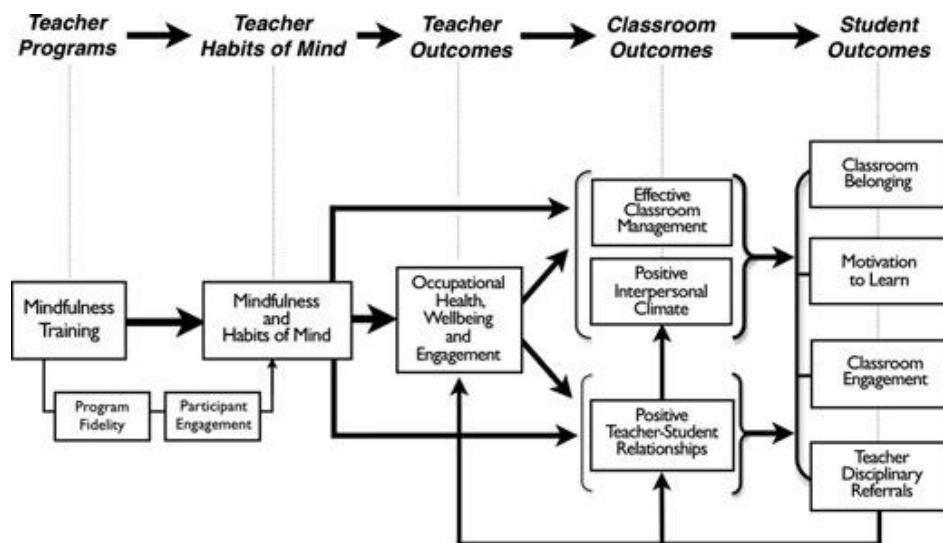


Figure 2.2: Logic model of hypothesized mindfulness training effects on teachers, classroom environments, and students (Roeser et al., 2012: 171)

This hypothesized model was built upon in association with an extensive quantitative study in Canada and the United States (as described in the previous section). Illustrated in Figure 2.3, the study investigated the 'first several steps' of the hypothesized model (Roeser et al., 2013: 2). It suggests that the mindfulness training (MT) programmes, which develop teachers' skills and mindsets, enhance teacher coping skills and resilience to address stress, burnout, anxiety and depression and culminate in lower levels of absenteeism and health care use. The greater occupational health and wellbeing experienced by teachers has the potential to further impact on classroom outcomes of effective classroom management, the development of supportive classroom environments and positive teacher-pupil relationships. In turn, the model suggests that student outcomes of belonging, engagement, motivation and wellbeing had the capacity to revert back to teachers, thus impacting on stress reduction and occupational wellbeing (Roeser et al., 2013). It may be important to note that although Roeser is the lead author in both of these publications the co-authors differed in each.

While the earlier model hypothesized that MT culminated in mindful teaching and habits of mind, occupational health, wellbeing and engagement, the follow-up study investigated the initial steps of the hypothesized model. It explored the implication of teachers' mindfulness practice and their subsequent ability to particularly address issues of stress and burnout, anxiety and depression, stress physiology and absenteeism.

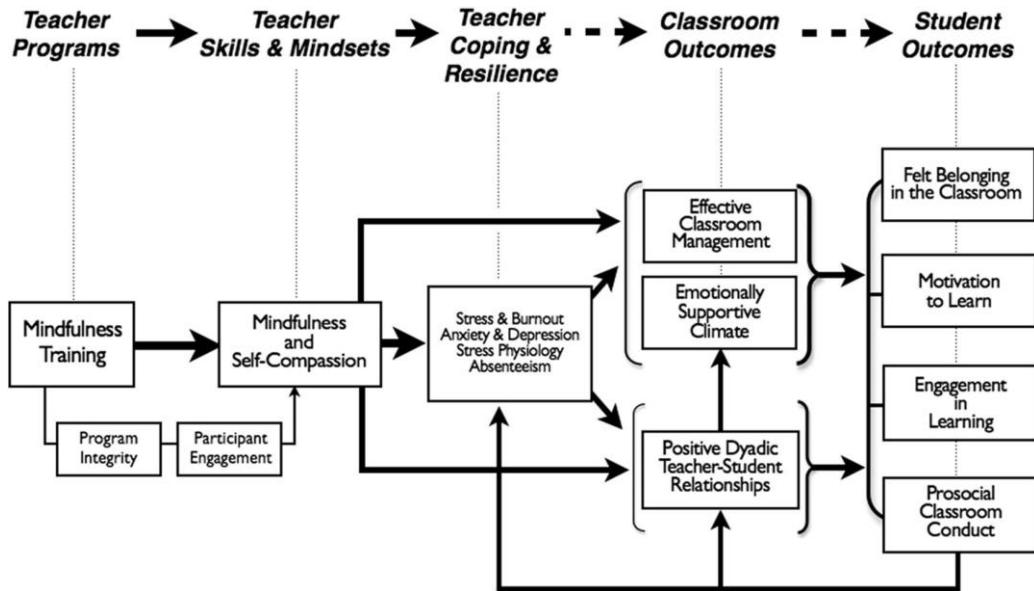


Figure 2.3: Teacher mindfulness training logic model and theory of change (Roeser et al., 2013: 2)

The model is comprehensive and inclusive of teacher outcomes in mindfulness and self-compassion. A particular asset of this model is its use of MT programmes specifically tailored to cultivate mindfulness and self-compassion in teachers in order to deal with stress and promote emotional resilience, while at the same time delivering comprehensive classroom and student outcomes. However, one aspect missing from each of these models is the internal process engaged in by the teacher in paying attention to the internal landscape towards the development of mindfulness and self-compassion and the specific outcomes of mindfulness practice. Other missing elements are the internal professional qualities which are often the outcomes of mindfulness and the external contribution to professional practice. For example, although mindfulness practice is not about calmness, it is in observing and disidentifying from thoughts and emotions that a new place is created from which to view the present moment and 'enter a calmer, clearer space' in the present moment (Shapiro et al., 2006: 381).

Korthagen and Vasalos developed a model integrating Senge et al. and Scharmer's 'Theory U' (Senge et al., 2004; Scharmer, 2009) (see Figure 2.4), as a means of a person reaching their potential in the present moment. The horizontal arrow below depicts the reactive response to situations by "downloading" habitual ways of thinking' (Senge et al., 2004: 10). Actions and responses to difficulties originate in 're-enacted habits' and reinforced 'pre-established mental models' (Senge et al., 2004: 11) that can be restrictive and counteract new and creative solutions (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009). The U-turn in this model offers what is suggested as a more effective professional response in teaching which requires a deeper process towards a deeper awareness. The model encourages reflection with an open mind, open heart and open will whence the teacher arrives at a 'state of being' (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009: 9) or presence (Senge et al., 2004). From the teacher's perspective presence is defined as 'the experience of bringing one's whole self to full attention so as to perceive what is happening in the moment' (Rodgers and Raider-Roth, 2006: 267). Presence connects with the concept of mindfulness and parallels the definition of purposefully paying attention in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). This model endorses the idea of 'being present with full awareness of *what is in the here-and-now*, both inside and outside' oneself (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009: 10) while integrating the humanistic perspective of 'actualizing one's full potential in the here and now' (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009: 10). It suggests that through the relationship with one's core in the here-and-now the resultant flow leads to a higher quality response than downloading a solution.

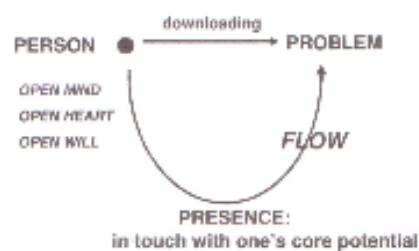


Figure 2.4: Downloading versus U-turn (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009)

Exploring the above models exposes strengths and weaknesses. While the initial three focus on classroom and student outcomes, the most comprehensive is that of Roeser et al., 2013, outlining how the cultivation of mindfulness training impacts on the teacher performance and student outcomes while addressing stress, burnout, anxiety, depression and absenteeism. It identifies MT's application to stress management and

the socio-emotional demands experienced by teachers, alongside a hypothesis of effective classroom climate and student-teacher relationships towards successful learning. Applying the practice of mindfulness to the model with integrity and engagement offers teachers an application towards stress reduction, self-care and self-compassion. Analysis of the models also reveals gaps, particularly in the internal process of mindfulness practice by teachers and the professional attributes in the responses to stress in teaching, through the cultivation of mindfulness practice or habits of mind. While these models were developed following a prescribed mindfulness programme, the current study investigates teachers who learned from varying programmes. This indicates the importance of enquiring about interviewees' practice and application of mindfulness.

2.10 CONCLUSION

Occupational stress in primary school teaching is a reality with significant implications for the teacher (Darmody and Smyth, 2010). Mindfulness may be one approach to address such stress (Albrecht et al., 2012; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This chapter has considered relevant literature which has informed the research question. Broadly, the examination of literature investigated the research and debates pertinent to mindfulness as a response to stress. The literature has exposed evidence of many ways in which mindfulness contributes to stress reduction, particularly with the use of the MBSR programme and within a medical context. It has also exposed a paucity of literature relevant to an educational context and to primary teachers themselves with a need to enhance existing data. This study is original in its location in an Irish contemporary educational context and is the first study to explore the contribution of mindfulness as a response to stress within primary teaching in Ireland.

Much of the current research and theory on mindfulness originated within a medical context with educational and professional aspects being pursued latterly. While mindfulness is not an integral part of teacher self-care for many, it is an option chosen by some to enhance wellbeing and reduce stress. This literature review highlighted the importance of teachers having a personal and professional health focused strategy to curb work-induced stress injuries and to address the serious toll that stress can have on teacher health, safety and welfare (Kyriacou, 2001). It also points to the economic implication of occupational stress due to absenteeism and stress related illness (Health and Safety Authority, 2009; European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2011) which impacts, not only on the individual teacher, but also on classroom climate.

Mindfulness is cited as a method of stress management and stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2001), with the components of intention, attention and awareness being central to mindful practice. In its capacity for moment-to-moment awareness, it points to an ability to reperceive, thus disidentifying from a particular experience in order to see it more clearly and engage in self-regulation of thoughts and emotions (Shapiro et al., 2006). Teachers appear to practise self-regulation in response to the numerous stressors which fall into such categories as relationships, challenging behaviour, organisational stressors and curricular demands. This may contribute to the development of personal awareness, personal development and consequent stress reduction.

The literature review has exposed a paucity of research and resultant knowledge relative to a conceptual framework or model for mindfulness in teaching. It has discussed models relative to mindfulness interventions for teachers. As a result there is a need to supplement existing knowledge in the elaboration and delivery of such mindfulness models for the teaching community, which this thesis presents in Chapters Five and Six.

Sustaining occupational wellbeing within the teaching profession requires commitment and care in order to address the stress and socio-emotional demands on teachers (Kyriacou, 2000; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Ideally, the causes of stress require attention. The socio-economic and stress promoting issues require strategic attention. Perhaps in an ideal world and ideal working conditions mindfulness for stress reduction would not be required at all. However, occupational stress in teaching is a reality and does require strategic responses from teachers. Despite the reasons for the generation of stress, Jennings (2009) and Roeser et al. (2013) argue that individual teachers engaging in mindfulness can create change in and for themselves. Being aware of the application of mindfulness in an educational context is important, offering opportunities for stress reduction to improve the possibilities and choices of teachers who strive towards occupational wellbeing.

Research Aims and Questions

The literature clearly stated that stress is commonplace in teaching and applicable to workload, relationships, classroom climate and professional practice. Therefore, the study did not include a specific question on the experience of stress. Alternatively its focus was on mindfulness as a stress reduction strategy. The study focused on the

connection between that mindfulness and stress reduction in primary school teaching and sought to answer the question:

What contribution does mindfulness practice have on stress reduction in primary school teaching in Ireland?

The literature highlighted the importance of evaluating both the stressors incurred by teachers and the contribution that mindfulness makes in responding to them. In order to ascertain the relevant answers to inform the study the research questions focus on five themes as outlined below:

1. In what ways do primary school teachers practise mindfulness?
2. In what ways can mindfulness impact on professional practice?
3. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on workload management?
4. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues?
5. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on classroom management?

Whilst this is a comprehensive range of questions it is important to consider the broad range of encounters within the teaching profession. One aspect which places the current study apart from other research into mindfulness is addressed within research question one. To date, the majority of research into mindfulness has been carried out with individuals partaking in the MBSR programme and using quantitative methodology. In this study, however, through research question one the myriad of ways that teachers learned and continued their practice, inclusive of MBSR, are explored though qualitative research methods.

The body of knowledge reviewed in this chapter pointed to common stressors among primary teachers. These are directly reflected in research questions two to five, which focus on professional practice, teacher workload, relationships and classroom issues.

Chapter Three follows with an outline of the philosophical underpinnings, methodology and data analysis that were used in this study.

3. Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative research project was undertaken using semi-structured interviews with a sample of primary school teachers in Ireland to address the question: What contribution does mindfulness practice make to stress reduction in primary school teaching in Ireland? The investigation was encouraged by a call for additional qualitative research into the effects of mindfulness on educators, teachers, students and classrooms (Albrecht et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2012). The chapter begins by exploring the philosophical paradigm that supports the design and approach to the study. The ontological and epistemological position of the researcher is detailed herein and its impact on the methodological choices is outlined. The chapter continues with an insight into the pilot interview and its implication for development of the research instrument, sampling and data collection. Ethical considerations, the research undertaking, analysis and their part in the study are each explored and explained.

3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The research questions for the current study focused on an attempt to gain understanding of subjective interpretations, meanings and experiences of teachers' perceptions of mindfulness. It sought to analyse if, in the teachers' views, mindfulness practice contributed to stress reduction. Thus, it concentrated on teachers' personal and subjective experience in the creation of their 'social world ... social reality and individual and social behaviour' (Cohen et al., 2007: 7). In the view that interpretivism invites the:

social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action ... (and) to gain access to people's common sense thinking and interpret their actions and social world from their point of view (Bryman, 2008: 20)

it is deemed an appropriate philosophical framework to underpin the study. Furthermore, interpretivism was used in this educational context, and in a process of meaning-construction in order to facilitate an understanding (Cohen et al., 2000) of the impact of mindfulness on teachers and teaching.

Mindfulness is both a difficult and complex concept to understand. At its core, mindfulness is a practice related to thoughts, emotions and other subjective experiences (Brown and Cordon, 2009). As a subjective practice carried out by individuals it can concurrently result in objective effects. However, in order to access and understand such subjectivity, or the internal experience of the teachers in the study, it was only really possible to do so through individuals' first person accounts and interpretations of their experiences.

Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, which consequently lead to methodological considerations including the issues of instrumentation and data collection (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995: 21). Such was the development of the research process for the current study. Its ontological foundation was based on the reality that teachers have their own perspective due to their personal interaction with the world, and a world view of mindfulness relative to their practice and integration into their work. The study also focused on the humanistic view that people strive to maximise their potential towards self-actualisation with awareness and choice (Rogers, 1951; Maslow, 1968), and on a positive psychology perspective that 'human goodness and excellence are as authentic as disease, disorder and distress' (Peterson and Wilson, 2002: 5) and perhaps stress. It is interesting to note at this point that implicit in the viewpoint of one of the leading humanistic proponents, that of Maslow (1966), was impatience with scientific psychology, considering that it did not address what he considered to be the most important in people. Conversely, his standpoint on the importance of paying attention to a person's way of viewing the world was considered by the researcher to be aligned with the thesis of the study herein.

As a central focus of the research endeavour epistemology concerned itself with the questions of 'how' and of 'what' could be known, in this instance how mindfulness contributed to stress reduction in primary teaching and what if any changes occurred for the teacher who practised it. The ontological basis for the research was based on a reality that combined events and experiences as perceived by the teachers who participated in the study. The nature of mindfulness incorporates awareness of the present moment. One teacher, for example, mentioned that for her the value of constantly returning to the present moment was that it created self-awareness of thoughts and responses. She indicated that she used to get quite stressed and that since practising mindfulness she tended to notice a stress trigger, paused to review the situation and changed her thoughts and attitude in relation to the situation (Gráinne).

The interpretive view relies on subjectivity while the scientific empiricist view contends that there is a straightforward relationship between the world, its objects, events, and the perception and understanding of the world. It therefore suggests that it is possible to describe what is ‘out there’ and get it right (Willig, 2009). However, the key point of the positivist approach in relation to educational research is its adherence to the scientific method (Briggs and Coleman, 2007: 21). The difficulty in which it finds itself is that it regards human behaviour as passive and essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention, individualism and freedom (Cohen et al., 2000: 19). Cohen et al. argue that it is less than successful when applied to the study of human behaviour ‘where immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world’ (Cohen et al., 2000: 9). Bryman warns that it would be a mistake to treat positivism purely as science noting that it is a philosophical position that provides an account of the nature of scientific practice (2008).

The limitation of the positivistic conception of science is acknowledged as one of the most important developments in the 20th century (Kirk et al., 2001). An alternate approach, interpretivism, focuses on the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world. Considering that the study focuses on teachers’ perceptions of mindfulness it is both subjective and personal. As mindfulness is a subject based practice; the choice of a positivist approach is deemed unsuitable.

Referred to as the anti-positivist or post-positivist movement (Cohen et al., 2000: 15), the interpretive researcher’s concern is with an understanding of the way in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves: what Cohen et al. term ‘idiographic’, the ‘individual’ approach to understanding behaviour (2000:7). This is endorsed by Pring (2004) who emphasises that to understand other people requires understanding the explanations which they give of what they do; their intentions, motives, understanding and interpretations. The literature, therefore, is underpinned by a view that interpretivism relates to the subjective meanings of those being researched and the different understandings and interpretations that participants hold in relation to the particular situation (Cohen et al., 2000; Pring, 2004; Creswell, 2009) of mindfulness practice among primary school teachers.

Interpretivism and humanism combine to inform an understanding of people’s accounts as important and enable the researcher to have faith in the general truth of what interviewees say from their perspective and from their personal and professional

viewpoint. Teachers' opinions are important and their perspective of how the world has been modified by virtue of their mindfulness practice is worthy of consideration. Alongside an interpretive perspective the research integrated a humanistic perspective which focused on researching human experience and behaviour in order to understand the whole person and the full richness of his or her experience in the context of mindfulness (Greenberg et al., 2004). It presents a model of the person as positive, active and purposive (Cohen et al., 2000) and sees people as 'essentially good and striving to achieve their potential' (Kalat, 2010: 511). The humanistic perspective of the current study focused on the individual and it set out to investigate and understand the wholeness of the human person – the teacher (Buhler and Allen, 1972; Cohen et al., 2000; Kirk et al., 2001). Interviewees indicated a search for meaning and fullness of life as a motivation for engaging in the practice of mindfulness, which concurred with the aspect of the study that endeavoured to comprehend the 'meanings and interpretations' (Cohen et al., 2000: 28), while maintaining a person-centred approach to view the situation through the eyes of the actor – the teacher – rather than the researcher (Cohen et al., 2000; Pring, 2004).

The central aspects of mindfulness practice involve thoughts, emotions and body sensations. At its core it entails a separation from 'habitually evaluative conceptual processing' implying that 'challenging events and experiences are less likely to be distorted by cognitive biases or misinterpretations' (Brown and Cordon, 2009). For example, a faster heartbeat is perceived as such rather than interpreted as a mild heart condition or panic attack, while a self-centred or judgmental thought is noticed simply as a thought without further self-judgment or criticism (Claxton, 1999). Thus, the primary concern of the study was to investigate teachers' thoughts, emotions and sensations to provide 'an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself' (Cohen et al., 2007: 8).

The research paradigm that the researcher has chosen ultimately determined and directed all other decisions made within the current research endeavour (Kirby et al., 2006: 13). For the interpretivist researcher there cannot be an objective reality existing irrespective of the meaning that human beings bring to it. Based on this understanding the study was conducted within the interpretive and humanistic framework and using qualitative research methodology, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Research focusing on the interpretive paradigm tends to get inside the person in order to understand from within (Cohen et al., 2000) thus embracing the search for meaning (Cousin, 2009; Creswell, 2014). Contrary to the objectivity and measurability of the quantitative methodology, the qualitative approach, which aims to elicit experiential and interpretative information, will be utilised to explore the specific research question, 'What contribution does mindfulness practice make to stress reduction in primary school teaching in Ireland?' While quantitative and qualitative research offer different approaches to research (Bryman, 2008), quantitative data focuses on empirical information in the form of numbers and statistics leading to measurement, and qualitative data is that related to the empirical information about the world, with its source in words (Punch, 2009) and a search for meaning (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach in the current study aimed to get a broad view of teachers' use of mindfulness in dealing with stress as a way of understanding the meaning that these teachers ascribed to this particular 'social and human problem' within the profession (Creswell, 2014: 20). Researching mindfulness among primary school teachers in Ireland was considered appropriate, being a topic that is new and had 'never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people' (Creswell, 2014: 8). With a paucity of literature relative to mindfulness and primary school teachers, the current study offered an opportunity to collect qualitative data from this group and make interpretations in an inductive style of analysis.

Although the use of qualitative methodology offers 'a baffling number of choices of approaches' (Creswell, 1998: 4), interviews are one of its most commonly used methods of data collection (Wengraf, 2001; King and Horrocks, 2010). The conversational approach, alongside 'the richness and vividness of the material it turns up' (Gillham, 2000: 10) and its capacity to provide reflection on experience and meaning, conspire towards the value for such data collection. It is deemed relatively unusual for humans to reflect in a structured manner on their own behaviour unless a researcher 'asks for reflection on an event or situation' (Morrison, 2007: 26), indicating 'an over-arching view that all human life is experienced and constructed from a subjective perspective' (Morrison, 2007: 27). The interview process could be described as a mentalization strategy inviting teachers to think about their thinking, feeling and behaviour (Allen, 2006). It was appropriate thus in the exploration of teachers' subjective experiences, and within the context of the interpretive approach which underpins the current research, to have chosen a semi-structured interview as the

research instrument in order to encourage the teachers to reflect on their mindfulness practice.

The interviewees, like ‘repositories of facts, feelings and related particulars of experience’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003: 30), held ‘a treasure trove of experiential data pertinent to beliefs, feelings and activities’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 12). In search of the contribution of interviewees’ practice of mindfulness to stress reduction in teaching, the researcher was interested to source such treasure troves by inviting each to recall certain incidents within their teaching and classroom experiences. The guidance of Seidman (2006) was pertinent in this regard suggesting that the in-depth interview is not designed to ‘test hypotheses, gather answers to questions, or corroborate opinions’ (2006: 92) but to invite interviewees ‘to reconstruct their experience and to explore their meaning’ (Seidman, 2006: 92), thereby offering interesting material that could be seen, understood (Gillham, 2000) and subsequently analysed.

Interviews, however, also had their limiting factors. They entailed a considerable time-cost factor for planning, interviewing, transcribing and data analysis (Cohen et al., 2000; Gillham, 2000). They were consequently designed to take an average of one hour for each interview and, for time efficiency, were timetabled geographically where possible. Gillham (2000) points to a curious fact that people are prepared to give significant time to an interview, fulfilling the basic human needs of attention, being listened to and an appreciation of personal opinions being sought and considered. The interviewees in the current study provided indirect information through their opinions and perspectives and also had differing levels of articulation, thus requiring further time and teasing out (Creswell, 2009).

Another limiting factor is evidence that the interviewer’s personality can have an impact on respondents’ replies, although ‘the extent and nature of the impact’ are unclear and may vary with each situation (Bryman, 2012: 227). This, aligned with issues of power and resistance and the importance of distinguishing truth from authenticity (Nunkoosing, May 2005), suggests that, despite the popularity of interviews, the integrity of the interviewer is essential. To deal with such issues the interviewer endeavoured to be objective, professional, independent and impartial in all communications with interviewees.

Thus, the interview process held key features which were useful to the qualitative study reported herein. An interview schedule for the study (Appendix 1) was designed to ensure that the research questions were addressed and generated an interview that flowed easily and conversationally in the collection of pertinent information. The interview opened with a welcome and invitation to consider aspects of the teacher's professional experience followed by more focused questions. Thus the interview was considered a valuable research instrument to address specific issues when the investigation had a clear focus from the beginning (Bryman, 2008). This research instrument was tested with the administration of a pilot interview to consider its appropriateness.

3.3.1 THE PILOT INTERVIEW

To investigate the suitability of the interview schedule a semi-structured interview was piloted with one primary school teacher to explore the design, administration and data analysis of the interview and its effectiveness as a research instrument. It took place in January 2012, concluding with valuable changes in order to ensure solid data collection and analysis for the research project itself. To establish best practice and in order that the interview ran smoothly, Gillham's five phase process was used as a guide (Gillham, 2005). It included the preparation, initial contact, orientation, substantive and closure phases (Richards, 2009). The preparation phase comprised familiarisation with the interview schedule, identifying prompts and practising the questions aloud (Gillham, 2005; Bryman, 2008). The researcher was conscious of the qualities of a successful interviewer and used such merits of being knowledgeable, structured, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering and critical (Kvale, 1996) in the course of the interview process.

In consideration of the findings of the pilot interview and feedback from the interviewee and the Ethics Committee within the University of Lincoln, Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD), the research instrument was revised for the main research interviews. The CERD Ethics Committee offered guidance relative to the care of interviewees and the framing of questions in order to ensure a fluid and comfortable experience for interviewees. This was also reflected in the interviewee feedback. The pilot interviewee indicated that the introductory question eliciting her understanding of occupational stress was a little bit direct as a starter question, bringing the focus of occupational stress very quickly to the fore. She gave a definition type answer to this question. As a result of her feedback a new introductory question was brought to the

interview schedule and the sequence of interviewee questions changed. The first interview question was subsequently changed to explore a broad context of teaching experience. It asked: What do you consider were the high and low points in your teaching career? In subsequent interviews this question immediately drew out teachers' experiences of what they enjoyed about the job and the challenges experienced. This was perhaps a friendlier and less threatening enquiry of job satisfaction and occupational stress.

This and other learning influenced subtle changes to the research instrument. The development of more probing questions and the inclusion of additional prompts relating to the literature review were added for later interviews (Gillham, 2005). For example, it was evident from the pilot interview that a gap existed in relation to school policy regarding staff self-care and stress management. Consequently, it was decided to include a prompt enquiring about school policy relative to staff care and stress management. Considered as rich data, information from the pilot interview was integrated into the body of the findings of the study. It became clear that this pilot interview was preparation and 'an advanced stage of development close to the real thing' (Gillham, 2000: 53) in an endeavour to 'get the research instrument right' (Gillham, 2000: 53).

3.3.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ACCESS

The research was carried out in accordance with the University of Lincoln's Ethical Principles for conducting work with Humans, and also according to the Revised Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Ethical Research as set out by the British Educational Research Association (British Educational Research Association, 2004) (BERA, 2004). Ethical approval forms provided by CERD were utilised and ethical approval granted by the CERD Ethics Committee, in December 2012, following application outlining ethical issues and risk assessment, and can be viewed in Appendix 2. It was appreciated that the production of knowledge in the qualitative arena is accompanied by moral responsibility (Ryen, 2011) and social justice (Hammersley, 1999) with regard to the research participants. The current study has endeavoured to ensure the highest possible standards of conduct throughout. The principles of respect and equality acknowledged the dignity and autonomy of interviewees alongside a stance of beneficence and justice aiming to protect them by seeking to maximise anticipated benefits while minimising harm and by integrating fair and just practices (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). It did so by emphasising to interviewees their freedom to choose for

themselves and to determine their own course within the bounds of the research. The study was validated by seeking informed consent for interviews, providing a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity and informing interviewees about the recording, transcription and use of data (University of Lincoln, 2012). In the consideration of these ethical issues the research, in association with the CERD Ethics Committee, was considered ethically sound and ‘ethically viable given the societal norms’ (Anderson, 1998: 23). An information sheet integrating a consent form was designed for each participant of the study and administered in line with good quality ethical practice (Appendix 3).

Following consultation with teachers and verbal permission for access each was sent an information sheet and consent form which was signed by both the participant and the researcher. Confidentiality, being given a very high priority, was ensured through the use of pseudonyms in the transcripts. Interviewees and the schools they work in are unrecognisable in public documentation at any stage of the study. This was clearly outlined in the information sheet presented by the researcher.

3.3.3 POSITIONALITY

In bringing the researcher’s biography to the current research study (Cousin, 2010) it was intended to incorporate high standards of researcher reflexivity and openness (Kirby et al., 2006). The primary investigator’s professional experience and practice, alongside personal values, beliefs and practices (Bryman, 2008), underlie the motivation and intention of the research and the researcher’s position within it. Although not a primary school teacher, the researcher is an independent freelance facilitator of Continuing Professional Development with primary school teachers. As was suggested previously, this could lead to the recognition of the researcher as both an insider and an outsider concurrently (Kirby et al., 2006). Acceding to the suggestion that researchers might ‘ideally admit to both their overt and their covert purposes’ (Thody, 2009: 55), the researcher acknowledges the covert position of the potential value of research to the researcher as a practitioner.

Regular interaction within the particular occupational arena and its professional organisations has given the researcher an appreciation of the diverse experiences and contexts within which teachers work. Although a researcher cannot avoid taking personal experience, background and pre-existing appreciation of experience into the research process (Finlay, 2002), the practice of reflexivity on the part of the researcher

stood out as a way of evaluating her impact on the process, ‘thereby increasing the integrity and trustworthiness’ (Cui, 2012: 95) of the research. In the researcher’s awareness of ‘positionality’ a reflexive perspective was maintained throughout the study. This involved questioning thoughts and attitudes, being attentive to how prejudice and loyalty towards mindfulness might impact on the production of knowledge and questioning personal involvement and how behaviour and knowledge might influence others (Clancy, 2013). It, in fact, necessitated the researcher to practise mindfulness herself, to be attentive to her thoughts and emotions relative to interviewees and their contribution. To diminish positionality the researcher was dedicated to ensuring that a true representation of interviewees’ perspectives was presented within the findings, which required the researcher to be open, objective and impartial in all aspects of the study (Kirby et al., 2006).

Such a reflexive approach may not necessarily have eliminated bias, but it did bring it into awareness in order to bring a ‘credible and transparent interpretation of participant’s accounts’ into the study (Clancy, 2013: 16). As a professional partially working in the primary teacher sector and with a personal mindfulness practice that spans decades, the researcher is aware of the significance of personal and professional experience that could have influenced the study from its inception to the present time. Aspects of influence by the researcher included the choice of the topic, mindfulness, development of research questions, methodology, data analysis and conclusions (Bryman, 2008). The researcher, however, was aware of her values and beliefs and their potential influence on emerging data, analysis and conclusions.

The researcher was also vigilant about ‘positionality’, the ‘multiple overlapping identities’ (Klenke, 2008: 162) and the aspects of gender, race and class (Klenke, 2008; Cousin, 2010) aiming towards ‘a fluid negotiated view of positional space’ (Cousin, 2010: 17), so that data was collected easily and ethically. Interviewees were sought through a number of avenues. While some interviewees had participated in mindfulness programmes delivered by the researcher, some 75% of the interviewees were completely unknown to the interviewer prior to the interview process, indicating a significant outsider position. The ethical and positionality issues detailed herein were overtly outlined at the beginning of the study and in the application for ethical approval to the CERD Ethics Committee, University of Lincoln.

To conclude, incorporating positionality into the study is essential as research is not free of my values, beliefs, practices and experiences and could influence its motivation

and intention (Bryman, 2008). It has the capacity to influence every aspect of the study from inception, as already mentioned, to conclusion. I am conscious of my potential influence on the study and the fundamental need to be vigilant, open and professional in my response to data and analysis and to ensure that its conclusions are free from bias or interpretation from my agenda, thus increasing its integrity and trustworthiness (Cui, 2012). I was committed to conducting the study reported herein with strict adherence to the University of Lincoln guidelines and to uphold the highest standard of ethical observance. Data is being kept for observation by an outsider if required at a later time.

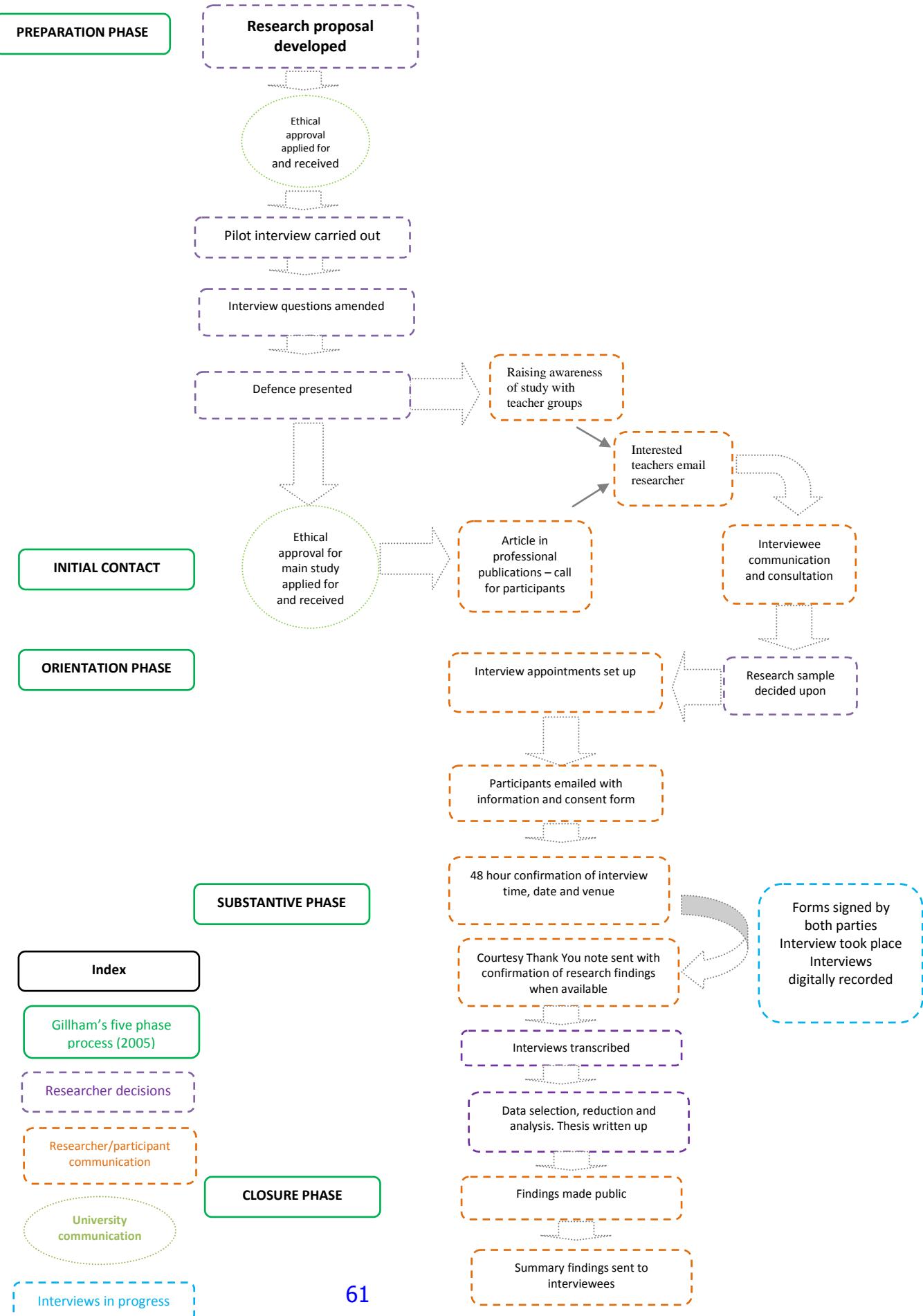
3.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The study, inclusive of the pilot interview process, data collection and data analysis spanned 15 months and is detailed in diagram form in Figure 3:1. Gillham's five phase process (2005) was adapted to outline the research process. Following acceptance and approval from the University of Lincoln Ethics Committee, preparation for the pilot interview commenced. On successful completion of the pilot interview with one teacher, interview questions were reviewed and re-structured with subsequent changes incorporated into the study. Following the 'Defence', a formal presentation of the research proposal within the University of Lincoln academic system, and an application for acceptance and ethical approval for the main study from the university's Ethics Committee, the search for research participants began. This took many forms. Names and contact details of interested teachers had been accumulated at opportune moments during the previous six months through Continuing Professional Development training events and relevant conferences. An invitation to research participants was extended through relevant teacher publications and websites and through communication with schools where mindfulness is integrated into the curriculum. An article with a short description of the study and seeking participation was placed in the In Touch magazine, a bi-monthly professional magazine of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation in the January/February edition, 2013. Through these initiatives a total of 26 teachers responded. Some did not meet the relevant criteria of having practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months and were therefore deemed unsuitable. Twenty were selected as participants for the study.

Following receipt of ethical approval, interested parties were contacted to consider suitability in order to create a purposive sample which tends to be used in qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Interviewees were sought and selected to

purposefully respond to the research questions in the current study (Creswell, 2009). Insisting on a criterion of six months practice of mindfulness was deemed appropriate to the development of a regular practice and an ability to purposefully inform the research problem (Creswell, 2008). The interview process was undertaken over several months with some interviews being carried out while appointments for others were being arranged. Data collection took place during April, May and June 2013 when teachers were interviewed predominantly in school premises, though a small number of interviews were conducted in alternate locations that were suitable to the interviewee. All interviews took place in a location that offered privacy and was void of interruption. Prior to each interview, interviewees were contacted by email with a reminder of the interview time and date and with an accompanying information sheet for the study and consent form. Consent forms were completed prior to the interview with elements of confidentiality and anonymity clearly laid out. They were digitally recorded and transcribed as a part of the familiarisation process and recognition of emerging codes (Richards, 2009). Figure 3.1 provides a flow chart of the research process and actions taken throughout the process. Following each interview a note of appreciation was sent to each interviewee.

Figure 3.1: Progression of research proceedings and actions undertaken



3.4.1 SAMPLING STRATEGY

The criteria for participation in the study were that each interviewee was a primary school teacher in an Irish school for a minimum of one year, and that s/he practise mindfulness for a minimum of six months. Six months as a minimum of mindfulness practice is considered appropriate time to have developed the habit of practice and integrated its knowledge and teachings. Having taught for a minimum of one year would ensure that the practice of mindfulness was integrated into the participant's teaching practice. The sample is not representative of the Irish population. Rather, the intention was to seek to be representative of variations in practice and geographical area and that the knowledge produced could be generalised to the whole of the Irish context.

Variables of gender, length of teaching experience, school type and geographical location were considered significant as a means of cross sectional selection and analysis. These can be viewed in Appendix 7. Primary schools in Ireland differ in their size and intake of students and are spread across rural and urban geographical locations. Schools vary from two-teacher schools in rural locations with a small intake of pupils and a principal who also teaches a class of pupils to large schools in urban areas with hundreds of pupils and an administrative principal and deputy principal. The study strove to include a representation from rural and urban, small and large schools in order to gain a cross-sectional representative sample. With 47% of Irish schools having five teachers or fewer and most of these located in rural areas (Smith, 2012), it was considered prudent to select teachers from both school types. The selected sample was considered adequate with a variety of schools, age ranges and teaching experience.

In total a purposive sample of 20 interviews with primary school teachers was regarded as a representative base for the requirements of the current study (Creswell, 1998) and as a means of reaching data saturation, the point after which no new or relevant information would emerge and the 'incremental improvement to theory is minimal' (Eisenhardt, 2002: 26). Eighteen women and two men participated in the study. While it might have been interesting to have a greater number of men, it was considered fair considering that the profession is particularly female dominated. Potential interviewees were communicated with by email and telephone and those who met the criteria for the study were chosen from the population (Ary et al., 2010) of primary teachers to yield significant and copious data (Yin, 2011).

Many research projects have analysed mindfulness practitioners who have participated in an MBSR programme. The current study chose different criteria and accepted participants who had completed an MBSR programme and others who took a variety of avenues to learn and support their practice of mindfulness. As interviewees were chosen from throughout the country it necessitated considerable time and travel. While this was a potential challenge, it was integrated into the time line for the study. As the researcher was unfamiliar with many of the locations, the time and venue for interviews were directed by the interviewee. Although a few interviews took place in a teacher's home, most took place in schools and directly after classes finished. These interviewees provided rich data for consideration.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative research typically produces large volumes of data (Bryman, 2008) necessitating well organised data management for a 'systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage and retrieval' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 428). A rigorous, transparent, robust and systematic approach to data analysis was employed (Robson, 2002; Bryman, 2008) with analysis planned and designed prior to data collection (Gray, 2004) while allowing the themes to emerge. As already mentioned, prior to embarking on the full study a single interview was administered with one primary school teacher. This investigation allowed the data analysis process to be trialled and tested with its outcome available to improve and develop the wider study.

Following initial interviews, questions were adapted to include new dimensions arising in an ongoing process (Bryman, 2008). Field notes were taken and included, contextual and non-verbal cues (Silverman, 2006) adding clarity and authenticity to the data (Denscombe, 2007). Analytical coding, central to the qualitative inquiry, and interpretation of data, were conducted. The researcher recognised that most approaches to the analysis of interview transcripts involve such coding (Richards, 2009), 'a flexible and forgiving procedure' (Lee and Fielding, 2009: 536) which 'segments the textual materials in question' (Bryman and Hardy, 2009: 4). An inductive process of data analysis identified various sections of data and labelled them using broad category names, identifying their connections (Gray, 2004; Bryman, 2008; Lodico et al., 2010). Data analysis was carried out acknowledging the importance of

both data reduction and data retention in order to learn from it and understand its patterns (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Richards, 2009) while simultaneously editing, summarising and segmenting it in its own context (Punch, 2009). The approach to data analysis used was that based on the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework for qualitative data analysis which is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

A computer aided qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS) known as Nvivo was used as an aid to data management. It was used to organise the information in a professional manner (Edlund, 2007), to manage the data and ideas, query it and report from its qualitative database (Bazeley, 2007), all with a view to best practice. NVivo8 was selected both because it was available and because it was considered a valuable software resource offering an audit trail useful for transparency and to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The analysis software offered the researcher opportunities to log data, code patterns and map conceptual categories and thought progressions making all stages of the data analysis process both traceable and transparent. It was realised that, in using data analysis software, the computer would not do the analysis or draw conclusions, but could be used for efficiency. The researcher sought a tool which would support analysis while managing to 'leave the analyst firmly in charge' (Fielding and Lee, 1998: 167) of the process.

3.5.2 OVERVIEW OF DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

In essence the analytical process was going on throughout the course of the study. The interviews culminated in interviewees' free and spontaneous expression of views and thoughts relative to the research questions. These were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis. The analysis process did not use pre-determined categories, but entailed grouping information into significant categories of meaning and relationships through a process of inductive reasoning using coding units (Stemler, 2001). It involved classifying data and categorising it into codes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The fundamental qualitative research analysis tasks of coding, re-coding, identifying, categorising and classifying data were carried out following the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework for qualitative data analysis. A synopsis of the data analysis is tabulated in Figure 3.2 and the stages and process involved in the analysis appear in Figure 3.3.

Phase 1 – Transcription of interviews, notes and observations for import into NVivo8, the computer aided qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS).
Collation of demographic and profile table.

Phase 2 – Start List, broad open coding of the interviews into initial non-hierarchical codes.
Clear name and definition of each code in order to create general themes and units of meaning.
See Appendix 4 – Codebook – Phase one – Open Coding.

Phase 3 – Data Display– categorisation of codes, distilling and re-labelling.
Re-order of themes identified in Phase two into categories of themes into framework that fits for deeper data analysis. See Appendix 5 – Codebook – Phase two – Data Display.

Phase 4 – Data Reduction – Consolidation and refining of codes into a more abstract and conceptual framework of the final outcome. See Appendix 6 – Codebook – Phase three – Data Reduction.

Phase 5 – Creation of analytical memos for the higher level codes to sum up the content of each category and its codes and propose empirical findings against such categories. These memos reflect five key areas:

1. The content of the cluster of codes
2. The patterns
3. Consideration of relatedness of codes to each other and consideration of their value in responding to the research question. Development of codes into a coherent narrative for Chapter 4, the findings chapter
4. Consideration of background information of interviewees and patterns relative to their profiles
5. Consideration of primary sources in the context of connection with the literature alongside identification of gaps in the literature

This stage of the process assisted the researcher in creating initial findings from which conclusions were drawn: the four phase framework included Mindfulness Practice, Teacher Attributes; Contribution to Professional Practice and Classroom Outcomes.

Phase 6 – Validation of the framework. This phase entailed checking the analytical memos beyond textual quotes. It involved interrogating the data by cross referencing with data and literature culminating in reliable evidence based findings.

Phase 7 – Synthesis of data into a coherent framework for mindfulness in education.

Phase 8 – Development of Chapters Four and Five – Findings and Discussion chapters.

Adapted to this study with permission from QDA online training programme (Meehan, 2013).

Figure 3. 2: Data analysis

Analytical Process (Miles & Huberman, 1994).	Miles & Huberman Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative process throughout analysis
Data Collection April – September 2013	Phase 1: Interview transcription for import into NVivo8, computer aided qualitative data analysis system	Data Management Open and hierachal coding through NVivo8	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning
Start List June – Aug 2013	Phase 2 – Open Coding		Refining and distilling more abstract concepts
Data Display September 2013	Phase 3 – Categorisation of Codes		
Data Reduction Oct – Dec 2013	Phase 4 – Data Reduction/Consolidation Phase 5 – Writing Analytical Memos	Descriptive Accounts (<i>Reordering, 'coding on' and annotating through NVivo8</i>)	Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning
Conclusion Drawing/ Verifying Feb – June 2014	Phase 6 – Validating Analytical Memos Phase 7 – Synthesising Analytical Memos	Explanatory Accounts (<i>Extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVivo8</i>)	Assigning meaning Generating themes and concepts

Figure 3.3: Stages and Process involved in the Qualitative Analysis ¹

¹ This figure was adapted from Miles & Huberman (1994) and adapted further to incorporate the aspects of data analysis in this research with permission during QDA online training programme (Meehan, 2013).

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive account of the philosophical underpinnings, research design, methodology, research tools and analysis of the research study. It outlined the argument for the use of qualitative methods using semi-structured interviews to explore the contribution of the practice of mindfulness towards stress reduction among school teachers. The epistemological and ontological underpinnings influenced the research approach in the search for the subjective material from the primary school teachers. Informed by the literature and a pilot interview, the semi-structured interview provides rich data to address the specific research questions. The particular methodology also endeavoured to integrate into the study elements of conceptuality, criticality and alignment in order to conclude with a contribution and new claim to knowledge.

This chapter outlined the process and collection of data from teachers in relation to the research questions. The chapter that follows presents the findings from the data.

4. Findings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the research and presents an analysis of the data. In particular, it addresses the research question ‘What contribution does mindfulness practice make to stress reduction in primary school teaching in Ireland?’ The findings have been structured using emergent themes in order to contain and represent the richness of the qualitative data and the language used by the interviewees themselves in response to questions posed (Gillham, 2000).

The literature clearly indicated teacher stress. The research questions, therefore, did not include a specific question regarding the experience of stress among teachers. However, many indicators emerged. Data analysis revealed consistencies across the interviews in relation to stressors experienced and observed by teachers within the profession and outcomes emanating from the practice of mindfulness as primary school teachers.

To ensure the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms have been utilised in reference to teachers who participated in the investigation. As indicated in Chapter 3 the evidence is based on interviews with 20 teachers who have practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months. Considering that the sample constitutes teachers who practise mindfulness regularly it might be assumed that they consider it to make a valuable and positive contribution occupationally. However, there are a myriad of responses to stress and wellbeing. According to the interviewees, mindfulness was not the only means of stress reduction. Other approaches included exercise, diet and yoga, alongside consulting with and socialising with friends and colleagues. Although this is not a correlational study, this indicates that it is not possible to totally isolate the variable.

This chapter is divided into seven distinct sections. These outline the stressors experienced by teachers; the type of mindfulness practice engaged in by teachers and the contribution that their practice had on essential aspects of professional and pedagogical issues, relationships, work and classroom management. The next section explores the stressors that teachers exposed in the current teaching climate.

4.2 STRESS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHING

Although teachers were not asked directly about the experience of stress many stressors emerged. It was evident that numerous ‘potentially stressful events’ permeated a teaching day (Morgan, 2015: 2) and that the causes of stress were both internal and external to the self. Some of the influences on teachers’ working days originated in an international drive for standards (Morgan, 2015) whilst others emerged from curriculum content, class combination and day to day relationships which concurs with other current research (Darmody and Smyth, 2010; Morgan 2015; Nic An Fhailigh, 2014).

The data indicated that many teachers experienced job satisfaction with a feeling that their work was fulfilling and meaningful and with a consensus that not every teacher responded similarly to teaching situations. Seventeen of the 20 interviewees indicated that, although they enjoy their job, they do experience stress in the course of their teaching profession. The remaining three indicated that, although they do not personally experience it as a stressful occupation, they accept that there are many stressors. Questioned about their view of a national finding that 45% of primary school teachers experience occupational stress (Darmody and Smyth, 2010), three of the research participants felt that more than 45% of the teachers they knew experienced stress. Fifteen considered it to be a realistic statistic as evidenced by Helen who said that she would:

... wholly agree with it. You don't switch off as a teacher ... mind racing because as soon as I wake in the morning I have my timetable in my head, Sunday evening I am planning the timetable. (Helen)

Two thought differently. Jacinta indicated that she would not know if ‘*that would be reflected in our school. We have the support from parents and a great staff*’. In answer to the same question, four teachers revealed that they had been stressed for a long time without realising it, reflecting that ‘*there are many times when we are unaware of the degree to which our relationships with our inner and outer environment are taxing our resources even though they are*’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 241). The following subsections explore stressors internal to and external to the self.

4.2.1 STRESSORS INTERNAL TO SELF

Some teachers named numerous stressors that caused distress at physical, cognitive and affective levels. They were aware of the need to respond at a conscious level reflecting the importance of teachers having clear and effective approaches to stress reduction (Kyriacou, 2000: 3). Such physical, cognitive and affective experiences are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

Physical indicators included changes in heart and breathing rates in addition to variations in temperature levels, sweating and stomach responses. Kelly described stress as being physical and emotional. Simon agreed adding that it is also spiritual, '*the sickening feeling, the low moods and the spiritual emptiness that come with it ... the breathing differently, the heart racing and the sweaty hands*'. While physical indicators included tiredness, exhaustion Róisin indicated it was '*the body telling of its stress*' (Róisín),

At a cognitive level some teachers noted a propensity towards '*mind racing*' (Helen) and '*rumination*' (Kate). Others reported '*day dreaming*' (Helen), '*mind wandering*' (Louise) and '*projecting into what will happen tomorrow*' (Chloe). An inner critic was found to be activated by thoughts of self-doubt and self-blame. Jacinta, in referring to her teaching blamed herself '*that it was my fault that they (the children) weren't learning*'. Chloe indicated that '*for a long time I never knew if I was doing it right and had high expectations of kids, though I thought they were coming up short*'. Jacinta continued that she '*finds it hard to deal with*' indicating her strategy in responding to such self-criticism: '*if that critical mode is switched on I need to step back. I get a cold, my lower back aches, my body tells me it's time to slow down, to take stock and take space*'. These comments point to a need for personal patience and self-tolerance. They also suggest that despite practicing mindfulness an inner critic endured and self-criticality persisted.

At an affective level, teachers talked of tension, frustration, powerlessness, anxiety, irritability, vulnerability and being overwhelmed. More than one teacher commented about feeling isolated. Several spoke of being in the classroom with pupils from 9 am to 3 pm with 10–15 minutes' break and minimal opportunity to meet with colleagues to discuss pupil needs, let alone personal needs. Brenda indicated that in a big school '*depending on where you are working, you mightn't see staff from the beginning of the*

week to the end (Brenda). In an exceptional case regarding staff interaction and consequent isolation another revealed that:

In our school we don't have breaks at all. The principal and vice principal don't take a break so the teachers don't, so we don't meet each other except at staff meetings or a night out. (Gráinne)

This socialisation into ways of working minimises the likelihood of collaborative working conditions and inclusive practices. The same teacher later indicated that there is consistent negativity among staff members and '*giving out about the stress of the job, that they have holidays though are the “working poor” with pay cuts and losses, and complaining about the conditions and all the paperwork*'. This is also indicative of teachers' concerns regarding stressors that originated in their external worlds.

4.2.2 EXTERNAL STRESSORS

A consensus of opinion from teachers was that the **context** of teaching has changed in recent years. They found themselves dealing with a far greater range of difficulties than in the past and a greater depth of complexities regarding educational and social needs for children. In the context of teacher supports, they reported that government cut-backs had culminated in a reduction in classroom supports for example, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and English as Additional Language teachers (EALs). Kelly was typical of a response to such stressors reporting that '*lack of resources is one of the lows of my teaching, with SNAs now unavailable to children and little support for children whose first language is not English*'. There were many challenges associated with working with children with special needs, typified by Mari:

You might have children with Down syndrome in the class and not have the skill or knowledge ... A child is only given a classroom assistant if she or he ticks certain boxes, but they might need a classroom assistant and because they don't tick the boxes they don't get it. (Mari)

Interviewees conveyed that government cutbacks and other recent government initiatives have caused a change in teaching styles and necessitated paperwork, report writing, monitoring and evaluation to be incorporated within an already full workload. Other comments from teachers regarding changes in schools included having to attend to additional academic and social challenges, social awareness and issues of professional development. Teaching multi-abilities and multi-classes was also

considered a particular challenge of the job and particularly in the light of pressures relative to literacy and numeracy and striving for international PISA and TIMMS targets.

From a different viewpoint there was a concern about a public perception that teaching is an easy job, that teachers have little to do, short hours and lots of holidays. Mari's comment typifies the unseen demands and commitment mentioned by her and other teachers:

We do have a great job and we do have good time off, but come the holidays we are so wrecked ... I was sick for the Christmas and Easter holidays ... I was just worn out from the term and up and down the town with Christmas carols and play etc. and my system was low ... it's very demanding of energy, and that's not just me, that would be pretty common. (Mari)

Another commitment invisible to the public is the time spent in class preparation exemplified by Helen reporting '*I'm there at eight planning and preparing and then come home in evening and have corrections ... holidays are the only time we get to switch off*'

A new requirement imposed by the Department of Education and Skills of additional Continuing Professional Development, known as Croke Park Hours, is considered '*stressful and pointless ... (and that) it really devalues you as a teacher when you give an extra hour for the sake of it when you know you are putting in three or four hours over what they think you do*' (Helen). In contrast one interviewee considered them an opportunity '*to communicate, to talk to each other when we don't usually have time otherwise*' (Chloe). A possibility according to some interviewees was to use the Croke Park hours differently, which is typified by Noreen:

I think something like mindfulness offered in a school would be very beneficial, to make people aware of it ... I think some principals are aware of how their staff are feeling, and it might be a nice thing to do rather than it's always got to be work, work, work and planning, planning, planning. You know, everything is planned for the children; maybe it's time to plan for the teachers. (Noreen)

This comment with its reference to work and planning is perhaps indicative of the workload addressed by teachers.

Two key areas in need of **workload** management emerged from the data, namely what interviewees considered **curriculum** overload and excessive administration through paperwork, both of which are discussed in this section.

There is a concern that '*the Department expectations are unrealistic*' and that '*it's all about ticking boxes*' (Gráinne), with '*so much detail required with paper work, planning, assessment work , records etc. in the classroom*' (Sadbh). Teachers are '*frustrated by the time-table being so full*' (Gráinne) and irritated by a curriculum that is '*now on overload*' (Sheila) '*leading to such pressure*' (Helen). They also indicated that experiencing '*a sense of huge frustration that you never get everything done and don't even get a decent day's work done*' (Sheila). Teachers also reported that they consider they are '*expected to be a Jack of All Trades*' (Mari) with an attitude that '*everything that is wrong with the world can be sorted by teachers*' (Nora).

This strain in relation to curriculum was coupled with a consensus that requirements related to documentation have escalated. The findings reveal that a significant majority of the interviewees considered as unacceptable an increase in paperwork, and that '*accountability is gone too far with so much record keeping*' (Sadbh) and an '*emphasis now on documentation that I'm not really impressed with*' (Teresa). This was particularly noted by interviewees in senior cycle classes. Helen suggested that it '*takes from the passion of the job*'. Teresa, a learning support teacher for three rural schools, for whom paperwork is a particular stressor was asked if mindfulness helped. She responded: '*I'd have a problem with all this documentation. So no, it doesn't help me. No it is the only area it doesn't help me in*'. The same teacher, one of three who considered the job undemanding, when asked about workload articulated: '*Well I'm so interested in what I do ... the workload doesn't get to me really*'. The same teacher indicated that relationships were integral to teachers' jobs.

Two Irish studies indicated that **relationships** with colleagues, parents and pupils contributed to high levels of stress (ASTI, 2007; Darmody and Smyth, 2010). Whilst the study reported here suggests also that relationships form stressors within the primary school milieu, it also points to teachers developing specific strategies to assist presence, listening and confidence in relationship with others, within the classroom and without.

While some teachers considered that the relationships they made with the children were the highlight of their teaching career, they were also challenged by relationships

in general. Some relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues were considered complementary, some conflicting and others caused frustrations and tensions. There was a general consensus among teachers that challenging behaviour in pupils was one of the primary stressors relative to teaching and classroom management. The greater number of teachers interviewed were employed in regular primary schools and were the cohort of teachers who identified particularly the challenge of dealing with pupils' challenging behaviour. In such situations children were described as '*dramatic at times ... overboard*' (Kelly), '*boisterous*' (Louise), and with teachers occasionally experiencing '*violent outbreaks with kids*' (Kate). At the same time it was clear that teachers endeavoured to understand the children and tried to recognise their issues and challenges. In this regard Cloe said that '*I understand that if children are acting out it's generally that they are not happy. I would try to get to the bottom of that and I found that really challenging*' (Cloe). Fiona suggested that over the years the issue of children's behaviour as a problem was consistently raised at staff meetings. She indicated that '*trying to deliver material that they're not available to receive*' (Fiona) was testing, not just for herself but also for her colleagues. The home situation of some pupils was a concern for teachers. Many proposed that children's' home situation often overflowed into the classroom and school yard impacting on classroom climate and the development of relationships with teachers and classmates. Contrary to this Louise reported that she has '*very little discipline issues*'. However, she did admit having in her class '*children who are anxious*'. She was one of three who indicated few behavioural issues.

Teachers also spoke of challenges to classroom management impacting on relationships. Having to juggle the needs of particularly weak and particularly bright children was a challenge in the midst of current reduced classroom resources to help weak children. Kate's response was typical:

to have the time for kids you're differentiating all the time, for kids that are particularly weak or particularly strong, to have the time to give them and keep everything juggled – and with weak kids it's very frustrating not having the support and resources to help them out (Kate).

Parents' educational expectations for their children were mixed and relationships that teachers had with parents varied among the interviewees. Three teachers in particular considered parents to be challenging and '*more demanding in the current climate*' (Louise). '*We're meant to be psychologists and social workers and everything rolled*

into one really', reported Teresa. Conversely, Sheila indicated that parents in her school are '*not interested in their children's education so we don't have pressure from parents to teach the curriculum, we don't have that stress*'. The same teacher, however, reported that she had an experience '*where parents walked in and opened the door and verbally abused teachers in front of the kids*', causing '*an awful lot of stress*' (Sheila). The data suggested that relationships with parents can be a particular challenge for Newly Qualified Teachers. Daniel reported that in the early years of teaching when a teacher may not have a lot of life experience being confronted by a parent '*is quite stressful the first time it happens*' (Daniel). However, teachers also reported the value of supportive colleagues in such instances.

From the findings it is apparent that there are two main aspects relative to collegial relationships, namely relationships with the principal and relations with other staff members. Many interviewees alluded to group dynamics and how '*the principal can affect the rhythm of the school*' (Jacinta). Four teachers indicated that their principal was particularly stressed, one suggesting the role of '*teaching principals is highly stressed*' (Moya). Some referred to the principal as '*a very difficult person*' (Gráinne) or struggling with '*the way she has dealt with certain things*' (Jacinta). All other interviewees reported that principals were particularly supportive, helpful, dependable, and had '*an air of confidentiality*' (Nora).

Interviewees were divided when it came to considering the place of mindfulness in the school. There was a divide between those who considered its acceptance and those who struggled for its recognition. Three teachers reported an organisational acceptance of mindfulness and its integration across the school with consequential positive implications for organisational stress reduction. Two of these schools offered regular mindfulness sessions for staff, initiated by the interviewees, while one school has integrated mindfulness across the school where children and staff members take a mindful moment twice daily with the sound of a bell through the school intercom system. A contrary opinion was typified by Teresa's description of a colleague's comment: '*Don't tell me you were off doing meditation again*'. Responses varied from interviewees showing a willingness to be open in discussing their practice of mindfulness to feeling guarded in response to critical attitudes and resistance to mindfulness. It is interesting that some teachers' association with mindfulness, with its Buddhist roots, was challenged by colleagues within the Catholic ethos of their schools. A cultural issue was raised by some teachers with a concern regarding the practice of mindfulness in Irish primary schools that were under the patronage of the

Catholic Church. Two teachers particularly verbalised concern that mindfulness has its roots in a Buddhist tradition and therefore would ‘jar with the ethos of the school’ (Jacinta), that being the Catholic ethos. One was concerned about management knowing of her attendance at Buddhist centres: ‘*Irish primary school teachers are going to Buddhist meditation centres*’ with an emphasis on the word ‘are’ perhaps suggesting that this may be unacceptable to school management. Both were concerned about these comments being recorded in the interview; hence no name is attached to the previous two comments. Thus this indicates that some teachers felt the need to keep their mindfulness practice confidential in the Irish school context, where schools are predominantly managed by the Catholic Church. Teachers’ coping strategies in the midst of such challenges were to appreciate their personal conviction and experience of the value of mindfulness. It was clear that the interviewees were introduced to mindfulness through differing means and continue to practise it in various ways. These are discussed in the next section.

4.3 HOW TEACHERS PRACTISE MINDFULNESS

The practice of mindfulness among teachers is increasingly being used as a means of teacher and pupil wellbeing (Greenberg and Harris, 2012) and as a means of coping effectively with stress (Roeser, 2013). It was clear that teachers practised a variety of mindfulness techniques ranging from the body scan, sitting meditation, movement or walking meditation. Although they had learned mindfulness through differing avenues, 10 participants indicated that they practised daily; nine signified they did so two to four times weekly and the remaining one practised irregularly. Sitting meditation was the most popular practice, being used by 14 of the interviewees. Each of the teachers identified more than one habitual practice with five teachers varying between three or more options selected from the body scan, sitting meditation, yoga, movement or walking meditation. It is interesting to note that, apart from one interviewee, teachers who practised mindfulness through walking are a separate cohort from those who have completed an MBSR programme. While interviewees reported a commitment to regular practice many recounted the availability or habit of taking the time to do so as a challenging factor. Despite the time constraint relative to regular practice, this question revealed that interviewees incorporated regular *mindful moments* throughout their working day in becoming aware of their present moment reality physically, mentally and emotionally.

Interviewees began the practice of mindfulness for various reasons. Six declared that they did so for health related issues, two for Continuing Professional Development and six for general wellbeing. Integrated in the health related issues was that of depression, either as a familial issue or for personal mental health reasons. Another six stated that their reason was directly related to stress, some of which was occupational stress. Two teachers reported extended absenteeism due to occupational stress.

I had a sixth class that was very, very difficult. And it was life, it wasn't all just teaching. Then I took four months off not knowing if I was coming back. I really didn't know if I could ever stand in a classroom again. I thought I'd be looking at retirement or a career break. I went for psychotherapy and through that learned about mindfulness. I took it on board and that has been my saving grace. That has brought me back into being able to stand in the classroom again. (Sheila)

Another interviewee explained about finding the role of Home School Community Liaison to be isolating and unsuitable, which culminated in him taking extended certified sick leave. He '*learned mindfulness during the time off as a way of healing and getting back to myself again*' (Simon), and valued it as a means of stress reduction, self-development, healing and recovery.

The terms mindfulness and meditation were occasionally used interchangeably during interview responses, but generally interviewees spoke of awareness of thoughts and emotions. The data from across the interviews suggests that, in using various mindfulness practices, there is some consensus of a consciousness of moment-to-moment awareness and attentiveness in the present moment.

4.4 INTERNAL MINDFULNESS EXPERIENCES

Mindfulness practice has the capacity for teachers to observe their internal reactions to emotionally stressful situations. The definition used in this study offers the capacity to monitor thoughts, emotions and body sensations. It states that mindfulness is:

- (a) the intentional self-regulation of attention to facilitate greater awareness of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions; and
- (b) a specific quality of attention characterised by endeavouring to connect with each object in one's awareness (e.g., each bodily sensation, thought,

or emotion) with curiosity, acceptance, and openness to experience (Lau et al., 2006: 1447).

The data from interviews in many instances correlated with this definition. It was apparent that importance was attached by interviewees to personal awareness of physical, mental and emotional responses through mindfulness. Kate articulates this:

It creates a stop gap in the hustle and bustle ... It creates a space to stop to look at what the reality of things is. It has taught me to recognise what a feeling is, what a thought is and what the reality is, that you are not the feeling, that you are not a mood, you are a bunch of everything together and you can control them ... It's so, so positive for that. It's a matter of recognising it for what it is. Living in the now in the middle of stressful situations can be as wonderful as we can be. Knowing personal abilities and limitations we realise we can only do one thing at a time. It takes the pressure off yourself. (Kate)

Teachers' mindfulness practice created and improved awareness of the present moment. At an affective level the expression of changing attitudes and beliefs was evidenced by awareness of feelings and an ability to choose in the moment, as reflected by Chloe:

It does help me to go 'hold on a second now', differentiating between my thoughts and projections. 'Am I getting annoyed about what might happen as opposed to what is happening?' Most times you get frustrated because you think something is going to blow up or something. (Chloe)

Louise reported that:

A feeling might come along be it like upset or whatever and I suppose when I am being mindful I realise 'that is how I feel now but I won't feel like this in an hour or tomorrow', whereas I would have been one to hold on to it for such a long time. (Louise)

At a physical level, Brenda indicated that '*before I wouldn't even be aware that this headache was coming on, that I was breathing faster ... so then I say "Okay, now calm down" or whatever*' (Brenda).

These extracts demonstrate physical, cognitive and affective level responses indicative of the second part of the definition being used in the study that mindfulness is:

- (b) a specific quality of attention characterised by endeavouring to connect with each object in one's awareness (e.g., each bodily sensation, thought, or emotion) with curiosity, acceptance, and openness to experience (Lau et al., 2006: 1447).

Though not all interviewees disclosed being stressed physically, mentally or emotionally, the findings of the research undertaken reveal a consensus that mindfulness practice is a means of self-regulation. The development of self-awareness and self-management was discussed as an integral feature of stress reduction and the creation of wellbeing. Evidence of an ability to feel good and recover from negative feelings is articulated by Jacinta: '*I suppose I have more positive feelings and am better able to manage my stress, more of a sense of wellbeing and happier in myself and in my job*', and by Moya who reported:

I think for my own self it just gives me a little distance or space from some of the immediate emotions. I can be aware they are there but I don't have to be dragged into them or get lost in them. (Moya)

These extracts demonstrate interviewees' ability to regulate their emotions in a more useful manner. Another factor cited by many interviewees pointed to the manner in which they choose to change their thoughts when being mindful. Daniel and Bríd's reflections illustrate this clearly:

After doing it for a while and reading and thinking about it, it does change the way I think about things. Definitely I think there is an underlying change in the way I think about things. (Daniel)

Bríd reported:

I suppose it is disconnecting from the mind for a little while and not replaying everything again and again and again ... I am calm and see things in a different light that maybe I may not have seen before. (Bríd)

Furthermore, the data indicates that teachers found that mindfulness practice enables regulation of thoughts and an ability to recover from negative patterns, to 'stop and

think', becoming '*aware of the important things in life*' (Brenda). Further evidence of this offers the possibility to '*notice a trigger and pause saying to myself this is happening and I don't need to get stressed or feel guilty*' (Gráinne).

Teachers' responses indicate that most primary school teachers experience occupational stress and that mindfulness provides techniques which alleviate individual stress. Though not all teachers reported feeling stressed, most did identify physical, mental and emotional indicators of stress. Nevertheless, all identified the value of mindfulness as a means of self-regulation, particularly of thoughts and emotions. They observed a resultant reduction in thinking and rumination and suggested that mindfulness practice culminated in greater focus, concentration and attentiveness to thought patterns, thus showing evidence of personal awareness and consciousness as a result of their practice. The data suggested that mindfulness practice at a core level contributed towards stress reduction. It has subsequently impacted upon stressors at a professional level relative to teaching style and practice, culminating in particular teacher qualities.

4.5 MINDFULNESS AND TEACHER ATTRIBUTES

In the process of self-regulation of thought and emotions it was evident that certain internal qualities emerged. These included a sense of calm, confidence, care and an ability to respond rather than to be reactive in response to the many potentially stressful events in the teaching day.

Generally the consensus of opinion among interviewees is that mindfulness, as a means of presence and self-regulation, brings a sense of **calm** and stillness. Some interviewees described the practice of physically stopping and taking time to pause for a moment, to breathe consciously, slow down or stop during break-time or in class as an opportunity to simply pause and regain composure. What is significant here is that teachers' indicated taking time with intention and awareness cultivated calmness and presence in their work and work place. Bríd suggested that it was like '*disconnecting from the mind for a little while and not relaying everything again and again and again*' and continued that in that she experienced '*calm and saw things in a different light*' (Bríd). Louise suggested that others had commented '*you are an awful lot calmer*' and she herself realised that '*stress might come along and I am much better at dealing with it*' (Louise). Some teachers reported that awareness of their personal sense of calm and relaxed behaviour has the capacity to transfer to the children a sense of calm and

a quiet atmosphere in the classroom. At a relationship level many reported that their relationships were easier and calmer. Gráinne's comment was typical. '*My relationship with children is calmer. I can handle my own emotions and help them to handle their emotions so children are happier*' (Gráinne). Julia identified being mindfulness as being present:

When I am walking down the corridor I now walk to the place and am not racing here and there from one place to the next. If a session goes over by 10 minutes, rather than chasing my tail I accept calmly that this has happened and I accept it as it is. (Julia)

The analysis of data revealed the ability in the moment to **respond rather than to react** in classroom and professional situations. Teachers interviewed in the study disclosed having been reactive towards children and '*little incidents*' (Sheila). '*I used to be a shouter*' revealed Roisín. '*I now tolerate them maybe not having the uniform on and have said it really doesn't matter ... I just see them as little people. I let an awful lot go, and then saw the bigger things, the bigger picture*' (Sheila). Jacinta indicates its relevance to emotional awareness and self-regulation. She indicates that she is sometimes better at '*not reacting*':

I notice if I am feeling uncomfortable or frustrated or annoyed. I recognise that feeling. Like I had a pupil that wasn't cooperating with me and I really noticed feeling uncomfortable, thinking what am I going to do and I am so uncomfortable here and it was lovely, I didn't react. I just let him be and another pupil in the group rescued me. It was beautiful you know. (Jacinta).

Jacinta identifies a new ability to pause, be present and wait, thus being less reactive and more responsive. Acknowledging the context of government changes relative to supports, documentation and challenging situations many teachers indicated that taking a pause moment to respond was useful both for themselves and the pupils in their care. It incorporated accepting the moment without judgment and pausing to consider a response in a particular situation. The practice of responding rather than reacting was considered particularly significant in relation to workload and time management where teachers learned to prioritise and to choose a response. Fiona's response was directly related to stress:

Stopping - just taking that gap between knowing that you're getting stressed. I can feel something coming in on me and just saying "Ok, I'm not going to race off with this" take a few breaths and then - then respond. (Fiona)

Gráinne described using what she described as '*a Thich Nhat Hạnh breathing technique*' in a class to assist a child with autism. Breathing in she says: '*I remain calm in my body and breathing our saying 'I smile, it makes me nice and calm'. I did it one to one with an autistic child one day and continued it as it worked (Gráinne).*

Teachers also demonstrated an ability to perceive the moment in a calm and clear manner with an ability to respond rather than be reactive and with a changed **attitude**. Many teachers in the interviews referred to living on autopilot and spoke of habitual thinking and behavioural patterns. They described a changed attitude to certain stressors and experiences. Nora indicated that since she began to practice mindfulness her thinking patterns have changed. She now regularly thinks back on her day and reflects on '*three positive experiences and maybe one that didn't go so well and try to reflect on it non-judgementally*' (Nora), indicating a new attitude for her. Brenda and Sadbh reported being attentive of their attitudes and a capacity to think non-judgementally.

Brenda reported having the capacity '*to make a better decision*'. Sadbh indicated a level of self-awareness in relation to a judgmental attitude: '*I am very judgmental of myself, critical, but now I am aware of doing it*' (Sadbh). Changed attitudes towards work and towards self were indicated. Jacinta and Brenda's comments relative to self indicated:

'I suppose I'd have a warmer feeling of kinship towards myself, towards everybody. Some of the time I have difficulty as well but I have more of a connection. That would have been developed through Loving Kindness practice' (Jacinta)

Brenda suggested about her mindfulness practice '*I think, it put me thinking – about me ... and that is the biggest thing I think I got from it*', while Sadbh indicated that '*The value of mindfulness for me is awareness ... I realise I am getting stressed. I stop and take a breath and realise I am ok*' (Sadbh).

Louise, among others, said that she was good at lists and has managed to change her attitude relative to the stressful element of such lists, to disengage and to respond with choice and awareness. She suggested that she used to think:

"I need to get through those 10 things on the list" but then I learned that actually only one or two of those things actually need to be done immediately. Some things can wait. So I suppose there is that sort of filtering of what's important and what's not important. (Louise)

Being attentive in the present was evident. Louise continued '*I suppose I used to worry about tomorrow or the day after or the week after or whatever. I suppose I am more in the present*'. Meanwhile Bríd suggested that with stressful experiences '*I can box it as work and then move on in that regard, maybe debrief with somebody about something if I was worried about it and then move on*' (Bríd).

Mind wandering and distraction were identified by teachers as stressors in the midst of a busy working day. The practice of mindfulness was identified by interviewees as a means of becoming aware of the present moment and experiencing presence in relation to the activity at hand and the thinking processes that pertained to it. Many teachers identified a capacity to take regular and spontaneous pause moments throughout the day and to conserve energies for the task of teaching. Daniel considers it useful to '*actually physically stop and take 10 minutes, 5 minutes, 15 minutes to breathe and to slow down*' the result of which he suggests:

probably gives me more energy because I burn off less energy through rumination and going around and around. So instead of doing all that, I am more focused. And I think I possibly have more energy and it changes the way I think about things. (Daniel)

This is echoed by Teresa who identifies that:

I just find my mind is clearer. It's just like de-cluttering the head and I think I'm more able for what's coming next. It definitely does calm the mind. I just think to myself, as a result of doing it, I have more energy and am more enthusiastic and don't get as bogged down in things ... I see things more clearly and ... it reduces stress levels. (Teresa)

It was apparent that teachers had the ability to manage classrooms, curriculum and relationships all at the same time. However, it was also clear that multi-tasking was not enabling effective teaching and self care.

There is a multitude of things happening all at once and it would nearly be impossible to process it one by one, when you really have to multitask an awful lot ... But then you really have to have a time when you can process some of that or just maybe step back a little bit and say 'I can't keep multi-tasking at this level because I am going to burn' you know... Now I suppose I can sometimes be more present' to a task. (Nora)

Julia echoes this indicating that:

I don't get caught up in the small things, in the little things. I can let go of them more easily and get on with things. It works! If I am doing something then I am doing that something and trying not to let other thoughts take over. I have become more focused trying to be 100% in the moment (Julia)

Interviewees acknowledged that the practice of mindfulness impacted on their **confidence** levels. They indicated its value relative to personal awareness, personal development and positive self-regard alongside classroom and teaching abilities. Brenda indicated her response to stressful situations.

I take deep breaths ... I am thinking about it a little bit and having a plan in my head. Then I leave it ... So I suppose having that discipline as well to make a decision and confidence to make that decision does take time. I do think that mindfulness helps with that. (Brenda)

Relative to the practice of mindfulness: Sheila indicated that ‘*the most important thing is finding out who I am*’ while Louise suggested that ‘*because I am more aware of who I am, I think that certainly helps my confidence*’ (Louise). For Sadhbh it was being self-assured in relationships with others:

For me it's more communicating them. It's that assertive thing of saying 'No' ... People still ask. However, with mindfulness I try to remember how I am today – I'm really tired – leaving it open – and it has made the workload more manageable. (Sadbh)

A connection between teachers' acknowledgement of an ability to change their thinking processes and develop empathy towards themselves and their pupils in stressful professional circumstances was evident. In teachers' views, concern about children and having the best possible supports available to them was one of the unique professional features of teachers and it was evident generally throughout the interviews. Each of the 20 interviewees at some point in the interview made reference to **empathy and compassion**. It was particularly evident in teachers in their first year of practising mindfulness and in those who have been practising mindfulness for longer than two years. Four teachers specifically referred to the development of empathy and compassion towards the self. Sheila, who learned mindfulness in the past year, articulated:

I think that I am growing in empathy as well, out of the mindfulness, probably empathy and compassion and therefore I can see where the kids are coming from a lot more easily and connect with them. (Sheila)

Although not all worked in schools ascribed as disadvantaged, a typical remark was made relative to understanding vulnerable children, for example, those who have little English or with minimal educational and familial support. It is represented by Moya who has been practising mindfulness in excess of five years and teaches in a Special Needs school. She indicated that she reviews '*things*' and '*is more inclined to be a bit more compassionate with myself*'. She further reported how this transfers to pupils in the classroom:

I sometimes think: 'Stop the curriculum for now, there are six kids sitting in front of me on Monday morning and they are wrecked tired, so let's just check in and see where we are in our bodies or in our minds. It has given me that freedom too. (Moya)

These personal expressions of growth in empathy and compassion are highly significant given that the literature points out that those who can manage their own distress, when in the company of another in need, are more likely to respond with empathy and compassion (Eisenberg et al., 1989). Furthermore, it signifies the use of empathy and compassion in the establishment of an optimal classroom climate by low levels of conflict and disruptive behaviour (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 492). While

empathy and compassion were noted in this context they were also mentioned in additional circumstances as will be noted later in this chapter.

Gráinne was conscious of negative attitudes among staff members. Her response to such negativity was to:

step back a bit more and review situations and realise they are temporary and will pass – will not continue ... working with people who are challenging I have learned to change my attitude – I realise I can't change someone else – can just change me and how I deal with them ... bring the right attitude with me in a given situation. (Gráinne)

This response of considering one's attitude was typical of other teachers in response to challenges and negativity and upholds the second part of the definition used in the study relative to paying attention with 'curiosity, acceptance, and openness to experience' (Lau et al., 2006: 1447). It was echoed by Ciara:

I suppose, it's all back down to being more aware and listening. You know when somebody has an issue or asks you for help ... it is about being more present to what they are saying and what they are asking for. That helps. (Ciara)

These comments are also integral to interpersonal relationships which will be addressed later in this chapter.

4.6 MINDFULNESS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This section of the chapter reports on findings that address professional practice. When questioned about this, teachers identified that the context of teaching has changed in recent years due to governmental cutbacks, attainment of academic standards aligned with performativity (Lynch et al: 2012) and changing requirements from the Department of Education and Skills. In particular this section explains how differing challenges culminate in a variety of internal experiences, responses and strategies. Four significant findings emerged and are discussed below. These include workload and time management, classroom management, self-care and relationships. Workload and time management and self care are discussed below while the contribution of mindfulness practice towards relationships and classroom climate are discussed in the following sections.

The teachers interviewed came from a variety of schools. Ten taught in regular primary schools, four in Educate Together schools, one in a Special Needs school, one in a Gaelscoil which teaches everything through the Irish language and four in DEIS schools which provide education to children in disadvantaged communities (The Department of Education and Science, 2005).

Interviewees' responses to **workload and curriculum challenges** in these schools were found to be mixed, although there was a commonality in the utilisation of time management, prioritisation and present moment awareness. While it was clearly apparent that interviewees placed importance on being solution focused, Louise's and Bríd's responses were typical of those related to time management:

I think 'now I am going to sit down and I am going to be present' and I do that one task and actually get it done an awful lot quicker than having my mind wandering or finding another thing to distract me. I would have always found distraction whereas now it's that filtering of 'this is important' or 'this is what I am doing right here right now' and not other things that are cluttering up.
(Louise)

This reflected intentional self-regulation. Bríd identified the need to respond to her perfectionist nature suggesting: '*I think mindfulness teaches me to say "right I am going to spend an hour doing this and if I don't get it done, I don't get it done"*'. A state of metacognitive awareness enabled some interviewees to become aware of mental patterns and emotions in relation to professional stressors. Jacinta reported changing her attitude, deciding that she was '*not responsible for the whole thing and so the curricular workload is not such a pressure*'. Gráinne had a similar attitude reporting that she did not consider that she had a big workload '*because I do my best and know that is as good as I can do in a particular day ... mindfulness is good to try to leave the work at school when I leave*'. Sheila's responding strategy was a little different and enabled her to '*see the bigger picture*', In this instance, this was to '*focus on the children in front of me more than the curriculum*' (Sheila).

A strategy identified by other teachers was that of being aware of the present moment in the management of workload alongside other stressors. Simon indicates that he manages to '*stop and think about my options and ... to respond in stressful situations rather than to react as I was inclined to do* (Simon). Nora also articulates this clearly:

Nora *I tend to focus on what I'm doing rather than going 'I have to do this, this, this and this'. I used to be great at making lists. I now make no lists, none.*

Researcher *Would you put that down to mindfulness?*

Nora *Yes, I would actually. I don't know the last time I made a list. A couple of years ago on a Friday afternoon I would go 'Right, these are all the things I have to do next week' whereas now on a Friday afternoon – it's Friday afternoon. I go in on Monday and okay it's not 'What have I to do this week?' It's today, it's now. I prioritise, but it's not even that. I will quite happily, if I'm doing something and somebody goes 'I need this' or 'Can you do this for me?' I think. Now I'll go, 'I can, when I've this ready'.*

According to many interviewees the practice of mindfulness afforded a greater ability for **concentration**: to concentrate on conversations and to concentrate on the task in hand by paying attention in the moment. Kate's application of concentration, however, was a little different. She spoke of mindfulness and its value '*to hone your concentration and ... bring out the best in you*' in order to prevent complacency and thereby enable the teacher to '*work harder for the good of the kids*' (Kate).

Regarding additional accountability, documentation and paperwork in recent years, Louise noted that the presence of mindfulness practice assisted her concentration and workload management: '*The mind is clear and the work gets done quicker because in your mind it is easier to do the paperwork or the corrections because you are actually present*'.

Teachers indicated that they used to be reactive. While the above examples demonstrate the value of responding rather than reacting to workload stressors, they may also indicate increased freedom and choice of response and a capacity to catch problems before they become serious. It is in this that the intentional self-regulation of attention facilitates awareness of thoughts and emotions and thus the present moment awareness wherein a choice is made. It is the intention to pay attention and with a certain attitude of response. Equally these examples show interviewees' capacity to have an intentional commitment to nurture calmness and awareness at work by letting mindfulness guide their actions and responses having a capacity to reduce workplace stress.

For some interviewees mindfulness offered an ability to pay attention, focus and prioritise their workload in order to manage it. For others mindfulness did not help in any way with administrative responsibilities. Intentional awareness of the present moment and carrying out activities with presence and openness were deemed useful in this context, giving an ability to respond rather than to react, to prioritise and to recognise personal choice in response to demands. These also indicated an implication on **self-care** among teachers.

The data suggests that a self-compassionate reflective relationship with self encouraged personal and professional self-care among teachers. The employment of a specific stress management strategy that focused on cognitive and affective reflection was deemed advantageous, particularly in the absence of an organisational response. Although interviewees were appreciative of and depended upon good collegial support when required, each interviewee when questioned about school policy and interventions indicated a lack of organisational stress management. This epitomises the European view that organisations need to develop organisational strategies (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2011). That said, a collegial support system was clearly present in 19 out of 20 schools and greatly valued as a means of talking through challenges and gaining support and wisdom from colleagues. Self-care thus emerged as a personal commitment despite collegial support and in spite of minimal organisational supports, with wellbeing pointing to adequate resources relative to teachers needs at a psychological, social and physical level.

The data suggests that cutbacks and Department of Education directives have impacted negatively on supports and circumstances for teachers. Simultaneously, interviewees have found strategies to respond to such strain and consequential negativity. The key response was that mindfulness facilitated teachers to be attentive to their internal processing with the development of self-compassion and empathy alongside compassion and empathy towards others. Mindfulness practice gave teachers a capacity to consider a particular situation they were faced with and to reflect on the thoughts and emotional responses with a certain acceptance and openness. Thus, it appears to have given them the ability to care for themselves rather than becoming involved in negativity, thus reducing internal stress.

4.7 MINDFULNESS PRACTICE AND RELATIONSHIPS

One of the important features of teaching is the management of ‘multiple relationships at once’ (Roeser et al: 2013: 2) requiring the constant employment of self-regulatory resources. This section explores teachers’ interactions with pupils, then parents, and finally collegial relationships and the contribution that mindfulness makes in such interactions. It illuminates the fact that relationships are central to teachers’ work and that self-awareness is central to interpersonal responses. The influence of mindfulness on relationships was considered by interviewees to be integral to their social and emotional wellbeing with enhanced qualities of compassion, empathy and present moment awareness. It was also associated with personal awareness, deeper listening and confidence building in the development of effective communication skills.

Interviewees were of the opinion that children’s wellbeing was paramount. This was typified by Gráinne’s comment: *‘It is my personal intention that children feel safe, secure and content in themselves’*. Teachers recounted that the practice of mindfulness developed sensitivity to a variety of stresses experienced by children ranging from economic and social situations at home, high expectations or lack of involvement from parents and children dealing with personal relational issues. They reported that mindfulness had enabled them to become more aware of the children and to relate differently with them. Interviewees indicated that relationships with children with challenging behaviour were a key stressor. This will be dealt with in the section below on classroom management.

It appears that personal benefit from mindfulness had a consequent effect on relationships. Present moment awareness, empathy and listening skills were noted as the key enablers to transformative interpersonal relationships. Louise reported that *‘because you are completely present you actually get to know the children. You are so with them, watching them, listening to them ... more aware and mindful’*. She later noted a parent’s comment: *‘You really know the children’* and reflected, *‘I don’t think anyone said that to me before’* (Louise). The teacher attribute of presence demonstrated here is noteworthy, presence being key to establishing relationships (Senge et al., 2004). Some interviewees indicated that having greater self-empathy prompted great understanding towards children. Sheila, who teaches in a DEIS school (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) explained:

I think I understand the kids an awful lot better. I see them now as people, little beings, as opposed to little students ... I can connect with them ... on a more deep level and I think a more human level ... I am more understanding of where they are coming from and that helps me to deal with their stress, from their stressful homes, because I've got empathy and compassion for them. (Sheila)

Other comments from teachers regarding changed attributes relative to pupil relationships included being '*more helpful with kids who have emotional issues*' (Jacinta), '*more aware of their enjoyment and the need to affirm them*' (Brenda), '*not taking things personally from pupils*' (Chloe) and awareness of being '*judgmental of myself*' (Sadbh). Some teachers referred to their interaction with the class as a whole and their personal reactions. Helen explained: *When I started teaching I was a shouter ... but recently I have learned it makes it much easier to be more positive and aware, not focusing and spending all the time in correcting*'. Similarly, Jacinta described an attitudinal change and then stated: '*I always did build relationships with pupils and tried not to lose my temper. Now I am more aware of this and don't see the place for it at all*'.

It was evident that each school has incorporated an organisational strategy to respond to challenging behaviour. Examples include: Traffic Lights; Incredible Years Programme; Safety Flower and the establishment of a specific Nurture Room (please see Glossary for details). One teacher, who reported finding a particular child difficult to deal with, '*used a stillness corner*' (Kelly) as a solution.

I would invite him (pupil) to go to the space and in time he began to know his own needs and would go there himself to take time out. Then other children wanted to use the space. The corner had three rules: a pupil could choose to go to the corner; when there the pupil could not disrupt anyone else in the class; the pupil using the stillness corner could not be disrupted by the teacher or other pupils. (Kelly)

One school's strategy was to refer the challenging pupil to the principal. The data indicates that the DEIS schools have clearer policies and strategies to address behavioural issues. Individual teachers also initiated strategies to suit their classroom. Kelly uses a '*Stillness Corner*' as described above, Bríd uses '*Golden Time*' and Kate uses '*Teacher Time*'. Teachers reported that the use of such organisational and classroom initiatives promote classroom harmony and stress management.

Reflective of this finding, some teachers were cognisant of their listening skills and the need for presence with others, realising that '*being able to just listen to someone and just be with them, it is bound to help the relationship*' (Daniel). Daniel referred to rapport with parents and being '*more conscious of listening to them rather than coming up with a quick solution*'. Jacinta spoke of sometimes being nervous of parents and that she:

used to do a lot of talking. Now I slow down a bit and give them a chance to talk. I can let the silence be silence. I am a bit more aware of my nervousness and therefore can let it be and sit back a bit. (Jacinta)

The development of a positive attitude in response to challenging relationships was deemed useful. One of the challenges referred to by learning support teachers was that of giving bad news to parents, for example when a child is diagnosed with dyslexia. In such a situation Teresa referred to focusing on the child's strengths considering that '*it definitely does help if you look at things from a more positive perspective*'. Helen thought similarly, though she clarified that: '*mindfulness is an element of it, not the be-all and end-all of it, but an element where you do get that space and say "Okay this is negative but I'm going to turn it into something positive"*'. Perhaps mindfulness helps by allowing teachers to access skills they may not be using habitually. Sadbh's opinion was also that her responses in interpersonal relationships are '*a combination of many things*' though she indicated that '*mindfulness helps to pay attention more to what's going on than what's not going on*'.

According to interviewees the practice of mindfulness enhanced colleague relationships by increasing personal awareness, listening skills and confidence. For some it helped to develop the skill of holding boundaries and saying 'No' appropriately when invited to carry out additional tasks. Interviewees suggested that formerly they would have accepted a task as it was easier to do so, thus having a greater sense of professional self-confidence through being '*in tune*' with the self. The outcome enabled teachers '*to be more true to what I think*' (Moya), '*to pull back a little bit*' when others are '*highly strung*' (Teresa), to '*contribute more at staff meetings*' (Sadbh) with honesty and openness, and with a mind that is '*more settled and focused*' (Jacinta). Thus it appeared that the practice of mindfulness impacted on personal awareness which in turn impacted on self-confidence, self-assurance and self-care, and with consequences for the classroom.

4.8 MINDFULNESS PRACTICE AND CLASSROOM OUTCOMES

The practice of mindfulness, with its capacity for the development of social and emotional competencies, is considered valuable in the creation of a classroom climate conducive to teaching and learning (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Various behavioural issues are a regular challenge for classroom teachers and regular a response. The findings revealed that 17 of the 20 interviewees viewed the practice of mindfulness with the pupils in the classroom as a positive step in the creation of a classroom climate suitable to teaching and learning. Although three have not incorporated mindfulness into classroom practice they expressed an interest in doing so: one in a Gaelscoil; one in a DEIS school and the third in a rural school. For those who have introduced it to children there was general uniformity amongst teachers that one of the key outcomes of the practice of mindfulness in the classroom was in relation to classroom atmosphere and children's self-awareness.

Kate's response is typical of many:

The kids are now in the mode for mindfulness and will ask me if we haven't had it for a few days. They really, really love it ... one child in my class is quite antagonistic and creates problems in the yard. So, suddenly having a class going out to the yard in good form, they come back with a serious atmosphere. If I sit down and do some mindfulness with them it dissipates it. (Kate)

She later referred to the metaphor of an indicator suggesting '*if there was a barometer for the difference pre and post mindfulness it would be very telling*' (Kate). Chloe's pupils also ask for mindfulness time because, she suggests, '*they see the benefit of it*'. Jacinta referred to the need to know '*particular special needs areas from ADHD to Autism*' and indicated that '*the mindfulness has been brilliant for me. That has been one of the biggest pluses in managing those children*'. The same teacher later reported that if a child was '*having a moment*', suggesting a distressing moment, she would ask: '*Can you notice what you are feeling or what is going on for you, and now, make a choice*' and reported that '*I have one child in my mindfulness group that responds to that quite well. Yea, it's great*' (Jacinta).

The development of internal qualities in children was noted by some teachers. Brenda reported that '*as the children grow they have more ability and more choices and know that it is up to them what to choose*', knowing that they '*have control over their choices*' (Brenda). Daniel reports that '*aside from meditation, the child has learned to focus and concentrate*' indicating the same requirement used for English, Irish and Maths. For

Bríd '*the biggest thing, for the children is that sense of self and self-confidence, the empathy and the awareness of the world around them*' and epitomised by Gráinne who noted that it was '*a great way of giving them a solid core*'. The development of empathy, choice and present moment awareness also reflects self-regulation and socio-emotional competencies that nurture children towards becoming '*educated and personally responsible citizens – hallmarks of true success in education*' (Liew, 2012: 7).. Some teachers were integrating this into classroom activities.

Using '*visualisation*' (Mari), a '*body scan*' (Bríd), '*a simple body awareness technique*' (Daniel), '*just being mindful of their breath*' (Louise) or '*teaching children mindfulness as a game e.g. mindful eating*' (Gráinne) were typical examples of the techniques used by interviewees with children. Taking 10 minutes, five minutes, two minutes or one breath were the time variants acknowledged by teachers who deliver it, while some practise it daily and others twice or three times weekly with their pupils. Interestingly one teacher who did not use mindfulness with the children stated that her personal practice had created '*a certain sense of the children being more relaxed without even bringing it in formally*' (Sheila). Thus, perhaps if a teacher can remain calm it can allow others to move to greater calmness.

The pupils' response to mindfulness appears to have corresponded to that of the teachers. There was a consensus among teachers who introduced mindfulness to children that its outcomes benefited both children and teachers. Kelly suggested that '*it is so useful for classroom management*' contending that '*for challenging pupils if I use the mindfulness in the class it gives me a quiet space and also the children*'. This was echoed by Louise who stated that '*I need it sometimes too ... it gives a general air of calmness in the classroom*'. Some arguments in the literature suggest that the most favourable classroom climate is distinguished by minimal conflict and disruptive behaviour (La Paro and Pianta, 2003). Daniel reported that being calm himself had a calming effect on the **classroom climate**. Similarly Louise suggested that '*being relaxed has definitely a knock-on effect*', echoing Jennings' contention that teachers' behaviours 'are associated with optimal social and emotional classroom climate and desired student outcomes' (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 492). In one school the knock-on effect reported was that a group of teachers meet weekly to practise mindfulness, placing great emphasis on the need for personal and professional self-care and work-life balance.

In summary, teachers' motivation to practise mindfulness had a cascading effect on classroom management and classroom climate. The inclusion of mindfulness in the curriculum with pupils is reported to have an impact on classroom climate. It manifested in increased calm and reduced behavioural challenges, while also offering opportunities for calm and concentration for teachers. The data also showed that teachers' awareness of themselves and their emotional state was a very influential factor with teachers realising that their own behaviour had an impact on the social and emotional classroom climate and pupil outcomes.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a comprehensive analysis of the findings of semi-structured interviews with 20 primary school teachers. By considering comparisons, trends and variables, and informed by the diverse experiences of interviewees, the findings focused on the responses of the key informants in relation to the contribution of mindfulness to stress reduction within the teaching profession. In general, the results add to data in the literature that stress is prevalent in primary school teaching (Darmody and Smyth, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001; Roeser et al, 2013) and that mindfulness may be a useful way to reduce stress (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser et al, 2012, Jennings, 2009). Thus, it makes a contribution to the personal and professional needs of teachers. The results concur with the literature in the acknowledgement of both internal and external stressors. Although this is a small study in a small country, it is a specific sample of teachers which therefore adds to the knowledge of the contribution of mindfulness towards stress reduction among primary school teachers.

Not only does the current study illustrate the internal and external challenging tasks that are required of teachers to maintain health and wellbeing, it also highlights the ability of mindfulness practitioners within the profession to regulate thoughts and emotions, which is indicative of continued focus and self-awareness. As suggested throughout this chapter, the data presents a comprehensive understanding of the many ways in which interviewees have used the practice of mindfulness. Their approach implicates relationships, challenging behaviour, workload, time management and general professional practice as a means of occupational stress reduction. Conversely, a particular tension experienced by some key informants was a somewhat lack of acceptance by their colleagues of the practice of mindfulness and anxiety in relation to participating in mindfulness retreats while being employed in Catholic

schools. Although mindfulness practice has not alleviated stress, it has evidenced stress reduction.

The findings suggest that, although interviewees began the practice of mindfulness through varying approaches, they each used it in response to internal and external stressors at cognitive and affective levels. The findings indicate that internal stressors such as internal chatter, an inner critic and a variety of emotions were being filtered through a process of awareness and attention while external challenges were given consideration to culminate in a considered response as opposed to a reactive retort.

The findings discussed in this chapter demonstrate the contribution of mindfulness to occupational self-care and wellbeing. However, it is apparent that self-care is a personal commitment. The data has highlighted that there is evidence of minimal formal organisational policies in schools to address stress reduction. It also emphasised the generous informal collegial support that maintains collaborative responses to certain stress-filled experiences for individual teachers.

The next chapter explores the synthesis of data from the findings herein. It discusses the key themes emerging from these findings, in particular the contribution of mindfulness to teachers' inner selves, their professional selves and their professional practice. It also proposes a conceptual framework for mindfulness in an educational context.

5. Discussion

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While there are many strategies available to teachers to deal with stress, the current research explored one particular model of teacher response to stress within the school and classroom, namely mindfulness. The current research explores the practice of mindfulness and endeavours to identify and recognise how it specifically contributes to stress reduction in primary school teaching. Research on mindfulness in an educational context has centred on mindfulness in the classroom and the use of MBSR or a specific mindfulness programme as a training tool (Gold et al., 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013). It has produced little evidence of the impact of mindfulness on teachers within the profession. The limited body of literature on primary school teachers is in an international context with little attention given to the Irish situation; therefore, developing an understanding and a conceptualisation of the contribution of mindfulness to stress reduction among such teachers, and how it may be utilised in addressing teachers' needs and professional development, is pertinent.

One item particularly worthy of mention is that the research reported herein is distinct because it investigated the perceptions of people who had become mindfulness practitioners through a range of routes. Some participated in prescribed programmes though others learned through books, guided practices or online training. It is interesting that, in the absence of common training, solid mindful outcomes have been identified and applied to stress reduction and classroom outcomes.

The preceding chapter set out the findings of interviews carried out with 20 primary school teachers throughout Ireland. This chapter discusses the data through a thematic analysis and is structured to:

- Provide an overview of the stressors experienced by primary school teachers who participated in the current study and the contribution mindfulness made towards stress reduction;
- Discuss the outcomes of the practice of mindfulness for teachers relative to internal mindfulness outcomes, teacher attributes, contribution to professional practice and classroom outcomes. (A summary of these findings aligned with interviewee quotes is available in Appendix 7.);
- Identify a model for mindfulness intervention in primary school teaching.

The discussion within this chapter primarily draws on the research data to explore further the processes that pertain to the practice of mindfulness and its relevance to primary school teachers.

5.2 TEACHER STRESSORS

5.2.1 TEACHERS STRESSORS INTERNAL TO SELF

Although the research questions did not include a question to explore the stressors identified by teachers many emerged. At an affective level, the stressors experienced by interviewees culminated in the incidence of tension, anxiety, frustration and unpleasant emotions concurrent with Kyriacou's definition of stress in teaching (Kyriacou, 2001). Cognitively aspects of self-criticism, rumination, unclear thinking, projecting into the future and reviewing past experiences were reported to culminate in physical symptoms of stress and a reactive capacity to stressful situations. Some teachers reported sweaty palms, heart racing, a sickening sensation and variations in breathing patterns as physical responses to stress.

Four teachers revealed that they had been stressed for a long time without realising it, reflecting that 'there are many times when we are unaware of the degree to which our relationships with our inner and outer environment are taxing our resources even though they are' (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 241). Teachers identified external as well as internal stressors.

5.2.1 EXTERNAL STRESSORS

Primary school teachers in Ireland presently teach in a climate where some pupils often do not have fluent English or Irish language when it is the prevailing teaching language and in a time when specialist EAL (English as an Additional Language) support teachers have been withdrawn due to cutbacks. They teach with specific expectations from parents, principals, the inspectorate and the Department of Education and Skills. Aligned with recent additional paperwork, CPD Croke Park hours and child misbehaviour, it is perhaps understandable that such external stressors might be physically, mentally and emotionally challenging.

Some of the challenges facing primary school teachers in Ireland include the need for a useful response to additional curriculum work on literacy and numeracy, the requirement of teachers to address additional initiatives, and the general milieu of

teaching in recessionary times when state funding and resources are constantly being reduced. Teachers are concerned about how they can sustain motivation, professionalism and wellbeing in the light of constant demands from external agencies. It may be interesting here to acknowledge that, if professionals in some other occupations are mentally or emotionally challenged, they can leave the situation to compose themselves. A classroom teacher cannot leave (Roeser et al., 2013). S/he must have the capacity to regulate thoughts or emotions in the moment which indicates the importance of a strategy that is habit creating and dependable.

With the advancement of neuroscience, mindfulness practice is confirmed to develop awareness and self-regulation with a capacity to change the architecture of the brain in the creation of a calm, focused mind (Siegel, 2007). This and a mindful ability to be present and to be emotionally and cognitively responsive, can equip teachers with a resource to address occupational stress, be cognisant of their internal responses and be pivotal in the creation of classroom and student outcomes. Similar to the conclusion of studies using MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Gold et al., 2010; Chaskleson, 2011), interviewees in the current study indicated that mindfulness contributes towards occupational stress reduction. However, few of the participants of the current study have taken the MBSR programme. A criterion for inclusion in the current study was that interviewees had practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months. Their mindfulness practice, alongside some other personal and professional measures, was deemed by interviewees as both a management strategy and a measure for stress prevention or reduction. Health and exercise, solid friendships, time off and the occasional glass of wine were employed as additional personal supports. At a professional and organisational level supportive and caring school cultures, collaborative networking and a national counselling service available to Irish primary school teachers were accredited as being helpful and protective.

The practice of mindfulness by interviewees involved employing qualities of intention, attention and attitude. It implied that using mindfulness in teaching gave time for the self-awareness to consider oneself and what was unfolding and gave the opportunity for certain qualities that are key assets in teaching to emerge. Thus, it provided the opportunity for internal self-awareness emotionally, cognitively and physically both at a personal and professional level. It was clear from the study that teachers' motivation to learn and practise mindfulness had the intention of employing a practical strategy for effective self-development, classroom and professional management. Such outcomes are outlined in Figure 5.1 and dealt with in greater detail in the following sections.

Figure 5.1 illustrates a summary of Chapter 4. It includes the stressors, internal and external to self, in red, the preventative measures employed by teachers in green and mindfulness with its outcomes in blue. The illustration includes those stressors already mentioned which were addressed by a variety of preventative strategies inclusive of the practice of mindfulness and both personal and professional supports. When the internal and external stressors were filtered through the practice of mindfulness, a variety of themes emerged, namely: internal mindfulness outcomes; internal professional attributes and a contribution to professional practice.

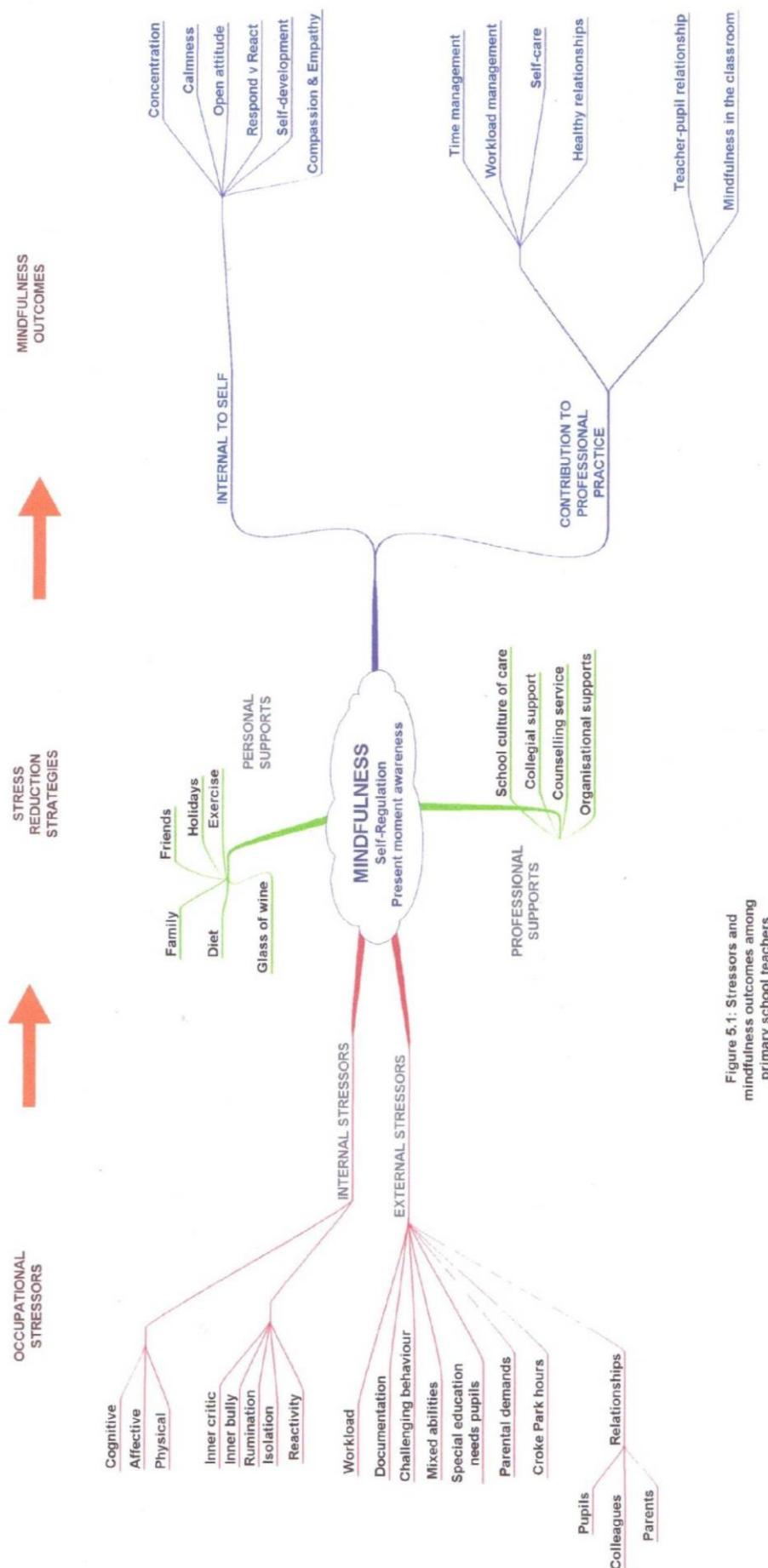


Figure 5.1: Stressors and outcomes among primary school teachers

This chapter continues with an in-depth discussion on the contribution of mindfulness to stress reduction in primary school teaching. The outcomes pointed to a four-fold conclusion. Firstly, it was associated with changes to the individual's personal inner awareness through *Internal Mindfulness Outcomes*, associated with present moment awareness and self-regulation at cognitive, affective and physical levels. Secondly, internal professional attributes were aligned with *Teacher Attributes* and connected with the individual's development of specific qualities significant to pedagogical practice reported by interviewees. Thirdly, it made a *Contribution to Professional Practice*, applicable to planning, self-care and professional interactions, and finally it was evident in *Classroom Outcomes* through interaction and activity with pupils. These are comprehensively discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

5.3 INTERNAL MINDFULNESS EXPERIENCES

Interviewees suggested that it is the individual's personal strategy that limits or enhances a useful response to stress. They suggested that there are significant internal actions a teacher can take to address the demands of teaching in a positive way to reduce its negative feelings and reactions (Kyriacou, 2000). The response process implied in the current study involves a process of slowing down, taking a moment to become sensitive to inner and outer considerations, thus gaining new levels of self-awareness, consciousness and understanding in order to act in response. It involves being aware of thoughts and thinking processes, feelings and emotional habits, the environment and bodily sensations. It is in a particular moment that one comes face to face with a 'present moment' reality.

5.3.1 SELF-REGULATION OF THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS AND SENSATIONS

The interviewees in this study suggested that mindfulness practice at a core level impacted upon their internal stressors cognisant with the suggestion that training people to relate to thoughts with 'detached mindfulness' is a means of reducing psychological suffering (Teasdale et al., 2000: 153). Mindfulness centres on improving awareness in the present moment (Bishop et al., 2004; Shapiro and Carlson, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2011) which the data reflects. The current study suggested that mindfulness gave an opportunity to observe thoughts, emotions and/or sensations with openness and curiosity within a given moment and to consider a response in the light of a particular stressor (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Thus, teachers took the option to reperceive and consequently disidentify from a stressor in order to view it with clarity and objectivity towards self-regulation of the thoughts and/or emotions. An example of

this was in teachers' responses to additional required paperwork in recent years which concluded in a shift from inner chatter and irritation to focus, time management and task completion with greater ease.

Concurrent with several findings that claim assistance towards psychological benefits (Raes et al., 2009) and cognitive functions (Teasdale et al., 1995) many interviewees pointed to improved self-regulation of attention. To some, this meant regulation at a cognitive level, observing the subject and content of thoughts (Brown et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2007), and cognisance of an inclination toward ruminative tendencies (Siegel, 2011a). Cloe referred to '*letting a problem run over and over in the mind*' and subsequently realising that '*it does help me to go 'hold on a second now', changing and differentiating between my thoughts and projections*' (Cloe). She observed a resultant reduction in thinking through mindfulness echoing mindfulness practice's association with decreased rumination (Hawley et al., 2013).

Interviewees also reported experiences of mind racing and self-criticism at a cognitive level alongside high expectations of self and pupils prior to the practice of mindfulness and also, periodically, while continuing the practice. Thus, the reported presence of an inner or self-critic, associated with self-blame and self-doubt, was eased subsequent to mindfulness practice. These correlate with Shapiro's work which pointed to a number of studied interventions reporting a decrease in cognitive distortions, anxiety and negative affect and an increase in hopefulness (Shapiro, 2009).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the study by Anderson et al. (2007) failed to report positive effects of the eight-week MBSR on attention control. However, it did report significant effects on emotional wellbeing with changes in depression and anxiety symptoms, anger and positive affect, which is concurrent with symptom reduction reported by Carmody et al. (2009). Emotional wellbeing also points toward a disentangling from negative and destructive emotions (Siegel, 2011a). Some of the teachers interviewed in the current study reported greater focus and attention to thought patterns and emotions with an ability to evaluate internal experiences, to disengage, consider and thus self-regulate attention of thoughts and emotions as espoused by Bishop et al. (2004). Simon and Sheila were two good examples of this in adopting mindfulness due to persistent stress that led to extended sick-leave from school. They reported taking up mindfulness specifically to address stress, thus presenting themselves with an opportunity to stop, pause and assess a situation, thereby considering their

perspective, reperceiving and moving forward with greater clarity, objectivity and flexibility in renewed circumstances (Kabat-Zinn, 2001) on return to school.

The interplay of thoughts, emotions and body sensations as indicated in the study reported herein is akin to the humanistic psychology perspective that argues that emotions, intellect and body work together towards self-actualization (Radu, 2010). The axioms of intention, attention and attitude (Shapiro et al., 2006) are associated with the definition used within this study:

- (a) the intentional self-regulation of attention to facilitate greater awareness of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions; and
- (b) a specific quality of attention characterised by endeavouring to connect with each object in one's awareness (e.g., each bodily sensation, thought, or emotion) with curiosity, acceptance, and openness to experience (Lau et al., 2006: 1447).

Thus, akin to the definition being utilised herein, the current study has revealed that interviewees' intention in pursuing mindfulness training was that of stress reduction and self-regulation of thoughts and emotions. Consequently, in attending to a particular stress-filled experience with intention and in an open and discerning manner, mindfulness practitioners appeared to have the capacity to distance themselves from the situation, to view it clearly and objectively and consequently create direct or indirect change (Carmody et al., 2009). Thus, the inclination towards creating a '*stop-gap*' (Helen) for moment-to-moment awareness is consistent with one's ability to '*disidentify*' (Shapiro et al., 2006: 377), decentre, defuse or distance (Carmody et al., 2009) from one's thoughts, emotions or body sensations as they arise, or to engage in a process of '*reperceiving*' (Shapiro et al., 2006: 378). This could be depicted as a '*rotation* in consciousness in which the "*subject*" becomes the "*object*", referred to as a metamechanism that is considered a '*hallmark*' of mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2006: 377). Interviewees identified an ability to pause, to stop and consider, to focus and to observe thoughts and feelings by choice and as if from a distance. Accordingly, through the process of reperceiving or the metamechanism of change, greater clarity, objectivity, perspective and equanimity were realised by having the ability to observe the contents of consciousness without being embedded or fused with such content (Shapiro et al., 2006). This suggests '*a profound shift in one's relationship*' to thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations (Shapiro et al., 2006: 379) and a quality of cognitive and emotional flexibility in the creation of change (Carmody et al., 2009).

In conclusion mindfulness enabled interviewees specifically to pay attention to stressors encountered and to respond with an intention of self-regulation of thoughts and emotions. It has in this way impacted upon stressors at a professional level with a consequent influence on teaching style and practice (Zelazo and Cunningham, 2007). Thus, the data in this research suggests that mindfulness practices promote cognitive and emotional regulation by supporting the ability to reflect on one's internal landscape and in doing so promoting the development of internal professional qualities and attributes.

5.4 TEACHER ATTRIBUTES

This section considers, in particular, the contribution of the practice of mindfulness to teachers' responses to stress at a professional level. Teachers' ability to cope with professional and personal stressors has become increasingly important in the light of change within teaching in Ireland. The practice of mindfulness, using secular meditative techniques, is anchored in attention and seeks to alter the 'relationship with stressful thoughts and events by decreasing emotional reactivity and enhancing cognitive appraisal' (Teasdale et al., 1995). In relation to teacher attributes, the data showed that, through the process of paying attention to and regulating thoughts, emotions and environmental conditions in the present moment, specific pedagogical qualities and characteristics emerged in response to stressors. Among the attributes identified are calm, clear thinking, clarity, concentration, confidence, empathy and compassion and an ability to respond rather than react in challenging situations. These characteristics are discussed further in the following sections.

5.4.1 CALMNESS

Generally the consensus of opinion among interviewees is that mindfulness as a means of emotional regulation brings a sense of calm and stillness. An attribute indicated by many was the quality of calm experienced in the development of emotional wellbeing (Lau et al., 2006). Some interviewees described the practice of physically stopping and taking time to pause for a moment of stillness, to breathe consciously, slow down and stop 'in the moment' or during break time as an opportunity to simply pause and regain composure. What is significant here is teachers' intention to cultivate awareness and calmness in their work place. It correlates with the definition being used for the current study that encompasses the 'intentional self-regulation of attention to facilitate greater awareness of bodily

sensations, thoughts, and emotions' and 'a specific quality of attention characterized by endeavoring to connect with each object in one's awareness' (Lau et al., 2006: 1447), the bodily sensations, thoughts or emotions. By taking time intentionally to focus attention, it could be considered that teachers purposely make an effort to cultivate self-regulation and calmness within the work place, which Kabat-Zinn indicates greatly reduces work stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Thus, teachers demonstrate an ability to perceive 'the present moment in a calm, clear, and veridical manner' (Roeser et al., 2012: 169). This practice of intentionally attending to experiences in an open and discerning manner presents the capacity to reperceive, thereby creating an opportunity to observe the contents of consciousness and shift the relationship with bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions which Shapiro argues 'directly and indirectly arbitrates change' (Shapiro, 2009: 558).

Bríd suggested that it was like '*disconnecting from the mind for a little while*' and in that she experienced '*calm and saw things in a different light*' (Bríd). Others reported that awareness of their personal sense of calm and relaxed behaviour has the capacity to transfer to the children a sense of calm and a quiet atmosphere in the classroom. Sheila indicated that her mindfulness practice creates '*a certain sense of the children being more relaxed without even bringing it in formally*' (Sheila). This reflects the suggestion by Kemper and Shaltout that one person's calm can be transferred to others (Kemper and Shaltout, 2011). Notable too was the link between calm and the ability to see things clearly and from a different perspective: the ability to respond in situations rather than to react.

5.4.2 RESPOND VERSUS REACT

The analysis of data revealed consistencies regarding emotional responses and a propensity to stop and think, to pay attention in the moment and consequently to respond rather than to be reactive in situations. It points to taking a pause moment with a conscious consideration of options in stressful situations, the management of such options when faced with professional stressors and an ability to respond calmly rather than in a reactive manner. Considering that automatic responses, habitual patterns of behaviour and cognitive reactivity to thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations increased stress and emotional distress (Lau et al., 2006), this highlights the importance of individual teachers being aware of what works best for themselves and for the children in the classroom. Simon is typical of many interviewees who considered the present moment and who chose to '*stop and think about my options*

and ... to respond in stressful situations rather than to react as I was inclined to do' (Simon).

Acknowledging an educational climate of government cut-backs, reduced supports for teachers and additional external accountabilities that are affecting challenges upon teachers, this particular skill of responding rather than reacting is considered valuable in managing workload and dealing with everyday challenging situations. Consistent with Shapiro's assertion of the dynamic process that is mindfulness, interviewees suggest engaging in a focus of attention that is both 'discerning and nonreactive' (Shapiro and Carlson, 2009: 10), and a process leading to an acceptance of the moment without judgment or reaction (Hanh, 1999). Concurrent with Boyatzis and McKee (2005), who stated that mindfulness is a key management competency with the capacity to become 'fully aware of all that one experiences *inside the self* – body, mind, heart, spirit' (original emphasis) (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005: 112), it could be said that interviewees' capacity for self-awareness enables freedom and choice of response to stressors that present themselves. Besides compliance with external accountabilities and governmental changes teachers are creating an ability to catch problems before they become serious inside themselves with an increased freedom and choice in response (Chaskleson, 2011).

5.4.3 OPEN ATTITUDE

Besides compliance with governmental staff changes, external accountabilities and general workload have prominent influences on stress levels among interviewees. Kabat-Zinn suggests that one does not necessarily need to leave a stressful job, but to change perspective to a more positive way of thinking as a means of addressing workplace stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Participants described how they responded to such stressors. They suggested that it related to their attitude, one of the axioms of mindfulness mentioned above (Shapiro et al., 2006). They also understood it as holding a position that was non-judgmental (Kabat-Zinn, 2001), curious, accepting and open to experience (Lau et al., 2006). A conscious change in perspective is deemed by interviewees as having an implication on their sense of presence in the job, relationship with self, the daily tasks of the job and relationships with pupils, staff members and parents. Many indicated an ability to reduce ruminating thought processes, to accept and change thought patterns and attitudes and to witness thoughts from a distance, reflective of the contribution of mindfulness to adopting a

non-judgmental attitude and changing thinking processes at will (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Gráinne reported that whilst working with people who were challenging she learned to '*change my attitude. I realise I can't change someone else, I can just change me and how I deal with them ... bring the right attitude with me in a given situation*' (Gráinne). This concurs with Neff's claim that mindfulness involves 'being aware of one's present moment experience in a clear and balanced manner so that one neither ignores nor ruminates on disliked aspects of oneself or one's life' (Neff, 2009: 212).

In general, the consensus of opinion is that mindfulness offers those interviewed an ability to disengage from habitual thinking patterns, to act with awareness in place of acting automatically or without thinking and to be aware of and make a choice to change from negative to more useful forms of thinking or behaving (Robins et al., 2012). It also corresponds with Siegel's assertion that mindfulness helps to disentangle the mind from ruminative thoughts, destructive emotions and impulsive responses (Siegel, 2011a).

The culmination of greater patience towards oneself and others and an acknowledgement that everyone is doing their best in a given situation is considered to be indicative of this process. However, it is important to note that not all teachers described the same levels of attitudinal change. Some referred to a consistent self-critical and judgmental nature which is portrayed as a constant challenge, and sometimes creates resistance to change. Personal awareness is considered by such interviewees as being aware in the present moment and maintaining an intention to change (Vago and Silbersweig, 2012).

5.4.4 CONCENTRATION AND CLEAR THINKING

According to those questioned, an ability to pause to regulate thoughts and feelings together with the capacity to disconnect from ruminative thoughts and processes is a significant outcome of practising mindfulness. Aligned with an ability to disconnect from or transform intrusive negative thinking it is possible that this points to clearer and more useful thinking processes. Teachers' claims that mindfulness enables clear thinking may be reflective of their use of reperceiving, which Shapiro (2006) maintains results in greater clarity, objectivity, flexibility, perspective and equanimity and a capacity to observe the contents of consciousness without being embedded or fused with such content (Shapiro et al., 2006). This type of clarity may provide fresh insights in relation to what can be possible (Kabat-Zinn, 2001).

Furthermore, the data indicates that teachers found that mindfulness practice enables regulation of thoughts and an ability to recover from negative patterns, to '*stop and think*', becoming '*aware of the important things in life*' (Brenda). Further evidence of this offers the possibility to '*notice a trigger and pause saying to myself this is happening and I don't need to get stressed or feel guilty*' (Gráinne). These comments reflect a form of cognitive self-regulation 'whereby a system maintains *stability* of functioning and at the same time, *adaptability* to new circumstances' (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 227). It is akin to a re-orientation of oneself and one's responses.

Thus, it could be considered that teachers' experience of 'a profound shift in the relationship' (Shapiro et al., 2006: 379) with their thoughts and emotions facilitates mechanisms such as self-regulation, value clarification and exposure to internal experiences of cognitions and emotions (Carmody et al., 2009). The data indicates that teachers found that mindfulness practice enables regulation of thoughts and an ability to recover from negative patterns, to '*stop and think*', becoming '*aware of the important things in life*' (Brenda). Further evidence of this offers the possibility to '*notice a trigger and pause saying to myself this is happening and I don't need to get stressed or feel guilty*' (Gráinne). These comments reflect a form of cognitive self-regulation 'whereby a system maintains *stability* of functioning and at the same time, *adaptability* to new circumstances' (Kabat-Zinn, 2001: 227). It is akin to a re-orientation of oneself and one's responses.

Clear thinking, as opposed to mind wandering and day dreaming, was suggested as creating greater presence to the task at hand, greater focus, concentration and attentiveness to thought patterns, thus showing evidence of teachers' personal awareness and consciousness as a result of their mindfulness practice (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005; Chaskleson, 2011) and an ability to respond to stressful situations with clarity (Zelazo and Cunningham, 2007). Kate suggested that '*to hone your concentration and ... bring out the best in you*' prevented complacency and thereby enable the teacher to '*work harder for the good of the kids*' (Kate).

Interviewees informed the study of the capacity to focus on or pay attention to a particular task as opposed to working on 'auto-pilot' (Robins et al., 2012). Their ability to concentrate was evidenced by a certain ability to focus with a practicality and determination in relation to workload and tasks requiring completion. It was evident that teachers had an ability to make decisions regarding time and attention and to focus on one particular task rather than multi-tasking or procrastinating. The result

revealed effective organisational skills and an ability to ‘conserve physical and mental energies’ for professional tasks in place of using energy to ruminate or engage in recurrent thoughts, thus exhibiting greater resilience and coping ability (Roeser et al., 2013: 2). According to Gu and Day, resilience in teachers also has the ability to ‘manage the unavoidable uncertainties inherent in the realities of teaching’ (Gu and Day, 2013: 39). This reflects the mindful outcome of remaining focused on a particular aspect, originating perhaps on the breath, thoughts or bodily sensations within the mindful practice (Roeser et al., 2012) and thus intentionally centring attention on the present moment and ‘with the clear light of conscious awareness’ as opposed to mindless practice (Roeser et al., 2013: 3).

5.4.5 SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY

According to interviewees the practice of mindfulness enhanced teacher self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. They suggested, generally, that it increased feelings and attitudes towards the self with positive regard – feelings related to their abilities within the classroom and school and a capability to perform certain tasks more effectively. Teachers indicated an awareness of the importance of self-esteem as individuals and professionals. The study suggests strongly that the development of self-awareness through practising mindfulness has implications for self-esteem. How teachers feel about themselves was inherent in the subject of many interviews. Some suggested that being '*more aware of who I am*' developed greater self-appreciation and regard for self with an outcome of being more true and more at ease with themselves. This was indicative of the humanistic perspective underpinning the study. It was also linked to the experience of being conscious of how others perceived them as teachers and also their teaching ability. They informed the study that practising mindfulness enables them to be more present to themselves, listen to themselves more clearly, know themselves better and thereby reduce worries and stresses about what others think of them. In informing the study that stress levels have reduced, it could be suggested that the enhancement of teacher self-esteem and self-confidence levels make a contribution to this in accordance with reports that indicate that self-worth and self-esteem are indicative of lower stress levels (Le Cornu, 1999; Huang and Ming, 2007; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). It may also align with Kabat-Zinn’s contention that it is not always necessary to leave a stressful job but to make work part of the mindfulness practice and part of self-awareness. In doing so he contends that bringing one’s inner resources to bear on the working day can shift the balance and

perspective in the realisation that it may not be necessary to take it too seriously (Kabat-Zinn, 2001).

Others indicated that being more personally aware resulted in being comfortable and '*in tune*' with the self, giving rise to greater self-confidence as a professional, thus enabling self-confidence in appreciating one's abilities and skills. Although the terms self-esteem and confidence were sometimes used interchangeably, one aspect of self-confidence mentioned repeatedly was that of holding boundaries and saying 'No' appropriately when asked to carry out an additional task. It was clear that previously the task would have been accepted with a 'Yes' and subsequently regretted. Another common example of self-confidence was that of having the self-assurance to speak honestly and openly at staff meetings and to speak one's truth with greater ease and self-belief.

A significant feature of the development of self-esteem, confidence and efficacy in the current research is the cascading effect it has both personally and within the classroom. Teachers' personal development appeared to create an awareness of job satisfaction and enjoyment, which in turn was indicative of relationships with pupils and a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in the classroom. This also was proposed by teachers as an enabler for children's learning and accomplishment and correlates with the consensus that teachers' feelings about themselves impact on the relationships they develop with pupils (Le Cornu, 1999; Poulou, 2007; Harris, 2008; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). It also illustrates how teachers' social and emotional competence sets the 'tone of the classroom', creating the most favourable social and emotional environment for student co-operation (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 492). A notable element of self-efficacy was in the facilitation of mindfulness with the children in the classroom. Although a majority of interviewees have assumed this role, two indicated not having the confidence to do so, though suggested that they hope to do so in the coming academic year.

It is evident that practising mindfulness makes a contribution to self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy with a consequent awareness of and responsibility for stresses and worries. It is interesting to note that compassion is likened to self-esteem and negatively relates to anxiety and that high self-esteem has similar benefits to self-compassion (Neff, 2009). The following section explores the aspects of compassion and empathy that are relevant to the study.

5.4.6 COMPASSION AND EMPATHY

The practice of mindfulness and its outcomes are extremely individualistic and based on individual needs and practices. However, one of the common attributes of mindfulness practice identified by interviewees in this study is a growth in empathy and compassion. Amongst the interviews undertaken as part of the current study each interviewee made reference to empathy and compassion as a result of practising mindfulness. Their references were twofold: self-compassion and empathy, and compassion and empathy towards others, each of which will be considered herewith.

Many interviewees considered self-compassion to be a natural attribute towards health and wellbeing with a desire to be safe and happy and to live with ease and curiosity (McKee et al., 2006; Germer, 2009).

Relative to the self it is characterised by interviewees as self-awareness, self-kindness and self-care which concurs with research indicating that mindfulness practice increases one's consciousness of internal experience in the promotion of emotional wellbeing (Brown and Ryan, 2003), compassion and psychological balance (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Interviewees considered that the essence of such is being compassionate and caring towards themselves, which is evidenced by an ability to change their thinking, caring and response processes in the development of self-empathy.

Some interviewees recognise being less judgmental and reactive and more self-compassionate by acknowledging that they do their best in the time available, despite additional tasks requiring attention. This form of prioritisation and time management is attributed to a quality of self-kindness and compassion as opposed to self-criticism and concurs with Neff's suggestion that those who are self-compassionate 'do not berate themselves' when they slip up or fail (Neff, 2009: 214). A strong association between self-compassion and psychological wellbeing suggests increased happiness, optimism, curiosity, motivation and a desire to make necessary changes in one's life, alongside reduced anxiety, rumination and fear of failure (Neff, 2009).

Data analysis revealed consistencies with regard to compassion and relationships with others, particularly pupils, parents and teachers. Sheila described '*growing in empathy and compassion and therefore I can see where the kids are coming from a lot more easily and connect with them*' (Sheila). Considering that empathy describes the ability

to understand the mental states of other people and to share or understand their feelings (Singer, 2006) (cited in Gilbert et al., 2012), it is a valuable quality for school relationships. What is interesting to note is teachers' self-empathy prompting a greater understanding towards pupils and reference to a new and empathic nature that enables a willingness to stand back to consider the child's disposition from the child's perspective rather than an assumed or judgmental stance. This is evident regarding intellectual, social and family perspectives with regard to children and particularly a child who is stressed, misbehaving or exhibiting challenging behaviour which is deemed as one of the main stressors among interviewees. Such personal expressions of growth in compassion and empathy are highly significant given that the literature points out that those who can manage their own distress, when in the company of others in need, are more likely to respond with empathy and compassion (Eisenberg et al., 1989). What is interesting in this regard is teachers' admission to being more compassionate in their communication and responses towards children, parents and colleagues following the inception of mindfulness. In probing more deeply it was evident that some teachers identified the importance of self-care within very busy schools and the awareness that only they themselves could provide self-compassion or the practice that Germer refers to as 'tending and befriending' amid the commotion and chaos of a regular school day (Germer, 2009: 86). Self-compassion is noted as a skill that is worth cultivating by those who suffer from stress with an acknowledgement that, if one is unable to be compassionate towards oneself, being compassionate towards others is a means of bringing it to oneself (Germer, 2009).

An interesting aspect of the development of compassion toward others identified within the current study was that of developing deeper listening skills. Teachers reported becoming better listeners, having the capacity to *just listen and be supportive* and becoming more aware of the value of relationships with children, colleagues and parents. Akin to relationships with children outlined above, some teachers realised an ability to simply be present with parents without a need to give advice, to pause to consider the parent's need and experience and to then pay attention in the moment, non-judgmentally, and with curiosity and kindness. This is significant in its correlation with the definition of mindfulness being utilised in this particular study. The aspect of 'endeavouring to connect with each object in one's awareness ... with curiosity, acceptance and openness to experience' (Lau et al., 2006: 1447) is fostered by teachers in their effort to listen more deeply with compassion and empathy, openness and curiosity. This practice reflects a form of self-regulation in the awareness that open and harmonious relationships are less stressful and more engaging.

The current study has revealed that mindfulness practice at a core level has impacted upon interviewees' internal stressors through the development of internal qualities and attributes relevant to their profession of teaching. It has subsequently enabled the utilisation of such qualities in professional practice. This concurs with Roeser et al. (2013) who carried out a very helpful study with 113 elementary and secondary school teachers in Canada and the United States and claimed that mindfulness and self-compassion increased following continual use of mindfulness, partially contributing to occupational stress reduction and professional practice in the classroom (Roeser et al., 2013).

The professional qualities indicated in this section together with the skill of self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and body sensations contribute to professional practice. This will be explored in the next section.

5.5 CONTRIBUTION TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Concurrent with Selye (1975) who stated that stress is attributed to environmental changes which produce individual emotional and behavioural responses, the current study has also determined that external factors are effecting challenges upon teachers in primary schools. One of the main findings emerging from the research data is the contribution of mindfulness practice to professional practice. While the practice contributed differently in different teachers, it also had commonalities in relation to workload, time and classroom management, relationships, self-care and the practice of mindfulness within the classroom. These will each be discussed in the following section.

5.5.1 WORKLOAD AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Concurring with other research (Darmody and Smyth, 2010), job satisfaction was evident among those teachers interviewed for this study. One key area of contention for interviewees, however, is the volume of paperwork now associated with the job. Some staff members were found to be emotive in this regard. The general consensus of opinion is that there has been an increase in external accountability of schools in recent years. It is clear that teachers are not opposed to being accountable, but the extent of paperwork is causing difficulties in relation to time and prioritisation. According to the opinion of interviewees, the necessary quantity of paperwork can often impinge on the time required to deliver the curriculum. The call from these

interviewees was for a reduction in the reports and documentation required by the Department of Education in order to prioritise curricular planning and provide necessary supports to children. In probing more deeply, the strategy used by some was to draw on the mindfulness skill of paying attention to allocate a certain amount of time in order to remain focused and to accomplish the task with minimal distraction. It was ascribed by one interviewee as clearly choosing to change her attitude in relation to this or other tasks that have the potential to drain energy or create frustration. Contrary to this, another interviewee informed the study that mindfulness was of no help in the multitude of paperwork and documentation as she straddled three schools as a learning support teacher.

A state of metacognitive awareness (Teasdale et al., 2002) enabled some interviewees to become aware of mental patterns and emotions in relation to professional stressors. Jacinta reported changing her attitude, deciding that she was '*not responsible for the whole thing and so the curricular workload is not such a pressure*'. Gráinne had a similar attitude reporting that she did not consider that she had a big workload '*because I do my best and know that is as good as I can do in a particular day ...*

While interviewees suggested a tendency towards multi-tasking, they also indicated being more organised with a reduced inclination towards procrastination, and acknowledged the value of remaining focused in attending to one thing at a time. Shapiro (2013) indicates that we make a third more errors and it takes twice the length of time to carry out tasks when multi-tasking, and also release stress hormones that contribute to feeling exhausted and less satisfied (Shapiro, 2013). Thus, it could be said that mindfulness makes a valuable contribution to paying attention, prioritising and enabling focus in the midst of a heavy workload with additional administrative tasks. It is interesting here to note that eustress is related to engaging in and being absorbed in a task (Campbell Quick et al., 2003). This parallels the notion of flow where people are so present to the task and '*concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant or to worry about problems*' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Considering that distress is deemed as a negative work attitude experienced as frustration, isolation and anger, the practice of mindfulness may well enable the transition from distress towards eustress and subsequent stress reduction.

A significant contributing feature of mindfulness towards stress reduction, relative to workload, is that of '*living in the now in the middle of stressful situations*' (Julia). A state of metacognitive awareness (Teasdale et al., 2002) enabled some interviewees to

become aware of mental patterns and emotions in relation to professional stressors. Jacinta reported changing her attitude to workload. She reported that she relaised that she was '*not responsible for the whole thing and so the curricular workload is not such a pressure*'. Gráinne's regulation of emotions in relation to workload pressure was in affirming that '*I do my best and know that is as good as I can do in a particular day*' (Gráinne).

The implementation of self-regulation of thoughts and emotions resulted in the ability to consider one's attitude with a sense of calm, giving rise to the identification of personal abilities and limitations, reflecting Chaatew's (2002) contention that both problem management and personal awareness are identified as the best initial approaches to stress. Awareness of interpersonal relationships are also important.

5.5.2 RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Good relationships are essential to school climate and wellbeing. This section explores teacher relationships with parents and colleagues. The management of social and emotional abilities within the class and staffroom may be affected by overall wellbeing and effectiveness, alongside relationships and the degree of life stress in one's personal life (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 494). Research indicates that teacher stress is linked with poor relationships with staff members and that day-to-day interaction among school partners has an impact on a teacher's experience and job satisfaction (Darmody and Smyth, 2010). One of the greatest desires attested to by interviewees was that of developing and maintaining relationships that were authentic, real and genuine. Concurrently, one of the challenges identified was the ability to address and respond to discordant relationships in a respectful and transformative manner. While relationships ranged from harmonious and collaborative to incompatible and exclusive, both on a one-to-one and organisational level, teachers appeared to be doing their best in the circumstances.

The contribution of mindfulness to building relationships was considered to be integral to teachers' own social and emotional wellbeing. Aspects of mindfulness that interviewees acknowledged as contributing to relationship building were those of self-regulation of thoughts and emotions and a non-judgmental attitude. This appeared to result in characteristics of calmness, attitude change, empathy and compassion alongside the ability to respond rather than react in relational interactions. Such qualities are deemed as key enablers to transforming interpersonal relationships.

Practising mindfulness has enabled interviewees to take a moment on a temporary platform in the mind, to look and feel more deeply and to observe and question many experiences, including relationships, thus becoming an ‘observing self’ (Fosarelli, 2011: 66). It could be said that this skill has enabled teachers to empathise, to listen more deeply to the spoken and the unspoken word, and to stand back to consider a colleague or child’s situation, background and current need. It is the capacity to manage distress in association with those who suffer and with the potential to respond compassionately and empathically (Eisenberg et al., 1989).

A significant number of interviewees hold the perception that parents have great expectations of teachers, expecting them to be skilled teachers, psychologists, social workers, mothers and fathers and much more. While none of the teachers within the study classified themselves as newly qualified teachers, many referred to their experience in the initial years as being particularly more stressful than at present. Relationships with parents were considered a particular stressor in those early days and still are for some. Acknowledging that there are many strategies that a teacher may call upon in challenging interpersonal situations, by drawing on the practice of mindfulness, the ability to pay attention to thoughts and emotions and to respond calmly rather than to react in a hasty and hostile manner may contribute the capacity of ‘a felt sense of trust and closeness’ and a greater ability to view stressed relationships ‘as challenges rather than threats’ (Kabat-Zinn, 1996). Helen’s application of mindfulness in such challenges is typical of some teacher responses when she said to herself: “*Okay this is negative but I’m going to turn it into something positive*” (Helen) or Sadhbh’s confirmation that “*mindfulness helps to pay attention more to what’s going on than what’s not going on*”.

While some interviewees are very comfortable with parental relationships, others are challenged. The task of giving bad news to parents, for example that a child has a skill deficiency or dyslexia, particularly by learning support teachers, is deemed demanding. In this type of situation, interviewees considered that they benefited from taking a positive perspective and focusing on the child’s strengths as an initial means of communicating with a parent.

Interviewees informed the study that good collegial relationships were vital to a sustained educational environment. Relationships with colleagues fell into two main themes: those with principals and those with other staff members. Teacher agency was inextricably linked with school leadership: being empowered or hindered by it. A

widespread finding in the current study is the supportive, helpful and empowering influence that principals have on those interviewed and its implication on stress management. This may be reflective of the importance of work environment, leadership styles and consultative processes that hold the capacity to contribute positively or negatively to stress levels (ASTI, 2007; Evans, 2009).

However, it is clear from the literature that teachers who are working in ambiguous or autocratic environments perceived higher levels of stress, while those who experienced good collegial relations and regular consultation experienced lower stress levels (ASTI, 2007; Evans, 2009). Four teachers from the study considered that the principals in their schools were particularly stressed by their role of responsibility and leadership, while one interviewee indicated that minimal communication by the principal and deputy-principal with staff members had a consequent effect on staff stress levels. This state of affairs concurs with claims by Schlichte et al. (2005: 35–40) who consider that challenging interpersonal relations and poor communication aligned with elements of insufficient support and a lack of community experience are direct causes of stress (Schlichte et al., 2005). Thus, there are two different pictures appearing out of these two perspectives. Due to limited literature on the contribution of mindfulness to stress in the teaching profession, the ways in which the leadership of schools might also impact on stress or draw on strategies such as mindfulness have also not been widely reported. Generally, however, the consensus of opinion is that interviewees manage their professional relationships well and that the practice of mindfulness enhances such relationships by increasing personal internal awareness and attitude, and improves self-esteem and authenticity. As discussed above the mindfulness practice of taking time to pause, to acknowledge a present moment reality and to respond with calmness was considered a valuable resource in collegial relationships, while also enabling the effective management of job stress (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009).

Authentic and deepening relationships were reported among respondents. When asked about organisational stress management procedures each one indicated that an organisational response was absent. Whilst this mirrors the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work that a positive health culture within organisations is somewhat ‘underdeveloped’ (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2011: 17), there was a call from interviewees for support and for organisational self-care initiatives. In probing deeper, it was clear that a systemic collegial support system was present in all but one school. Acknowledging the importance of such a support, either

within the school or elsewhere, the value of having significant colleagues to talk to when in need was deemed invaluable and aligned with the value of developing social and emotional competence (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Jennings et al., 2011).

Whereas interviewees generally found colleagues to be accepting of the practice of mindfulness, some experienced resistance from co-workers which they found to be objectionable. Such resistance was experienced in the form of both overt and covert opposition. Two interviewees were genuinely concerned about being part of a study – this current study – that may name the practice and attendance at courses that have a Buddhist origin or orientation. The intrinsic implication was discomfort and a concern with being employed by a Catholic Board of Management which may consider attendance at such courses to be unacceptable, culminating in professional consequences. The experience of another interviewee was that of being occasionally mocked by a principal with statements like '*Don't tell me you were off doing meditation again*' or '*Were you up early this morning doing meditation?*' or '*That's a load of ...*' (Teresa). The suggestion from this interviewee was that such statements indicate that some teachers are not as open to mindfulness and meditation as one might think. The State provides free primary education to children. While Irish society has changed significantly in recent years with many people practising different religions or none, 96% of primary schools in Ireland are under the patronage of religious denominations and almost 90% of these are owned and under the patronage of the Catholic Church (Irish Government News Service, 2014). So on the one hand there is state management of schools which is deeply integrated with the Catholic Church. This implies that the Irish state and the Catholic Church are inextricably intertwined in a majority of its schools. The former Minister for Education and Skills had begun to address this and has been met with mixed reaction from primary school principals and bishops who hold authority over Catholic patronage in Catholic schools (Donnelly, 2014). Ireland does not have a state school system. Despite this, teachers who participated in the study were generally happy to integrate mindfulness into their professional practice and their classrooms.

5.5.3 WELLBEING AND SELF-CARE

The association of mindfulness practice and the creation of wellbeing (Siegel, 2007), aligned with the development of self-awareness and self-management, have emerged as key features of stress reduction. Through the interviews, teachers verbalised inner thoughts that pertained to decision making processes regarding stress and the conscious choices they made relative to self-care and stress reduction. It could be

considered that this ability to evaluate internal thinking, self-regulation and mindful awareness in relation to external experiences offers possibilities in relation to health and welfare. It is clear from the data that each of the teachers experiences job satisfaction and a sense that their work is meaningful. Interviewees have indicated that the contribution of mindfulness enables them to have a greater ability to respond in stressful situations. The outcome and practice of compassion and empathy form an integral part of such responses, concurring with Neff's assertion that self-compassion 'involves the desire for the self's health and well-being, and is associated with greater personal initiative to make needed changes in one's life' (Neff, 2009: 213). Empathy is both an attitude and a skill – mindfulness can help on both levels. Self-compassion, therefore, is a form of self-care. Mindfulness could be viewed as a way to achieve greater balance between care for self and care for others, including children.

While mainstream schools worldwide are beginning to acknowledge the stress experienced by children and consequently integrate social, emotional, mental, spiritual and cognitive wellbeing into the curriculum (Albrecht et al., 2012), so too it is being integrated into Irish schools through the Social, Personal and Health Education programme (Department of Education and Science, 2006). The same cannot be said for professional development at this time with insignificant reference to teacher care or wellbeing in Departmental documentation in Ireland. The data, from teachers' perspectives, provides evidence of an absence of staff wellbeing policies in schools which could be regarded as a matter of concern. However, despite a lack of operational organisational policies and procedures it is apparent that some teachers are taking self-responsibility for their care and wellbeing. Some interviewees identified that their motivation in learning and practising mindfulness was specifically for reasons of stress management while others identified general health and psychological wellbeing. Indeed, two interviewees in particular recounted the experience of prolonged time off school due to stress and the discovery and practice of mindfulness as integral to their recovery and return to the classroom. Others related that they had experienced considerable stress and that it was quite advanced before they even realised that they were stressed. Humanistic psychology states that people are controlled by their choices and values rather than the external or unconscious drives (Stockton and Gullat, 2013).

The researcher was struck by the commitment that the teachers had to their work and to providing the best possible teaching and learning opportunity for the children in their care. The study points to the importance of teachers maintaining their wellbeing,

motivation and commitment to teaching. An outcome of the study is an indication that mindfulness has the capacity to promote personal and professional awareness, presence and compassion with some teachers stating specifically that their practice helped in giving meaning to their lives. With its capacity to impact upon emotional anxiety and internal chatter, the inner resources from the practice of mindfulness aided teachers to flourish with a capacity for self-fullness (Higgins, 2010) in the development of self, self-care and attention to children in the classroom.

5.6 CLASSROOM OUTCOMES

5.6.1 EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

This section of the chapter highlights the contribution of mindfulness to planning, implementing, and developing effective classroom management in order to build a smooth-running class that encourages learning. Teachers spoke of adequate preparation and planning as enablers for classroom management. It is apparent that those interviewed are dedicated to preparation and planning by virtue of the long hours spent on class plans and curriculum development. A commitment to early arrival at school and late departure is an indication of loyalty to children and professionalism and an endeavour to provide time and commitment to the development and refinement of management skills that lead to children's learning and enjoyment. Classroom management is one of the key components of effective teaching (Marzano et al., 2004), with effective classroom management enabling the establishment of a positive environment, good communication, co-operation and a commitment to teaching (Charles and Senter, 2011). Dealing with student misbehaviour, special educational needs and multi-ability pupils within the classroom were considered by interviewees as particular challenges to classroom management and teacher wellbeing. This situation corresponds with Darmody and Smyth (2010) who viewed teacher stress as being associated with student body structure and the need for teacher behavioural management skills training in order to develop the skills, approaches, and strategies to establish effective management systems. In recent years the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes has added an extra dimension to teaching in Irish primary schools. While challenged by the diversity of such needs, teachers view themselves as being competent in meeting the needs harboured by the growing complications within their classroom. The increase of the self-regulatory aspect of mindfulness appears to assist interviewees in dealing with the cognitive, social and emotional demands of teaching, helping teachers to 'conserve precious

motivational and self-regulatory resources for investment in relationships with students and classroom teaching rather than coping and defence (Roeser et al., 2013: 16).

It could be suggested from the data that an awareness of the classroom emotional climate alongside a consciousness of teachers' and children's needs, aids the ability to regulate emotions while also managing challenging behaviour. It could be further proposed that interviewees' use of self-regulation of attention and non-judgmental attitude supports against associated emotional distress. This concurs with Jennings and Greenberg (2011) who suggest that 'greater mindful awareness may support both effective classroom management and caring' (Jennings et al., 2011: 39). Kemper indicates that little research has been carried out on non-verbal communication, though specifies that 'compassionate communication is the cornerstone of clinical care', suggesting that people who are calm may trigger a sense of calm, relaxation and peacefulness in others (Kemper and Shaltout, 2011: 1).

As mentioned earlier, interviewees' experience of calm can have a secondary effect on relationships within the classroom. Perhaps it is also the cornerstone of teacher-pupil communication with a development of self-empathy resulting in empathy for others (Germer, 2009). Interviewees reported awareness of the implication of their personal mental or emotional state on classroom climate and pupil response. They are acutely aware that their personal emotional state is reflected in the classroom. Teachers interviewed suggested that when they are calm and relaxed it has a calming impact within the classroom and when they are frustrated, stressed or anxious this was also reflected in classroom climate and classroom management. The awareness of experiencing a positive or negative state, and changing a concerned attitude to an opportunistic one was attributed to paying attention in the moment, self-regulating and reperceiving. Thus, it concurs with Fosarelli who indicates that:

- (1) reperceiving does not create distance and disconnection from one's experience, but rather enables one to look, feel, and know more deeply;
- (2) importantly, the 'observing self' is not reified, but rather is seen as a temporary platform for observation and questioning' (Fosarelli, 2011: 66).

Fundamentally the awareness of the importance of environmental conditions on learning, the responsibility to educate pupils to their full potential and the need for personal self-care while teaching is integral to the motivation for self-regulation. The ability to respond rather than to react in challenging situations, which was identified by

many as a consequence of the self-regulation of mindfulness practice, appears to be a valuable and mindful skill in classroom management. In addition reflection on the external experience, from a broader perspective, provides a wider variety of interpretations of and responses to stressful situations (Zelazo & Cunningham, 2007). As a result, mindfulness-based interventions may be ideally suited to support the development of a mental set that is associated with effective classroom management and a reduction of stress (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). This is also pertinent to relationships with children.

5.6.2 HEALTHY TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIPS

To some, relationships with pupils are integral to the quality and richness of the educational experience and essential in engaging them in the educational process. The contribution of interviewees' self-regulatory practice that they suggest culminates in being more present to others, helps them to listen and watch attentively, thereby getting to know the children better and build deeper relationships. According to some interviewees questioned about relationships with children, a change in attitude was recognised as influencing their quality of relationship. There was a realisation that such an attitudinal change contributes to greater sensitivity and an ability to stand back before judging or responding. This capacity, while particularly evident in relation to teachers in DEIS schools, was also apparent in teachers from other schools. While it is evidenced that challenging teacher-pupil relationships and poor communication are direct causes of high levels of stress (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1978; Borg and Riding, 1991; Manthei and Gilmore, 1996; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001), it could be said that interviewees' description of renewed attitudes and responses to pupils play a role in addressing such stress and consciously improving relationships. Teachers asserted that this sensitivity had culminated in greater care and concern for pupils. Increased awareness of the stresses encountered by children through economic and social issues, parental expectations or lack of parental support and pupil-to-pupil relationships have encouraged teachers to respond differently to children, and in a way to better understand and/or reduce such anxieties. However, although this is a mindful response to challenging behaviour and thereby somewhat lessens the stress experienced by teachers, it does not indicate that it erases the stressor. What is clear from the interviewees is that they have devised strategies and responses that deal differently with the issue in a way that eases the pressure on the teacher and thereby creates a different and less stressful experience for the pupil. The study revealed that DEIS schools are particularly skilled at integrating whole-school strategies to deal with

challenging behaviour. It also exposed that some teachers in these schools have specific in-class strategies that enable children to find their own still quiet space as a means of dealing with and taking personal responsibility for their behaviour. Concurrent with Meiklejohn's findings on the results of teaching mindfulness to teachers and children, interviewees report mindfulness as an additional resource to help them manage their classroom and also to maintain supportive relationships with pupils (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). It also encouraged them to integrate mindfulness into the curriculum.

5.6.3 MINDFULNESS IN THE CURRICULUM

The study indicates that 18 of the 20 teachers interviewed already integrate mindfulness into the curriculum through the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme. Being enthusiastic and witnessing the value of mindfulness for themselves and their pupils, some teachers yearned for their colleagues to know, understand and implement mindfulness more deeply into the school. These ideas have been developed in one Educate Together school where, not only do the teachers interviewed have their personal practice of mindfulness which they integrate into the classroom, but this school also offers weekly staff mindfulness sessions for staff members who wish to participate. This they contend provides an opportunity to focus on self-care, wellbeing and stress management.

Mindfulness was introduced to children as a direct consequence of interviewees' own interest and practice. Teachers drew on their own confidence and expertise in the delivery of mindfulness in the classroom. What is interesting is that there was a consensus among interviewees that three key features resulted from the integration of mindfulness into the classroom: an improvement in children's self-awareness and development; improved classroom climate and greater teacher composure. Each of these, interviewees suggest, has a contribution towards stress reduction. The time and techniques used vary among interviewees. Some teachers introduce it daily while others do it weekly or a few times each week with time allocation varying from 10 minutes to a few breaths. Techniques of age appropriate breathing practice, body scan, visualisation, mindful eating, walking or action, or the use of guided CDs were common techniques used. Considered as an innate and natural human quality and capacity (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Albrecht et al., 2012), children generally enjoy their mindfulness practice and seek it out if the teacher does not offer it regularly. Although not every child liked to practise, teachers reported that those who were not keen had grown to respect the practice and remain quiet so as not to disturb others.

Although not specifically asked, interviewees informed the study that the value of mindfulness with children was that of developing internal qualities and promoting self-regulation and awareness of thought, emotions and body sensations. Some of the outcomes reported were those of self-respect, concentration, focus, self-esteem and self-confidence, empathy, an ability to make choices and awareness of the world around them consistent with the development of resilience through school based mindfulness practice (Greenberg and Harris, 2012). Concurrent with the teaching of the basic three Rs, the additional 'R' for Reflection and the education of the heart (Liew, 2012) is evident as a significant value in teaching today (Siegel, 2007). It somewhat mirrors Aristotle's opinion that 'educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all' (cited in Liew, 2012). It also echoes the principles of the humanist teacher who endeavours to develop students' self-respect, self-esteem and self-efficacy alongside concern for the students' emotional as well as cognitive needs (Radu, 2010).

Significant features for developing and sustaining mindfulness in the classroom were its benefit in managing children who exhibit antagonism and challenging behaviour, and its value in handling conflict and quarrels among pupils. Teachers declared that practising mindfulness with the children at specific and often spontaneous moments sometimes quickly and quietly dissipated disagreements and challenges, giving a quiet space for children and the teacher to mutually create an atmosphere of calm and enhance learning. Many interviewees taught children with ADHD and special educational needs in their classes. Kelly suggested that '*it is so useful for classroom management*' contending that '*for challenging pupils if I use the mindfulness in the class it gives me a quiet space and also the children*'. This was echoed by Louise who stated that '*I need it sometimes too ... it gives a general air of calmness in the classroom*'. They advocated mindfulness as an additional resource in the development of a positive classroom climate, culminating in minimal conflict and disturbing behaviour (La Paro and Pianta, 2003).

It could be said that the internal process of mindfulness that promotes placing 'attention on one's surroundings' (Richards et al., 2010: 251) is utilised by interviewees in the employment of mindfulness at critical moments in the school day. Amongst the interviews undertaken as part of the current study, each described a practice of returning to awareness of their own emotional and cognitive states with an awareness of how their emotional expressions affect their relationships with others, particularly

children. They appeared to recognise and consider the emotions of others in the building of warm and supportive relationships. This concurs with Jennings (2009) who contends that socially and emotionally competent teachers know how to manage their emotions and relationships amidst challenging situations and 'can regulate their emotions in healthy ways that facilitate positive classroom outcomes without compromising their health' (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 495).

Some interviewees reported that on occasion they introduce mindfulness themselves when cognisant of their own internal stress or tension in the midst of a busy day, thus addressing teacher stress and anxiety by creating a quiet and concentrating class using informal mindfulness practice within the activities of daily life (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Mindfulness is gaining mainstream recognition globally as a means of enhancing teacher and pupil wellbeing (Greenberg and Harris, 2012). It could be suggested from the data that teachers and pupils conversely promote mindfulness and wellbeing in each other. When children are being mindful it impacts on the teacher's wellbeing and, as already mentioned above, when the teacher is calm and mindful it exerts a positive effect on the children and classroom climate.

In the context of the study, it could be suggested that the practice of mindfulness among teachers exhibited aspects of intention, attention and attitude (Shapiro et al., 2008). These three characteristics of the definition of mindfulness employed within the current study were also utilised within the classroom. Firstly, it could be said that interviewees clearly hold the intention, the motivation, conscious direction and purpose of supportive relationships and a harmonious classroom climate. Secondly, paying attention, with moment-to-moment awareness of what was actually happening was being employed with self-awareness and awareness of classroom climate and relationship development. Thirdly, what interviewees described concurs with the attitude with which they pay attention, pointing to that of being 'accepting, caring, and discerning' (Shapiro et al., 2008: 842) towards themselves and towards others. This is relevant to both teachers and pupils.

Pupil stress has been a catalyst for the acknowledgement by schools globally of the value of enhancing children's social, emotional, mental, spiritual and cognitive wellbeing (Albrecht et al., 2012). A new emphasis on health and well-being for children in Irish schools is evidenced through a curriculum focus on Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) alongside new initiatives to build children's self-esteem and develop personal awareness (Hislop, 2012). Some of these initiatives are inclusive of

mindfulness (Duignan, 2013) which may be important in promoting children's wellbeing and a classroom climate conducive to calm and co-operation.

This chapter, thus far, has identified four themes: internal mindfulness outcomes; teacher attributes; contribution to professional practice and classroom outcomes. A summary of the contribution of mindfulness in primary school teaching is depicted in Figure 5.2. An additional synopsis is visible in Appendix 7 (page 168) which integrates NVivo data reduction codes with relevant interviewee quotes, demonstrating the number and type of quotations that support each of the themes herein.

In noticing a particular stressful event a teacher, engaging in a mindful process, embarked on a progression from internal processing to external practical application in a professional and classroom context. The experience of stress was impacted upon by mindfulness practice suggesting an intentional process of paying attention to the stressor and subsequent self-regulation of thoughts, emotions or bodily sensations (yellow). Such internal self-regulation culminated in specific teacher attributes of calmness, concentration and compassion (green), which in turn offered a contribution to the teacher's professional practice (blue) and classroom outcomes (purple). The framework presented below provides insight into how the internal mindfulness process culminates in an external response and interaction, and will be further discussed in the following section of this chapter.

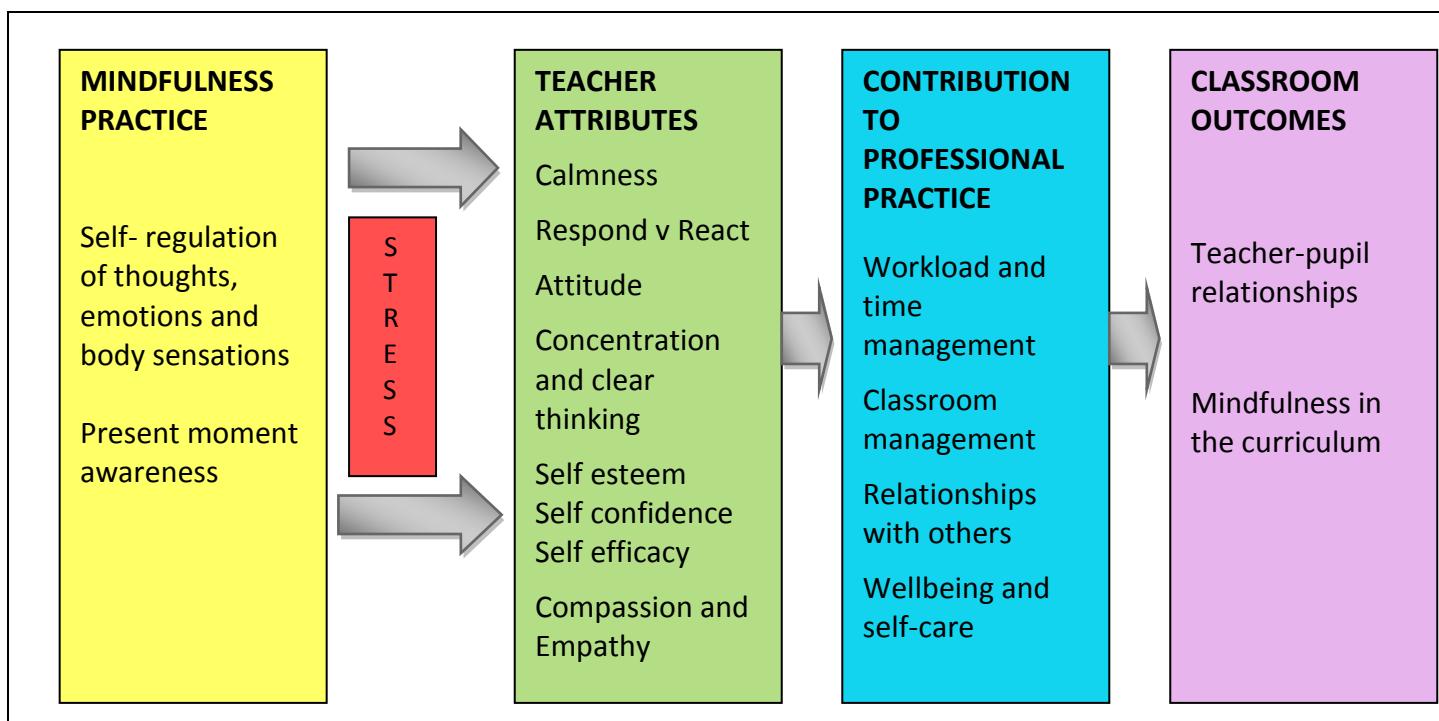


Figure 5.2: The outcomes of mindfulness practice among primary school teachers

5.7 A MODEL FOR MINDFULNESS INTERVENTION IN TEACHING

An important model for mindfulness in teaching was devised by Roeser et al. in 2013 (as outlined in Chapter 2). The model depicts how mindfulness and occupational self-compassion assist teachers in coping with the socio-emotional and cognitive challenges of the classroom and the reduction of stress and symptoms of burnout (Roeser et al., 2013). This is a significant model for teaching. The current study proposes to contribute to it by combining findings specific to teachers' internal experience and their professional practice as evidenced earlier in this chapter. The Roeser et al. model begins with a teacher learning the skill of mindfulness and subsequently moves through the processes to exhibit significant and effective changes for teachers, the classroom and pupils. Since the wellbeing of the teacher and his or her capacity for social and emotional competence is considered to influence pupil and classroom outcomes (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009), it was deemed relevant to elaborate on the internal and external teacher processes, which is something that the developed model takes into account. Although the participants in the Roeser et al. study (2103) participated in a prescribed Mindfulness Training programme, the participants in the current study came to the practice through a variety of pathways. Nonetheless, the processes that emerged from both studies point to an internal process of mindfulness culminating in both internal and external outcomes.

It might be that the Roeser et al. model assumes the development of self-regulation and present moment awareness following mindfulness training. However, this is not explicit. At a personal level, interviewees in the current study were cognisant of the development of self-awareness and presence. At a professional level it was clear that self-regulation of thoughts and emotions generated outcomes that were pertinent in addressing workplace stress through a four stage process:

- A process internal to self culminating in teacher skills and mindsets and subsequent resilience and coping strategies
- A process internal to self which at a professional level culminated in Teacher Attributes
- A contribution to professional practice and
- A contribution to classroom outcomes

These steps are integrated into a developed model, Figure 5.3 (page 123), which answers many calls for a theoretical framework or model for mindfulness in education

(Albrecht et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2012) and the call by Roeser et al. for additional qualitative research (Roeser et al., 2012).

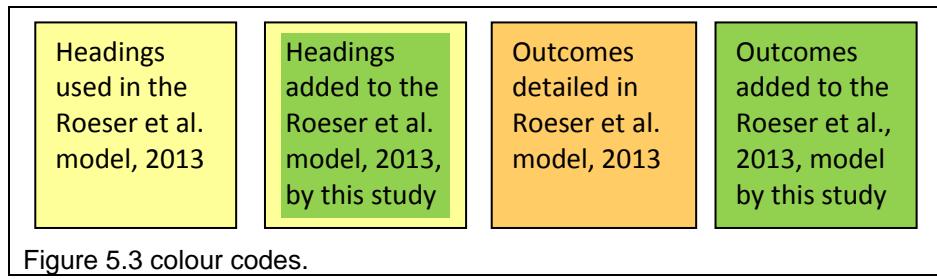
Few models exist. The current research develops the Teacher Mindfulness Training Logic Model and Theory of Change which was developed by Roeser et al. (2013) following quantitative research. The research reported herein adds value from a different perspective, being a qualitative study. It revealed findings relevant to many aspects of the Roeser et al. model: Teacher Skills and Mindsets, Teacher coping and Resilience and Classroom Outcomes (2013). It goes a step further by highlighting the process of engaging in mindfulness in order to develop specific internal teacher skills and mindsets, which consequently lead to Mindfulness and Self-Compassion.

Furthermore, by incorporating two additional steps it specifies Teacher Attributes and a Contribution to Professional Practice, which consequently contribute to Classroom Outcomes. The process described herein parallels some of the steps described by Roeser et al. (2013) whilst also integrating additional contributions. The current qualitative study adds to the literature and answers the call by Roeser et al. (2013) for additional qualitative forms of assessment of mindfulness training in education (Roeser et al., 2012). That said, it is significant coming from qualitative research methodology, acknowledging the paucity of such studies related to mindfulness practice. The current study did not research the influence of a particular Mindfulness Training programme, nor did it focus on Student Outcomes.

Few factors hindered the use of mindfulness as a strategy by teachers. The recurrent obstacle was that of time and the creation of the habit of a regular daily extended meditation or movement practice which was aspired to by the majority of teachers. What was clear, however, was that each teacher practised momentary practices throughout each day which culminated in significant professional outcomes.

For teachers the unintended consequence of learning mindfulness was that of introducing it to the children through the curriculum. All but two teachers delivered simple techniques to the children in their classes. Some had done specific mindfulness training for children in the classroom. Others had transferred some of their own practices in a child appropriate manner. Others used mindfulness CDs or video clips as a means of imparting the practice. This is an additional contribution to stress reduction as some teachers acknowledged occasionally practising mindfulness with children in order to take a quiet moment for themselves, thus impacting on classroom

climate alongside a calm and relaxed classroom teacher. In Figure 5.3, the Roeser et al. framework (2013) is outlined in lemon and orange while additional developments from the current study are designated in green.



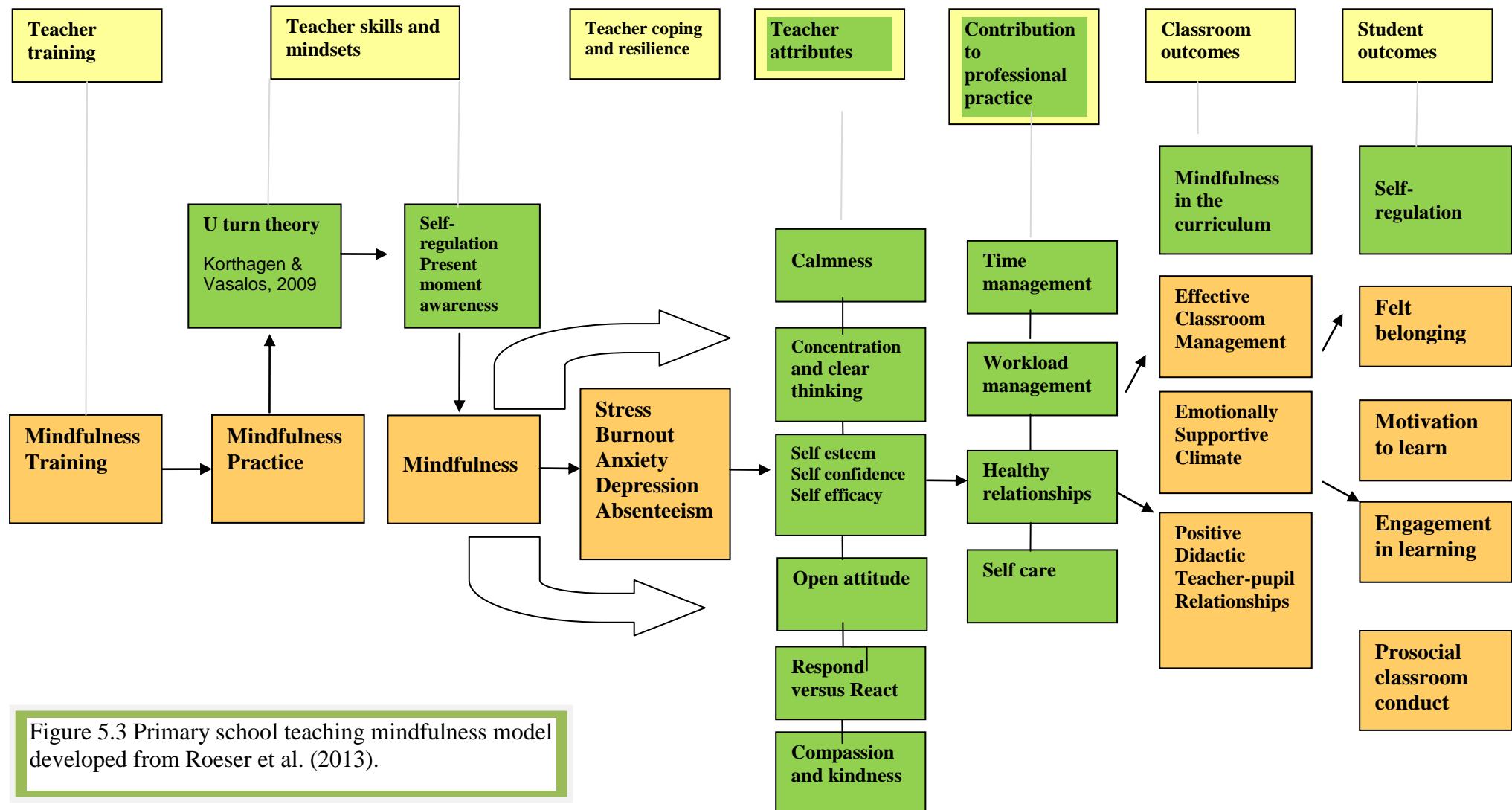


Figure 5.3 Primary school teaching mindfulness model developed from Roeser et al. (2013).

Significantly, the current research project addresses a gap in research identified by Roeser et al., 2013. The model and process presented herewith provide insight into teachers' internal processing relative to mindfulness, professional attributes and outcomes for teachers. This model adds to the literature by providing insight into how its outcomes contribute to teacher wellbeing and consequently influence children in the classroom. The developed model suggests that a teacher practising mindfulness has the capacity to retain personal and professional awareness and exhibit particular qualities and tasks beneficial to teaching and learning. It demonstrates that mindfulness in teaching raises attentiveness, draws teachers into self-awareness and enables a conscious response to internal and external stressors that they face daily. It suggests that such teachers have a capacity for flexibility and resilience in the management of time, workload and self-care, thereby creating beneficial classroom climate and inter-relationships.

In addition, the research and model reported herein suggest that mindfulness was employed as a means of pupil wellbeing, evident from two vantage points. Firstly, teachers agreed that their practice of mindfulness brings about a sense of wellbeing. They suggested that when they were in a state of wellbeing mentally, emotionally and physically they had an ability to be more present and respond more effectively to daily teaching routines. Secondly, with a personal practice and realisation of its benefit they had an interest in training and delivering mindfulness practices to children in the classroom.

As an evidence-based model it has the capacity to inform teachers, principals and policy makers. It may be helpful for teachers in ascertaining the value and application of mindfulness practice and in realising its potential and its capacity for teachers to reach their full potential (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009). For policy makers its evidence base may well answer issues relating to Professional Development in mindfulness training with teachers in schools or Education Centres. Spending on education has been reduced in Ireland in recent years, while simultaneously concerns regarding teacher stress, burnout, absenteeism and early departures from the profession are rising. Mindfulness training could ultimately offer a low cost response. Teaching is a profession that encounters copious emotions and interactions in the course of its daily routines. Other professions make similar demands of their workers, which suggests that the developed model could have the potential for use with other professions as a means of addressing the occupational stress and stressors therein.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The overall aim of the study reported herein was to investigate the contribution that mindfulness practice could make to stress reduction among primary school teachers. Overall the results of twenty semi-structured interviews with primary school teachers who practised mindfulness suggested that, with the skills and mindsets derived from the practice, teachers can effectively manage occupational stress and contribute to professional practice. The discussion in this chapter presented the insightful model of Roeser et al. (2013). It developed it by integrating four key categories from the current study: the internal self-regulation of thoughts and emotions; the subsequent development of teacher attributes; a contribution to professional practice in the form of personal awareness and management corresponding to workload, relationship and classroom management and finally a contribution to classroom management. The chapter concluded with the current findings being integrated into the Roeser et al. Teacher mindfulness training logic model and theory of change (Roeser et al., 2013) to create a Mindfulness in Teaching model applicable to primary school teaching. In essence this model was drawn from and will work towards teacher wellbeing and self-care in the pursuit of stress reduction, coping skills and resilience.

6. Thesis conclusion

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter of the thesis provides an overview of the study. It commences by summarising the argument for the research. It then outlines how the literature review informed the choice of research questions in order to investigate the contribution of mindfulness to stress reduction in primary school teaching. Next, the discussion engages with the methodology and findings of the study. Whilst this chapter mainly follows the framework of the thesis, it contains an analysis of the most significant results with discussion. It concludes with a discussion of the application of the study and offers recommendations for further research.

6.2 STUDY CONTEXT

The study was contextualised with particular reference to the current teaching climate and the dilemmas faced by primary school teachers in Ireland. Schools as places and spaces where teachers and children have the potential to achieve growth, meaning, learning and wellbeing are places where the welfare of teachers and pupils is paramount. When teachers and children are valued for who they are and not what they achieve, school and classroom climate is positively influenced. However, the current climate of global unrest, national economic crisis, Department of Education and Skills criteria for the priority of numeracy and literacy and the growth of administrative accountability have impacted negatively on the teaching community. With the introduction of international PISA league tables and a focus on exams and results, classrooms internationally have the potential to become factories and engines of learning towards ‘performativity’ (Lynch et al., 2012: 61). Teachers are increasingly pressurised toward performativity. This has been shown to be a major contributory factor to stress in the classroom (Caulfield, 2014). Thus, it was considered timely to investigate the impact of a specific intervention strategy, that of mindfulness, as a central issue for the current research.

The study set out to explore the question: What contribution does mindfulness practice make to stress reduction in primary school teaching? Throughout the literature review it was evident that particular aspects of a teacher’s occupation appeared fundamental to the creation of stress in primary school teaching. These included professional practice, workload and classroom climate and relationships. Subsequently, the following research questions were considered essential to the study:

1. In what ways do primary school teachers practise mindfulness?
2. In what ways can mindfulness impact on professional practice?
3. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on workload management?
4. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on relationships with pupils, colleagues and parents?
5. In what ways can mindfulness practice impact on classroom management?

The findings provided evidence that the practice of mindfulness among primary school teachers had potential for healthy occupational management. The next section illustrates how the literature review shaped these questions, the direction of the study and its theoretical approach.

6.3 TEACHER STRESS AND MINDFULNESS

6.3.1 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND TEACHING

The review of literature examined professional aspects of stress and mindfulness pertinent to teaching in primary schools. The initial investigation of literature suggested that the humanistic approach was a suitable approach to underpin the study with its perspective on human growth (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1968). In terms of factors contributing to stress, the sources are numerous. Analysis of national and international literature suggested that teaching can be a stress-laden occupation. The commercialisation of education in recent decades (Lynch et al., 2012) and focus on performance, alongside the public opinion that schools are capable of addressing multiple societal issues contributes to psychological and social pressures for teachers (Cottrell, 2013). They result in a call for additional accountability and paperwork together with supplementary curricular activities to be integrated into the school day. Despite being protected within current Health and Safety standards (Health and Safety Authority, 2009), stress levels of up to 70% in Irish schools are reason for concern (Darmody and Smyth, 2010), both for the welfare of teachers and in acknowledgement of their cost on absenteeism, sick leave and early retirement (Fitzgerald, 2008).

Research into stress and job satisfaction in Ireland is limited. However, it is evident that teachers' workloads have changed in recent years with a need for greater diversity. The integration of children with special educational needs, multiculturalism and increased class sizes impact on professional and teaching practice (Darmody and Smyth, 2010). Concurrently, primary teaching in Ireland involves the supervision of up to 35 children in one classroom (O'Sullivan, 2013). Like elsewhere, it entails managing

numerous teacher-pupil relationships whilst catering for individual needs, age profiles, aptitudes and intelligence quotients (Roeser et al., 2013). Behavioural problems as well as an overloaded curriculum are commonplace thus placing increased stress and workloads on teachers. Indeed occupational stress is a common consequence with physical, mental and emotional effects (Kyriacou, 2000) and the potential for occupational burnout characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and absenteeism (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Thus, the use of effective intervention strategies is essential.

The current study, pertaining to such stress and the implication of mindfulness practice among primary school teachers, supports a person-centred approach, accepting that individuals have a natural inclination towards positive change, growth and self-actualisation (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1968), the basis of the humanistic approach that underpins the study. Its premise suggests that people are essentially good and encourages self-exploration from a holistic perspective acknowledging choice, creativity and spiritual aspiration (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1970), tenets paralleled by mindfulness.

Drawing on the work of Selye (1984), Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Kyriacou (2001) the definitions of stress and eustress were considered. Being subjective, the literature identified stress as complex and difficult to conceptualise. However, although Selye's (1984) definition focused on the non-specific response by the body resulting in pleasant or unpleasant conditions, Kyriacou's (2001) definition of stress was specific to the negative feelings resulting from teaching itself. This corresponded with the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), who defined stress as an imbalance relative to demands and resources and pressure resulting from excessive demands relative to moderate resources. Although eustress or the positive emotions associated with stress (Selye, 1974) is important, it was considered that when distress outweighs eustress it becomes unhelpful and a cause of concern within the teaching profession. It was therefore the unhelpful aspect of stress that became the focus of the current study. Such stress is characterised by the departure from normal homeostatic balance and is also implicated by internal thinking and feeling processes (Dispenza, 2007; Hanson, 2013).

Mindfulness as a strategy is being employed increasingly to enhance teacher wellbeing worldwide. The experience of stress in teaching in Ireland has been identified as a catalyst for the initiation and practice of mindfulness among primary school teachers who participated in the study reported herein.

6.3.2 MINDFULNESS AND TEACHING

Recent developments and the popularity of mindfulness practice advanced the employment of mindfulness in a variety of contexts. With roots in the Buddhist tradition the practice of present moment awareness was originally embedded in a religious context with the purpose of alleviating suffering and encouraging compassion (Kernochan et al., 2007). This suggested its potential relevance to stress reduction, self-exploration, personal growth and professional practice. In recent decades mindfulness has become secularised (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). The medical profession have viewed it as a therapeutic tool (Ludwig and Kabat-Zinn, 2008), scientists have explored its application to the nervous system through neuroscience (Siegel, 2007) and specialised mental health professionals have investigated its potential in relation to anxiety, depression and stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Herein lies its prospect in terms of a professional contribution to occupational wellbeing and the reason why educationalists have recently viewed it as an aid to occupational health and wellbeing, stress management and classroom management (Jennings et al., 2011; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013). To explore this further it was considered useful to investigate teachers' intentions in practising mindfulness, the type of practice in which they engaged and the way in which they learned and practised mindfulness.

The study explored the contribution of mindfulness to effective coping strategies for daily teaching routines. The dimension of teachers' personal awareness and self-management seemed to affect teachers' ability to cope with the demands of teaching and the creation of an effective teaching climate (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Those factors considered to assist towards the development of more effective teaching included personal skills and mindsets, cognitive, emotional and social competence, self-esteem, resilience and an ability to relate to others with care and compassion (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013).

In the analysis of literature numerous definitions of mindfulness were examined. The definition of Lau et al. was chosen as central to the current study. It reads that mindfulness is:

- (a) the intentional self-regulation of attention to facilitate greater awareness of bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions; and
- (b) a specific quality of attention characterised by endeavouring to connect with each object in one's awareness (e.g., each bodily sensation, thought,

or emotion) with curiosity, acceptance, and openness to experience (Lau et al., 2006)

The key factors of intention, attention and attitude herein were regarded as relevant to the mindfulness practice because they constitute the rationale of why an individual practises mindfulness. They also refer to how it is practised, by noticing mental, emotional and physical expressions, and the mindset of curiosity or non-judgment that a person brings to it (Lau et al., 2006). However, present moment awareness emerges through the literature as a crucial characteristic, with its potential to notice feelings, inner thoughts and sensations with the prospect of disengaging in order to reperceive or self-regulate those thoughts and emotions (Shapiro et al., 2006).

The analysis of literature suggested that much research has investigated the effects of a specific eight-week MBSR or prescribed mindfulness training. The current study differs in that its participants learned mindfulness through a variety of avenues including MBSR, online training and through books and other resources. Although some warn that mindfulness is over-estimated in Western society as a marketable skill rather than a way of being (Rosenbaum, 2009; Hanson, 2013), others suggest that it has potential greater than stress reduction with its capacity for wellbeing, emotional regulation and healthy relationships for teachers in primary education (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013).

The literature relative to mindfulness practice points to the development of attentional and emotional self-regulation strategies. These were considered valuable in the development of mindful teaching and professional self-compassion (Roeser et al., 2013), culminating in improved classroom management, supportive relationships and occupational wellbeing (Jennings et al., 2011; Meiklejohn et al., 2012) and are evident in a conceptual framework (Roeser et al., 2013).

The ‘Teacher mindfulness training logic model and theory of change’ (Roeser et al., 2013) (outlined in Figure 2.3 page 44) offers a conceptual framework relative to mindfulness in teaching. It illuminates both the gap in and the potential for an operational framework for the analysis of mindfulness in teaching. Examination of several frameworks between 2009 and 2013 illustrated a subtle development through the years resulting from different studies (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Roeser et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013). This framework is underpinned by and integral to the new knowledge emanating from the current study and will be discussed in a later

section of this chapter. Appropriate methodology was considered and chosen as a means of answering these questions.

6.4 METHODOLOGY

The humanistic approach, having an interest in discovering how life concept is affected by lived experience, suggests that individuals are familiar with their own unique life story and can describe their own experiences (Smith et al., 2003). It was the researcher's task to acquire and classify such experiences in relation to mindfulness and its contribution to primary teaching. Considering that qualitative research methods encourage participants to talk about their own experiences in their own words, it was deemed a suitable research methodology (Cohen et al., 2007).

The choice of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain an insight into teachers' subjective experience and their world of self-exploration in response to professional and environmental stressors (Morrison, 2007). A purposive sample sought teachers who had practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months as eligible to participate in the study. Twenty interviews were considered appropriate to reach a geographical and school representation. The interviews offered rich and vivid material (Gillham, 2005) which was analysed using a computer aided qualitative data analysis system, NVivo, as a data management system. A qualitative thematic analysis was engaged in using a Miles and Huberman (1994) framework. By coding, re-coding, identifying, categorising and classifying data, the analysis offered a contribution to knowledge relative to mindfulness and stress reduction.

6.5 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

6.5.1 MINDFULNESS AND A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the most important outcomes of the current study is the further development of the pre-existing Mindfulness in Teaching Model (Roeser et al., 2013). Given that the literature abounds with calls for stress reduction in teaching and skills to respond and manage demanding situations, it is essential to have a model to respond to this. Roeser et al. provide such a model. The analysis of data from the current study supports the Roeser et al. models (Roeser 2012, 2013). It contributes to the framework by drawing on the U-turn theory (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009) and integrating new knowledge that emanates from the current study.

The Roeser et al. models commence with mindfulness training programmes and then move through the processes to significant and effective changes for teachers, classroom climate and pupils (2012, 2013). They introduced five levels within the models for use in teaching. These are indicated in Table 6.1 with modification identified at levels two and three:

Logic model of hypothesized mindfulness training effects on teachers, classroom environments, and students (2012) 1. Teacher programs 2. Teacher habits of mind 3. Teacher outcomes 4. Classroom outcomes 5. Student outcomes (Roeser et al., 2012).	Teacher mindfulness training logic model and theory of change (2013) 1. Teacher programs 2. Teacher skills & mindsets 3. Teacher coping & resilience 4. Classroom outcomes 5. Student outcomes (Roeser et al., 2013: 2).
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Table 6.1: Comparison of mindfulness teacher models

Both models agree on the starting point of a Mindfulness Training (MT) programme for teachers and its implication for Classroom and Student Outcomes with student outcomes in turn impacting on stress reduction for teachers. In the 2013 model, Teacher Skills and Mindsets replaced Habits of Mind (2012), indicating an association of Mindfulness and Self-Compassion. In this same model, 2013, Teacher Coping and Resilience replaced the Teacher Outcomes of 2012, providing a focus on the impact of mindfulness on Stress and Burnout, Anxiety and Depression, Stress Physiology and Absenteeism.

Following an extensive quantitative study with teachers, the Roeser et al. models are innovative and timely, describing the potential effect of mindfulness on teachers and students. The current qualitative study with Irish teachers makes a substantial contribution by the addition of a dimension that was not previously included. Roeser et al. (2012 and 2013) suggested that Habits of Mind, Skills and Mindsets are necessary requirements for effective teaching. One aspect that complements this is the identification of such skills and habits. What is not clear from the 2012 and 2013 models is the specific internal process in the development of Habits of Mind or Skills and Mindsets through MT. The current study specifically identified the outcomes of mindfulness practice in this regard. It discovered the process of affective and

emotional self-regulation and present moment awareness as initial outcomes of mindfulness practice by teachers. It further ascertained the impact of the process of self-regulation on teacher attributes. Internal qualities such as clear thinking and concentration, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy, and an ability to respond in stress-filled situations rather than to react, were deemed outcomes of self-regulation and contributory factors in professional practice. These in turn were discovered to impact on professional practice with a contribution to workload and time management, self-care and relationships. Thus, the Roeser et al. model was developed as a seven-level model to include:

1. Teacher programs
2. Teacher Skills & Mindsets incorporating **Self-Regulation**
3. Teacher Coping & Resilience
- 4. Teacher Attributes**
- 5. Contribution to Professional Practice**
6. Classroom Outcomes inclusive of **Introducing Mindfulness in the Curriculum**
7. Student Outcomes adapted from Roeser et al. (2013: 2)

Table 6.2: Primary school teaching mindfulness model

This primary school teaching mindfulness model developed from Roeser et al. (2013), (in diagram form on page 123) may be useful in a climate of increased workload and reduced resources wherein it is critical that teachers establish and exercise at least one specific strategy to address occupational and classroom pressures to maintain a state of 'self-fulness' (Higgins, 2010) and flourishing (Seligman, 2012). It is interesting to note that some of the aspects of this model are aligned with the PERMA model in which positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment are at the core of wellbeing (Seligman, 2012). Since the wellbeing of the teacher and his or her capacity for social and emotional competence is considered to influence pupil and classroom outcomes (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009), it was deemed relevant to develop the internal and external teacher processes and outcomes. These four levels of contribution are taken into account within the model as further developed in the following sections.

6.5.2 TEACHER SKILLS AND MINDSETS

This research study shows that teachers' skills and mindsets were developed through their mindfulness practice. At a personal level, teachers were cognisant of an internal process which developed personal awareness and presence. The study was an exploration of their distinctive and authentic sense of self and the revelation of their subjective experiences in terms of their mindfulness practice. It investigated the impact of mindfulness on their internal self-awareness and knowledge of teaching qualities and patterns. In analysing the contribution of mindfulness it was clear that cognitive and emotional self-regulation generated outcomes that could be pertinent to addressing workplace stress. Rogers (1961) emphasised the value of the relationship with thoughts and feelings. He suggested that feelings and thoughts are often dis-owned, later expressed and gradually accepted with a sense of self-responsibility for the current reality, thus changing the relationships with them (Rogers, 1961). So for example, many teachers who practised mindfulness and became attentive to their thoughts and feelings, over time became accepting of those thoughts and feelings as they were, and thereby became more accepting of the self. Thus, an aspect of personal awareness identified was the maintenance of a greater capacity to listen to and accept themselves and to be themselves. It enabled effective self-knowledge in recognising more clearly and acknowledging the feelings and thoughts that permeated the mind. In so doing, it enabled awareness and subsequent effective responses in teaching.

In terms of neuroscience, the study of the brain and nervous system, it has been proven that what we choose to focus on impacts us physiologically as well as mentally and emotionally (Dispenza, 2007; Siegel, 2007). The cognitive and affective factors of stress are associated with thinking and feeling processes. Hence feeling negative or destructive emotions emanating from stressful situations are likely to cause physiological and psychological consequences while using more positive functions can create additional resources with an impact on resilience, effectiveness and creativity (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005). Consequently, thoughts and feelings have a role to play in coping with stressors within both the school and the classroom. Paying attention to thinking and feeling processes has a role to play in coping mechanisms.

The findings reported herein suggest that the practice of mindfulness creates insight. It empowers a teacher to take effective action in professional practice by noticing the nature of internal thoughts and feelings, acknowledging them and subsequently

choosing to regulate them, thus activating mental and physiological stress responses through thought patterns (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Dispenza, 2007). Thus, the resources gained from mindfulness practice enable the teacher to respond well and to ‘bounce back more quickly from the inherent and considerable social-emotional and cognitive challenges of classroom teaching’ (Roeser et al., 2013: 2). Consequently the development of valuable teacher attributes was evident.

6.5.3 TEACHER ATTRIBUTES

Another significant finding in this research study is that teachers practising mindfulness identified qualities of calm, concentration and an open attitude as important characteristics that emanated from their practice. It was recognised that effective listening to oneself with acceptance, interest and curiosity enabled teachers to gain knowledge of personal thoughts, feelings and body sensations (Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Noticing and accepting that a teacher felt warmth or compassion towards her/himself or conversely annoyance or rejection in a particular moment enabled the teacher to be who s/he was in the moment. Consequently, through listening and accepting oneself the tendency was to extend that listening to others. In accepting her/himself the capacity emerged for the teacher to accept the feelings, thoughts, attitudes and beliefs of children and adults in the school, assisting them in becoming themselves. Rather than dashing in to solve problems and ‘fix’ things, to set targets and shape people, the inclination was to pause and consider the situation and the most suitable response, in other words to respond rather than to react to situations. This was exemplified by the attitude of concern of one teacher toward the children on a Monday morning. She wondered about their low energy and considered how they were, how their weekend was, and their present needs, while also aware that the curriculum tasks would be dealt with satisfactorily.

Teachers considered that truth and meaning were important. They considered that it was unhelpful to pretend to be relaxed when in fact they were stressed or to take on a certain task at a staff meeting when in fact they were already feeling strained and unable to carry it out with ease and efficiency. Equally they considered it unhelpful to act as if they were loving and kind when in fact they felt frustrated and overburdened. They found it unhelpful to be untrue, though sometimes it was unavoidable in instances lacking the necessary skills of confidence and communication. At the same time many indicated that mindfulness developed an inner self-confidence that enabled participation in collegial relationships and staff meetings. Many acknowledged a

newfound capacity to give an opinion and to interact in discussions within such meetings, acknowledging it as being true to themselves. This encouraged more useful and effective relationships with colleagues. A newly developed confidence promoted relationships that were more truthful and real with little need to maintain a mask or facade or to communicate one way on the surface while experiencing something different underneath.

Akin to the underpinning humanistic perspective, teachers in the current study were subtly enriched in motivation and self-confidence. They came to understand and gain awareness of their own difficulties and challenges and came to accept them as they were, noticing the feelings and thoughts that accompanied them. This person-centred approach resulted in the capacity to be self-aware and to move toward growth and self-actualisation. Subsequently, an expansion of oneself to dig deep and to understand oneself extended to trying to understand a particular pupil, drawing on empathy. Singer (2006) emphasises empathy as the importance of and the capacity to understand the emotional state of others and to share in their feelings. Thus, the capacity was to understand, enrich or create change in relation to a child; to make a difference and empower a child to create personal change and growth. It permitted teachers to accept their own emotions of concern as well as their feelings of delight, courage and compassion in being understood. The consequence of teachers' awareness and acceptance of their own feelings was shown to enable them to open up opportunities whereby pupils might acknowledge and share their feelings, thus possibly creating communication channels in the classroom where feelings are articulated and where differences are acknowledged and understood. This indicated an expansion of empathy in the endeavour to understand the little girl who lives in circumstances of material or intellectual poverty, to try to comprehend the boy who is labelled disabled or special needs, to appreciate the child who is very bright or the one who cannot add or read and consequently feels useless, or the girl whose first language is not Irish or English. The need to be in tune with such a variety of needs underlines the importance of socially and emotionally competent teachers and adherence to the highest possible standards of professional practice.

6.5.4 CONTRIBUTION TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This study suggests strongly that the integration of self-regulation and teacher attributes impacted on professional practice. It was evident that the school system with its demands on teachers' time and expertise could have a capacity for damage and destruction. However, the human spirit, as observed from a humanistic perspective,

has an ‘overbalancing thrust toward growth, if the opportunity for growth is provided’ (Rogers, 1961). The delivery of a very extensive curriculum, which is expected of every Irish primary school teacher, was noted as a concern and impossibility for many teachers. It was considered by many to be an overloaded curriculum. Their acceptance of their personal and professional fallibility and limits relative to the curriculum encouraged them to address such concerns with responsibility and self-understanding. Though it did not eliminate stress, mindfulness offered partial solution and ease of response. By allowing themselves to be aware of their thoughts, feelings and bodily responses, teachers were enabled to know themselves better and also to know their limits and tolerations. The classic response to curriculum overload was often dealt with by doing their best and dealing with additional literacy and numeracy hours and other curricular requirements by acknowledging an ability to do a day’s work in the best way possible. Teachers aimed to notice and accept their thoughts, feelings and situations just as they were at a given time and to respond and prioritise accordingly. It was in accepting the reality in the moment that personal and professional growth took place, giving a capacity for understanding, change and openness to opportunity.

Much humanistic theory focuses on healthy personal functioning. One of the primary reasons that this theory was chosen as an underpinning approach was because of its approach to viewing the person as a whole person, which involves self-exploration rather than studying the behaviour of others (Rogers, 1961; Rogers and Freiberg, 1994). This, however, is relevant to teachers’ relationships with others. Relevant personal knowledge and coping skills were learned by teachers to deal with the anxieties and tensions within school relationships. Such learning was developed and used preventatively in future interactions. An ability to develop emotional and cognitive self-regulation and openness enabled teachers to develop a constructive response in relationship tensions and anxieties as they arose.

Like the humanistic psychologist, many teachers delighted in having a key role in facilitating ‘the emergence of a self, a person’ (Rogers, 1961: 5) in the children in their care. They were pleased to see the development in the children in front of them in a class or support room, and many considered it a privilege to be associated with this unfolding. In relationship with others it was listening to oneself and being interested that helped in understanding others or acknowledging the insecurity or uncertainty in relation to a pupil, parent or colleague. Acknowledging the diverse inner attitudes and feelings enabled teachers to listen to themselves and in turn accept themselves with compassion. This was acknowledged as challenging and often difficult, though

relationships became more authentic and real when it did materialise. This study confirms examples of such inner experience. They include being curious about another person and acknowledging them with empathy, accepting the reality of warmth or annoyance towards a pupil, uncertainty or confidence in relation to a colleague, and interest or impatience with a parent in a particular moment or interaction - all aspects of inner awareness. Thus, it was considered that more authentic relationships had the capacity to create awareness and attention rather than lack of knowledge. This was true also of collegial and parental relationships; the awareness of oneself instigated awareness of the feelings of others. Noticing and acknowledging warmth, boredom or interest in a child or other enabled the teacher to become more comfortable in being who s/he is and to accept her/himself as adequate or inadequate, flawed or acceptable with an attitude of consciousness (Brown and Ryan, 2003).

In terms of communication the study indicated that teachers gained awareness of personal and professional patterns by learning to witness intentions and observe the outcome of actions. For example, a teacher's intention may have been to do something specific with children. With mindfulness the teacher could have the capacity to observe the outcome by genuinely being attentive. The study suggests that the cultivation of such deep listening and attentiveness has the potential to give rise to internal awareness towards interpersonal attention and understanding. Relative to relationships with children who misbehave and other challenging relationships, practising mindfulness has enabled teachers to pause, take a breath and to consider a response, thus enabling them to reperceive and to respond appropriately rather than to react. This not only encouraged better relationships but also impacted on classroom climate.

At a time when the dominant focus in schools is on children's learning with literacy and numeracy being paramount (Thornton, 2014), it is also a time of concern for teachers' health and wellbeing (Cottrell, 2013). The study indicates that many teachers engaged in mindfulness practice in order to enhance wellbeing and reduce stress. With the resultant aptitude for emotional and cognitive self-regulation, interviewees pointed towards the value of mindfulness for self-care and work-life balance. Reporting its capacity for the development of presence and self-compassion, teachers indicated raised awareness of personal and professional needs and cognisance of the value of prioritising their own care. Teachers indicated a desire to maintain positive physical and mental health akin to growth towards self-fullness (Higgins, 2010) and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968) as a strategy towards effective teaching in the classroom.

6.5.5 CLASSROOM OUTCOMES

Mindfulness practitioners are often perceived as calm and relaxed. Such non-verbal presence has the capacity to create a mirror effect, the calm person extending calm to others thus creating unconscious and intrinsic transformation (Kemper and Shaltout, 2011). The research findings indicate the tendency for teachers to remain calm in the midst of turmoil. Primarily, teachers who participated in this study gained cognitive, emotional and social resilience and increased personal strategies in stressful situations. These consequently impacted on classroom climate and classroom management. It was evident that coping with stress drew upon multiple factors (Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007) inclusive of physiology, emotions, behaviour, attention and interpersonal processes (Masten, 2006). Having the ability to be aware of early signs of stress and what to look for when stressed, teachers had the capacity to cope and resolve problems; while coping strategies are associated with health and wellbeing they are also connected with resilience relative to the day-to-day activity within the classroom.

The data reveals that many teachers introduced mindfulness to the children in the classroom. This stemmed from teachers' personal experience of mindfulness practice as a way of being and a belief that it might also be valuable for their pupils. Its introduction into interviewees' classrooms gave rise to children gaining the ability to pause and to notice and regulate thoughts and emotions. Alongside self-awareness, mindfulness practice with these pupils was reported to improve classroom management and classroom climate, thereby correlating with Roger's indication of the importance of a positive learning climate (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994). From the perspective of stress reduction, this study indicated the value of mindfulness practices with children when teachers themselves were feeling stressed or tense during a demanding day. The introduction of momentary informal mindfulness practices with children occasionally gave the teacher an opportunity to pause and breathe too!

Teachers' motivation to maintain a mindfulness practice was supported by its outcomes. It was evident that many positive features were reported by teachers. Few aspects hindered the practice of mindfulness. Challenges included the need for time at home or at school to practise routinely and consistently, a lack of support from colleagues in some schools and a perception by some of an institutional rejection of mindfulness by management in a Catholic school culture.

Occupational stress is particular to the demands of the workplace. In the current economic and educational context, it could be argued that teachers are working in extreme conditions. While environmental working conditions are constrained and teachers are limited by resources in the form of funds and additional teacher supports in the classroom, it was deemed a challenge to remain consistently calm and resilient. Noted as a profession with an altruistic nature, the data pointed to the importance of teachers choosing effective strategies to develop self-cultivation, growth and human flourishing (Higgins, 2010), all aspects of humanistic theory (Smith et al., 2003).

Occupational stress was evident despite the use of mindfulness. When working as a stressed teacher, self-growth, self-actualisation and flourishing have the potential to be reversed. Schools cannot determine some of the factors that create healthy classrooms and organisations. The question of how environmental conditions impact negatively on the classroom was not necessarily for the teacher to solve. Many are attributed to organisational, departmental or cultural factors. Teachers, however, need to have personal, professional and classroom management systems to ensure effective teaching and their own occupational health. Teachers participating in the current study were motivated to practise mindfulness in a bid to address and manage their own stress. Further to discussions about personal occupational stress, the teacher voices in this research revealed that, although teachers used a strategy that assisted stress reduction, social and organisational structures were beyond their capacity for change while certain working conditions could do with change. The concerns raised link back to discussions on performativity. For example, in the current climate of performativity, mindfulness had a significant application for teachers within the study though it has not in any way reduced the focus and demands from outside sources. The study, therefore, points to the importance of investigating ways of supporting teachers better to mitigate against stress. Mindfulness as one strategy has potential for further growth and development within the educational context.

6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

One of the significant outcomes of the study is the development of the Mindfulness in Teaching model. The Roeser et al. model (2013) is excellent in its identification of the outcomes of mindfulness applicable to teachers' coping and resilience in the classroom. It identifies the development of mindfulness and self-compassion as a response to stress, burnout, anxiety and depression. In so doing it also identifies

significant classroom and emotionally supportive climates of learning alongside teacher-pupil relationships and student outcomes. Further to the Roeser et al. model (2013), this research demonstrates the integration of the internal experience of teachers through self-regulation and significant attributes that enhance both their personal and professional capacity.

The application of mindfulness in teaching offers potential for teachers to retain personal and professional self-care and wellbeing and to monitor their work more consciously and effectively. It indicates that teachers have a capacity for cognitive and emotional self-awareness and subsequent cognitive and emotional self-regulation, enabling mindful responses in stressful situations. In its contribution to professional practice an example is that of time and workload management. Mindfulness practice offered teachers interviewed a perspective on time resulting in less time pressure. The capacity to be mindful and slow down created psychological space wherein the teacher could accomplish more, thereby reducing time wasting and time related stresses. The teacher had the ability to focus on a task rather than thinking about doing it.

The developed model was evident within the study. The development of self-regulation and enhanced self-compassion and empathy towards others culminating in personal growth and meaning, were articulated by a significant number of participants. Professionally, there was evidence of teachers gaining qualities that enhanced their teaching and professional practice. These outcomes led teachers to introduce mindfulness to pupils to meet the children's needs, to enhance classroom climate and also to attend to teachers' stress reduction needs on occasion. What was significant here was teachers' assessment of the value of mindfulness for themselves and an interest in extending it to others. In one school this also extended to staff members, which led to cultural changes within the organisation.

As an evidence-based model the Mindfulness in Teaching model can be applied to the teacher in the classroom, the support teacher and the principal or vice-principal. It has the potential to be integrated into Continuing Professional Development at many levels with its relevance in stress, self-regulation, coping and resilience. Primary school teachers in Ireland are currently required to undertake CPD relative to literacy and/or numeracy (King, 2014). At the same time there is scope for CPD centred on teacher wellbeing and that encourages resilience, self-awareness and self-care. Such CPD has benefits, not only for the teacher, but also for the development of a mindful and resilient school culture.

The research data indicates that teachers are likely to be influenced by evidence of occupational self-care in teacher-training institutions. Teacher education generally does not incorporate the development of emotional self-regulation and self-compassion in response to stressful conditions (Roeser et al., 2012). A significant dimension of the research reported herein was the contribution of mindfulness as a means of self-care and occupational stress reduction which sometimes is not considered (The Teaching Council, 2012). Stress reduction and resilience occur within the mind of the teacher. Newly qualified teachers who begin their teaching career with effective coping strategies, and who are attuned to self-awareness and self-knowledge, could be well prepared for a profession which is identified as being particularly stressful (Kyriacou, 2000). Highly significant were findings relative to resilience and self-care. These included the capacity to prepare, teach and communicate mindfully, to listen deeply, to respond rather than to react and to relate with compassion and empathy. Teaching mindfulness during initial teacher education might provide students with self-care tools in the present moment, in stressful teaching practice placements and in their careers. The earlier these mindfulness skills are honed, the less damage might be done in terms of stress, burnout. Reducing stress early in careers of newly qualified teachers would be considerably more beneficial than later on. One could argue that the Department of Education and Skills and the teacher training institutes have a duty of care to student teachers, and it is easy to forget the challenges of teaching placements and the initial years.

The Mindfulness in Teaching model may be useful for teachers and schools in addressing the stress that is inherent in the job. It could be argued that teachers who experience stress can also experience impaired performance with the risk of stress-related sickness and absenteeism. The implementation of teacher-care must be strategic and at an organisational level to really infiltrate the teaching community. The model may be valuable as a means of encouraging teachers and schools to assess and create self-care and organisational care policies. It is important, however, to note that not all teachers may be interested in practising mindfulness as a means of stress reduction. Despite this, it could be implemented as one strategy among many to be integrated as a low-cost preventative measure within the profession.

It is noted that participants in the study were invited because of their mindfulness practice. They were enthusiastic about the particular practice, believed in it and deemed it a useful strategy towards both self-care and stress care. It therefore

appears to work for them. It might be interesting to conduct a similar study with participants who practise other techniques towards resilience and stress reduction.

Increasing interest in the creation of a resilient workforce has focused attention on the role of wellbeing practices such as mindfulness (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005; Welford and Langmead, 2015). The Mindfulness in Teaching model also has application beyond the teaching arena. It has potential in other professions and organisations where leadership and employees value the strategic role of intentional professional self-care and growth in order that employees reach their potential. However, meaningful research evidence from relevant studies will be useful in the implementation of mindfulness as a significant strategy.

6.7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The research conducted for this study achieved its aims in addressing all of the research questions. However, the study is not without limitations. Whilst the study cannot claim to be generalizable, due to its context, size and approach, it is possible to transfer the findings to another context (Lincoln and Guba, 2000).

The sample of teachers in the study was confined to those who teach children in the classroom or are in teacher support roles. Further studies of specific roles would be useful, for example teaching principals who, in Ireland, have a teaching class alongside carrying out administrative and leadership duties and who have been shown to have lower job satisfaction due to this division of responsibilities (Darmody and Smyth, 2010).

The results reported herein could be enhanced by further exploration with teachers who manage stress through the use of other practices, for example exercise, yoga, collegial support, or those who use no particular stress reduction practice. Furthermore, this study focuses on the individual teacher and did not set out to take account of the school context, policies and procedures. This gives scope to explore further the implications of the school's and self-care procedures on the teacher.

The introduction of mindfulness to pupils is gaining credibility globally (Albrecht et al, 2012). This offers opportunities for investigation of mindfulness practice with reference to the children and the teacher. In this regard and independently, third person observation of teachers in the classroom and their relationships with students and curricular activities would offer another approach to inform a further study, although this would require particular rigour with regard to ethical considerations.

6.8 CONCLUSION

In investigating what teachers consider is the contribution of mindfulness to stress reduction this qualitative research has enabled new themes and knowledge to emerge. In particular the thematic analysis in this concluding chapter focused on four themes: teacher skills and mindsets; teacher attributes; contribution to professional practice and classroom outcomes. Attention was drawn to the application of the findings in the latter part of the chapter.

The findings indicate that it may be possible for teachers to develop wellbeing and resilience by recognising and paying attention to their thoughts and thinking patterns, their emotions and emotional patterns, and their habitual experiences. Implicit here are concepts of intention, attention and attitude in the development of a facility to reperceive experiences (Shapiro et al., 2006). It is also evident that this capacity to reperceive, or disidentify, enables personal and professional awareness and self-regulation. Therefore, while it enhances an understanding of the impact of cognitive and affective experiences it also enables the management of thoughts, emotions, and behaviour in the development of necessary teaching qualities. Thus, the practice of mindfulness with its cognitive and affective application supports the capacity to evaluate internal and external experience from a broad perspective and offers numerous interpretations and responses to stressful experiences (Zelazo and Cunningham, 2007).

It is apparent that the response to occupational stress among teachers is a personal response. A paucity of literature and lack of confirmation in this study of an organisational response to stress is evident. Social and environmental factors are implicit in the solution and often not necessarily under the control of the teacher or the school. Whilst there is concern that performativity increases occupational stress, it is apparent that teachers' mindfulness practice promotes 'the ability to be more aware of automatic emotional reactivity, promoting the ability to have greater control over one's responses' (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009: 511). This research suggests that such a capacity promotes a sense of calm, openness, empathy and compassion which in turn implicates professional practice and classroom outcomes.

In a society of constant change and an educational system that demands increasing challenges in terms of time, curriculum and initiatives in primary education, there is a

necessity for vigilance and attention to personal and professional needs. This study argues that teachers follow a positive direction and that they inherently move towards growth, maturity, self-actualisation and socialisation (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1968). In essence the study identifies teachers' ability for self-regulation which has an implication for their self-care and growth. The study indicates that teachers' own development is a key issue in the development and maintenance of occupational health. It infers that the more fully teachers are aware of their intention, attentional focus and mindset the more capacity they have to move in a forward and positive direction towards occupational wellbeing and the improvement of their own academic and social-emotional growth and that of the pupils in their care.

The End.

7. Appendices

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introductory Question

You indicate on your consent form that you have been teaching for 'X' number of years. What do you consider to have been the high and lows points in your teaching career?

Research Question 1

The literature indicates that there is stress in primary school teaching. A 2010 survey of primary school teachers in Ireland indicates that 40% of teachers and 70% of principals feel stressed daily (Darmody and Smyth, 2010).

What do you consider to be the main causes of stress in the teaching profession?

- Are there any issues related to the requirements of the role that you consider may contribute to stress in the teaching profession?
- Are there any issues related to classroom practice, parents, relationships?

Research Question 2

What does the term 'occupational stress' mean to you?

- Can you tell me what you understand by the term 'stress' itself?

Research Question 3

Do you experience occupational stress in your teaching or do you use specific strategies to prevent it?

Research Question 4

In relation to the contributors to stress – what do you do to manage potentially stressful situations?

- How do you deal with potentially stressful school situations?

- What strategies do you employ?
- What is the **school** policy on dealing with stress?
- What strategies are employed in the school to prevent stress?
- What self-care procedures are in place for teachers in the school?
- What is the school policy in response to challenging pupils?

Research Question 5

As you know, I am exploring the influence of mindfulness practice on occupational stress; I understand you practise Mindfulness. Can you tell me how long you have been practising and why you initially chose to practise mindfulness?

What does mindfulness mean to you?

- What mindfulness practice do you follow and how often?
- What do you consider to be the value of mindfulness practice?
- How does the practice of mindfulness help you in responding to stress in primary teaching?
- Does mindfulness impact on:
 - Workload management?
 - Relationships?
 - ~ With colleagues, management, pupils and parents
 - Classroom management?

Any Recommendations...

Is there anything else you wish to add or that you had expected me to ask, but has not been covered?

APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

EA2

Ethical Approval Form:
Human Research Projects

Please word-process this form.
Handwritten applications will not be
accepted.



This form must be completed for each piece of research activity conducted by academics, graduate students and undergraduates. The completed form must be approved by the CERD Research Ethics Committee.

Please complete all sections. If a section is not applicable, write N/A.

1 Name of researcher	Ann Caulfield	
	Department	School
	CERD	Health, Life and Social Sciences
2 Position in the University	Ed D candidate	
3 Role in relation to this research	Primary investigator	
4 Brief statement of your main research question	<p>Research questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Do primary school teachers experience occupational stress?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If so, how is that stress experienced?○ If not, is this because they have a way of dealing with stress?○ What are the precursors, or potential causes to stress in primary school teaching?○ What contribution does mindfulness practice have in stress reduction in primary school teaching?	
5 Brief description of the project	<p>Stress in primary school teaching in Ireland is becoming an occupational hazard with a growing concern about teacher health and wellbeing. The purpose of this project is to explore the experience of occupational stress among primary school teachers and the contribution of mindfulness as a means of stress reduction. The primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers who regularly practise mindfulness throughout Ireland. A pilot interview was carried out in June 2012 as part of the project preparation.</p>	
	Approximate start date: January 2013	Anticipated end date: September 2014
6 Name and contact details of the Principal Investigator (if not	Email address: motivationalwaves@gmail.com	Telephone: 00353 87 610 8144

you) or supervisor (if a student)	SUPERVISOR Karin Crawford kcrawford@lincoln.ac.uk
7 Names of other researchers or student investigators involved	NONE
8 Location(s) at which this project is to be carried out	It is planned to interview 20 primary school teachers in Ireland. While the cohort of interviewees is not yet identified it is anticipated that the majority will be from Dublin city locations. Others will be from outlying areas. The interview will take place in a location that offers privacy and is void of interruption. It is anticipated that interviews will take place in school settings where the teachers work.
9 Statement of the ethical issues involved and how they are to be addressed, including discussion of the potential risks of harm to both project participants and researchers This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an assessment of the vulnerability of the participants and researchers• the manner and extent to which the research might not honour principles of respect, beneficence and justice• concerns relating to the relationships of power between the researcher(s) and those participating in or affected by the research	The research will ensure the highest possible standards of conduct in carrying out research. The research work to be carried out will be in accordance with the University of Lincoln's Ethical Principles for conducting work with Humans, and also according to the Revised Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Ethical Research as set out by the British Educational Research Association. This research is 'ethically viable given the societal norms' (Anderson, 1998: 23) and ethically sound with no significant risks to participants involved. A careful and thoughtful application of the principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice will be integrated into all aspects of the project, in order to ensure that each teacher who agrees to be an interviewee will be treated in a respectful and ethical manner. The principle of respect for persons will acknowledge the dignity and autonomy of each interviewee and a status of equality. It will do so by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasising to interviewees their freedom to choose for themselves and to determine their own course within the bounds of the research.• Informing interviewees of their freedom to participate or to decline to participate.• Indicating that interviewees will be able to withdraw their input at any time up until the final draft of the thesis is submitted without any detriment to themselves.• Ensuring that each research interviewee has sufficient information in order to make a rational choice.• Seeking consent and informed consent for each interview.• Providing a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity.• Indicating that confidentiality excludes a situation where the interviewee may be at risk of harm to her/himself or a third party and that in such a situation appropriate action will be taken.• Informing each interviewee about how the information will be used. Each will receive a guarantee regarding anonymity. The document and transcript of each interview will be held anonymously. Each interviewee will not be readily identifiable within the thesis. A code pseudonym will be utilised in relation to each interviewee's name. The principle of beneficence will aim to protect them by seeking to maximise anticipated benefits and minimise possible harms. It will do so by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting the welfare of the interviewees.

- Assisting them to also further their legitimate interest in the subject being researched.

The principle of justice will aim to integrate fair and just practices. This will do so by:

- Choosing interviewees carefully and equitably.
- Treating all interviewees fairly.
- Prior to the research the researcher will enter into an agreement with each interviewee to clarify the nature and responsibilities of the research.

With regard to the specific source of data collection and relevant measures to ensure ethical management the following is presented:

- Each interviewee will receive written information about the project (attached herewith) and will be asked to sign a consent form (attached herewith). The consent form will confirm his/her awareness of the project's aims, how the data will be used, and the right to withdraw at any time. It will make clear that the interview will be recorded digitally. Consent for recording the interview will be obtained and explanations regarding why the interview is being recorded, what the recording will be used for, where it will be stored and if it will be disposed of after transcription will be provided. It is appreciated that an interviewee may refuse to be recorded. In such a situation permission will be sought to take some handwritten notes. Digital data in the form of recordings will be stored securely and password protected. They will be destroyed prior to the completion of the project. Transcriptions will be stored on a laptop which is password protected. Print outs will be stored in a locked location.
- When the interview is officially concluded, if additional information is provided which would require written consent for use, the matter will be discussed with the interviewee.
- Each interviewee will be made aware that s/he can ask for the voice recorder to be turned off at any stage during the interview or when answering a particular question and that the data will not be used if requested.
- The research work will be overseen by a supervisor who will be consulted about all aspects of the project in relation to ethical issues.
- The information sheet and consent form will be forwarded to the interviewee prior to the interview.

Although not a primary school teacher, the primary investigator is a facilitator of some continuing professional development programmes for primary school teachers. She delivers courses on mindfulness to primary teachers e.g. Mindfulness for Teachers and Developing Mindfulness and Happiness in Primary School Children.

Research participants will be sought through an invitation to schools where mindfulness is practised and integrated into the curriculum. This shall be done through communication with the school principal. Invitation will also be extended to teachers who have participated in mindfulness programmes and through the websites related to the continuing professional development. Participation in the research requires that teachers have practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months.

10 Does this research involve children and/or young people?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain (a) how you have obtained or will obtain the appropriate permissions to work with these people, and (b) your principles for their ethical engagement.

Ethical approval from other bodies

11 Does this research require approval from an external body?

Yes

No

If yes, please state which body:

12 Has ethical approval already been obtained from that body? Please note that such approvals must be obtained before the project begins.

Yes (Please append documentary evidence to this form.)

No (If no, please explain why below.)

APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION PERMISSION SHEET

RESEARCH TITLE:

The practice of mindfulness and its implication on stress reduction among primary school teachers.

The purpose of the research

The purpose of this research project is to develop an understanding of the impact of stress on primary school teachers in Ireland and to explore the practice of mindfulness and its implication on stress reduction. The research is for a doctoral study and no payment can be made for participation. Research will be undertaken with a small sample of 20 teachers. The intention is to capture your experiences, perceptions and perspectives as a primary school teacher.

The proposed area of research is valuable for primary teaching in Ireland. This project may have an important impact on shaping future policy in teacher self-care and professional development within the Republic of Ireland. To this end, it is planned, subject to appropriate consents, to present the work at academic conferences, in academic journals and in other related documents such as submissions to relevant policy bodies. The research participants will be anonymous and will not be identifiable in any of the subsequent research outputs, documentation or presentations.

Informed consent

You may ask at any time for clarification of anything that you do not understand or for which you would like further clarification. You are not obliged to answer any of the questions that are put to you and are free to leave the interview at any time. The researcher will ask permission to record the interview. You will be able to withdraw input at any time up until the final draft of the thesis to be submitted.

Confidentiality

Raw data and interview recordings and transcripts will be used only for research purposes. They will be visible to the interviewer and to the supervisor for verification and to support the research analysis. Other third parties will not be able to access the recordings during or after the course of the research project. Transcripts will be kept in a safe place and digital aspects will be password protected. Information and quotes will be anonymised within the final research reporting and no one individual will be identifiable within the writing.

Feedback

Participants will be sent a summary report on the findings if they so wish.

Please feel free to contact me after the interview if there are any further thoughts or questions that you would like to discuss. Contact details: Ann Caulfield, motivationalwaves@gmail.com

Consent

I understand the nature and purpose of this research and I consent to being interviewed. I understand that I do not have to answer any of the questions and that I may leave at any time.

I do/do not consent to the interview being recorded digitally.

I do/do not wish to be sent a summary of the findings when the project is completed.

I understand the project

I have been given an information sheet

Name: _____

Gender: Male Female

Age: 20–29 30–39 40–49
 50–59 60–66

Length of experience in teaching:

0–5 years 5–10 years 10–19 years

20–29 years 30–39 years 40–49 years

School: _____

Signed Date
Interviewee

Signed Date
Ann Caulfield

APPENDIX 4: CODEBOOK – PHASE ONE – OPEN CODING

Phase 1 - Open Coding (142 Codes Generated)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
24-7 job	This node refers to teachers constantly thinking about the job and the children and doing mental planning and consideration	4	4
ADAPTING curriculum to children's needs	Curriculum doesn't fit for some children	1	1
Additional PROFESSIONAL experience	Teachers who have worked in alternate professions	3	7
Aistear mindful	Overview of Aistear	2	2
Awareness of feelings through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness teachers' awareness of their feelings	4	4
Better concentration through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness for the development and maintenance of concentration	1	1
Board of Management	This node refers to the relationship with the Board of Management as a stressor	3	3
Burnout	This node refers to the experience of long term stress and burnout	3	3
Care and Concern for children	This node refers to teachers' attitude towards children and children's needs in day-to-day teaching	5	8
Change of thinking process through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness-changed thinking processes	6	9
Children experiencing stress	This node refers to teachers' perceptions of children's experience of stress through home and social situations	5	6
Class choice	This node refers to the implication of class choice as a strategy of stress reduction	2	2
Collaborative support	This node refers to collective support strategies, i.e. a) Personal collegial support and b) collegial support at classroom level	10	23
COLLEAGUE relationships	This node refers to schools where collegial relationships are generally supportive and harmonious	2	3
Confidence through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness for confidence building among primary school teachers	1	1
Cost of mindfulness courses and training	This node refers to some teachers' perception of mindfulness training being expensive and thereby prohibitive	3	3
COUNTRY schools	Less stress re country schools	1	2
Create awareness	Create awareness with teachers and parents	2	2
Croke Park Hours	This node refers to the implication of Croke Park hours, extra mandatory working and training hours set out by the Department of Education and Skills, for teachers	3	4
Curriculum non-stress	This node refers to teachers for whom the profession and the curriculum are not stressors	4	4
Curriculum overload	This node refers to the perception of curriculum overload experienced by teachers and the difficulty in delivering all that they consider is expected of them	9	10

Phase 1 - Open Coding (142 Codes Generated)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
Darmody and Smyth stress percentages	This node refers to teachers' opinions of stress in teaching relative to Darmody and Smith report finding that 45% teachers and 70% principals experience stress in primary school teaching	16	19
Demanding parents	This node refers to significant demands made on teachers by parents	3	4
Department of Education and Skills	This node refers to specific cutbacks that have been established e.g. Special Needs Assistants, funding etc.	9	10
Development of empathy through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development of empathy and understanding towards others	5	9
Different perspective through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness and the development of empathy and flexibility	2	3
Empathy, compassion and awareness of children's needs through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development of empathy and compassion towards children	9	14
Exercise	This node refers to the integration of regular exercise as a strategy of stress management and stress reduction	7	8
Glass of wine	This node refers to the use of a glass of wine in the evenings as a means of stress reduction	2	2
Holidays	This node refers to the value of regular school holidays for teachers	3	3
Impact of mindfulness on children	This node refers to the benefits of mindfulness practice for the children when it is practised in the classroom	11	22
INDICATORS OF INTERNAL STRESS	This node refers to teachers' reference to their personal experience of internal stress, i.e. physical, mental and emotional	13	19
INDICATORS OF NON-STRESS	Evidence of teachers' experience of little or no stress in teaching and reporting good relationships, workload management and harmonious classroom and pupils	3	8
Inspectorate	This node refers to the relationship with the inspectorate and its historical implication	4	6
Institutional supports	This node refers to the availability of resource staff to develop learning and reduce stress through appropriate responses to children's learning needs, e.g. Home School Community Liaison, Teacher for children for whom English is a second language	2	3
Internal stress impact on children	How teachers' stress impacts on the children	2	2
INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY RELATIVE TO COLLEAGUES	Indices of stress inducing interactions with colleagues, i.e. a) person to person relationships and b) organisational interactions	11	25
INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY RELATIVE TO PARENTS	Stress inducing interactions with parents relative to communication, relationship, expectations and lack of expectation	11	19
INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY RELATIVE TO PUPILS	Relationship	5	5
Interruptions while teaching	Interruptions like messages etc. while teaching	4	5
Isolation	This node refers to the impact experienced by teachers of long days alone in a classroom and minimal contact with colleagues	4	4
Isolation in classroom	This node refers to the impact experienced by teachers of long days alone in a classroom and minimal contact with colleagues	5	6

Phase 1 - Open Coding (142 Codes Generated)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
Isolation in Home School Community Liaison	This node refers to the impact experienced by teachers of being out and about in the role of Home School Community Liaison with minimal contact with colleagues	1	1
JUGGLING	Teachers' perception of a constant struggle to respond to varying needs within the classroom with both children's needs and curriculum needs. Some children exhibiting weakness in learning ability and others who are very bright	5	5
Juggling children's needs	This node refers to teachers' capacity to respond to varying needs of children all at the one time, e.g. special needs children, bright and weak children	8	9
Juggling the curriculum	This node refers to the need for teacher flexibility relative to the teaching plan for a particular day	2	3
Lack of parental support	This node refers to challenging teacher relationships with parents	4	5
LEADERSHIP	IN SCHOOLS	1	1
Learning support teacher	This node refers to teachers in roles of Learning Support	2	2
Long day no break	This node refers to teachers' long day without a break due to the need for child supervision	4	4
MENTAL HEALTH	IMPORTANCE OF FOCUS AND ENCOURAGING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH	2	2
Mindfulness - relationship with children	This node refers to how the practice of mindfulness impacts on the relationship between teachers and children	5	5
MINDFULNESS - VALUE IN SCHOOL	This node refers to the reported value of the practice of mindfulness in schools	13	74
Mindfulness and classroom management	The effect of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' teaching style, classroom management and response to pupils' challenging behaviour	15	48
Mindfulness and clear mind leave work at work	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on work - home balance	1	1
Mindfulness and development of personal qualities	This node identifies personal qualities which teachers identify as being developed through the practice of mindfulness	4	6
Mindfulness and empathy towards parents	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the establishment and maintenance of parent relationships	3	4
Mindfulness and further education and CDP	This node refers to teachers' interest and participation in CPD and post grad education	4	8
Mindfulness and healing from stress related illness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on recovery from stress related illness	2	2
Mindfulness and interpersonal capacity relative to colleagues	Teachers' perception of the impact of the practice of mindfulness on collegial relationships	8	15
Mindfulness and interpersonal capacity relative to pupils	Teachers' perception of the impact of mindfulness practice on pupil relationships, learning and development	7	11
Mindfulness and interpersonal capacity relative to pupils' parent(s)	The impact of mindfulness on relationships with parents of children in classroom or school	8	10
Mindfulness and limits and boundaries	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development of appropriate limits and boundaries	4	4
Mindfulness and meaning	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on an understanding of the significance or meaning of life	5	5

Phase 1 - Open Coding (142 Codes Generated)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
Mindfulness and non-reactive responses	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the ability to become responsive rather than reactive	4	5
Mindfulness and its value with colleagues	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the establishment and maintenance of collegial relationships	3	4
Mindfulness and relationships with parents	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on relationships with parents	5	5
Mindfulness and relationships with teachers	Impact of mindfulness on relationships with other teachers	6	7
Mindfulness and self-care in the classroom	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness and developing the practice for both children and teachers in the classroom from the perspective of teacher self-care	7	8
Mindfulness and slowing down	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' pace	4	7
Mindfulness and assertiveness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' assertiveness	2	3
Mindfulness and workload management	Teachers' perception of the effect of mindfulness, i.e. a) on workload and b) on time management	11	16
Mindfulness <i>as gaeilge</i>	This node refers to the delivery of mindfulness techniques to children in the Irish language within Gaelscoileanna	2	2
Mindfulness driving force	This node refers to the driving force in initiating the practice of mindfulness among teachers	16	24
MINDFULNESS EXTERNAL	This node refers to the response of external actors to mindfulness, e.g. Department of Education and Skills	4	5
Mindfulness for staff Croke Park hours	This node refers to a call for mindfulness and self-care sessions to be delivered towards Croke Park hours	1	2
Mindfulness integrated into a school	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on developing mindfulness practice with pupils and integrating it across the school	3	3
MINDFULNESS NEGATIVE FACTORS	This node refers to reported negative or perceived unacceptable aspects of mindfulness	5	5
Mindfulness outcomes - internal level	Indices of the internal impact of the practice of mindfulness at cognitive and affective levels	12	71
MINDFULNESS OUTCOMES internal implication - professional level	Teachers' report of the effect of the practice of mindfulness on personal stress reduction in teaching	11	13
Mindfulness practice with children	Teacher interest in incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum, giving children techniques to use and practise themselves and creating a harmonious classroom atmosphere and classroom management	17	31
MINDFULNESS VALUE TEACHER	This node refers to teachers' perception of the value of mindfulness to their teaching practice and profession	13	28
Mindfulness - seeing and thinking more clearly	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on levels of observation and clarity of thought	4	6
Mindfulness and present moment awareness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on present moment awareness	7	9

Phase 1 - Open Coding (142 Codes Generated)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
Mindfulness and relationship with principal	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on relationships with persons in leadership roles	2	2
Mindfulness for teachers in school	This node refers to the establishment of mindfulness sessions especially for teachers within the school	1	1
MIXED classes	Teachers teaching different classes and different abilities concurrently	1	1
More stressed than used to be	This node refers to teachers' perception of greater stress being experienced than in earlier teaching years	1	3
Need for SUPERVISION	FOR TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS	0	0
New role -	This node refers to stresses attributed to taking up a new role in a school	2	2
No time to eat	Teaching goes on all day within certain situations with little or no time to have lunch or a break	4	5
Not to tell people practice mindfulness	This node refers to a reference in a prominent mindfulness publication encouraging practitioners not to talk of their practice	3	3
NQT INTERNAL STRESS	Teachers indicated particular stresses experienced when they were newly qualified at both cognitive and affective levels	7	12
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS - INDICATOR OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTION	Reported perception and understanding of the term 'occupational stress'	18	19
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS External Stressors within the school	This node refers to stressors external to the self and within the school context	14	93
Organisational stress reduction strategies	This node refers to a school response to self-care and the development of a culture of care among teachers and staff members	0	0
OUTCOMES OF LONGTERM OCCUPATIONAL STRESS	This node refers to the effects of longer term relationship with stress and its impact on wellbeing and development of burnout	0	0
Paperwork and accountability	This node refers to the quantity of paperwork required of and the time implication experienced by teachers in their day-to-day teaching	9	15
PARENT relationships	This node refers to supportive teacher - parent relationships	2	2
Parental pressure on children	This node refers to significant pressure placed on children for academic results	1	1
Personal awareness through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on self-awareness among teachers	9	15
PLANNING, PREPARATION AND DELIVERY	Class preparation and lesson prep	9	12
Positive attitude	This node refers to the use of a positive attitude as a means of stress management and stress reduction	3	4
Principal directs school atmosphere	This node refers to reported experiences of stress relative to principals' leadership style within the school	3	3
Principal stressed	This node refers to the impact on teachers of principals being stressed	4	5
PRIVATE STRATEGIES	This node refers to reported preventative personal strategies employed by teachers, e.g., physical, mental, emotional or spiritual initiative	14	31
PUBLIC STRESS REDUCTION STRATEGIES IN SCHOOL	This node refers to organisational responses to challenging behaviour, i.e. a) classroom strategies and b) whole school strategies	13	57

Phase 1 - Open Coding (142 Codes Generated)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
PUBLIC STRESS REDUCTION STRATEGIES OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL	This node refers to various external supports available to teachers, e.g. a) management structures, b) counselling and c) Continuing Professional Development	7	10
PUPIL BEHAVIOUR	Indices of stress inducing pupil behaviour in the classroom, i.e. challenging behaviour and interpersonal capacity relative to pupils	9	11
Relationship with principal	This node refers to teacher - principal relationships as stressors	2	2
Resistance to mindfulness	This node refers to colleague resistance towards teachers who integrate mindfulness into the classroom	7	10
Resources	This node refers to the implication of resources or lack thereof on teaching capacity and stress	4	4
Respect for colleagues through mindfulness	This node refers to the development of respect and value placed on colleagues	1	2
Roles	This node refers to roles taken up by teachers in their day-to-day teaching, e.g. classroom, learning support and roles of responsibility	10	15
School culture strategy to reduce stress	This node refers to school norms and culture that assist stress reduction in the absence of an official school self-care policy	9	12
School policy for teacher self-care	This node refers to the presence or absence of an official school self-care policy for teachers	15	27
School type	This node refers to the type of school in which teachers teach	8	10
Self-care	This node refers to organisational responses and initiatives to self-care and self-care policy	6	6
Slow to talk about mindfulness	This node refers to teachers' discomfort in talking about their interest in and practice of mindfulness	3	3
Social issues	This node refers to the implication of family and social issues on stress experienced by children, parents and teachers	5	9
Special needs	This node refers to the response to behavioural issues in a specific special needs school	1	1
Staff response to mindfulness	This node refers to staff members' responses to the practice of mindfulness by their colleagues	3	3
Still learning mindfulness	This node refers to teachers' continued development of mindfulness techniques	5	5
Strategic organisational responses to challenging behaviour	This node refers to the incidences of organisational responses to challenging behaviour, i.e. a) classroom strategies and b) whole school strategies that aim to create respect, discipline and harmonious classrooms and school environments	13	22
Stress changed over the years	This node refers to teachers' perception of stressors and level of stress changing in recent years	2	2
Stress is part of the job	This node refers to teachers' perception that stress is an ongoing part of the job and that it is integral to being a teacher	5	6
STRESS Perception	This node relates to teachers' perception of what denotes stress	1	1
Stress relationships colleagues	This node refers to challenging staff relationships as stressors	6	8
Stress Responses	This node refers to the physical, emotional and mental impact of stressors	10	17
Take work home	This node refers to the regular task of teachers taking work home with them in the evenings	3	3

Phase 1 - Open Coding (142 Codes Generated)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
Teacher driving force	This node refers to the 'highs' experienced by teachers during their years of teaching	18	19
Teacher morale	This node refers to the presence of low morale among teachers as a stressor	1	1
Teacher traits	This node refers to qualities or general descriptions of teachers by teachers interviewed	10	14
TEACHING ENVIRONMENT	Teachers reported the impact of the teaching environment on them as individuals and as professionals	0	0
Wellbeing and mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' wellbeing	3	3
Time constraints	This node refers to stressors relative to teachers being available to children throughout the day leaving little time to eat or confer with colleagues	5	6
Time off school due to stress	This node refers to teachers taking extended time off from work due to issues of stress	3	6
Unsuitable role	This node refers to teachers carrying out roles that are unsuitable to their skill set	2	2
Usual practice of mindfulness	Indices of the regular mindfulness practice engaged in by primary school teachers, i.e. type and length of regular practice	13	25
Validate as teacher	This node refers to the outer perceptions that teaching is a very easy job with lots of holidays and days off	5	5
Variety of stressors	All sorts!	8	10
Work - life balance through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on healthy work - life balance	6	8

APPENDIX 5: CODEBOOK – PHASE TWO – DATA DISPLAY

Phase 2 - Data display (11 Categories of Codes with 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th order codes)	Code Definition for Coding Consistency (rules for inclusion)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
CHILDREN	This node refers to how teachers describe children and children's traits	7	9
Care and Concern for children	This node refers to teachers' attitude towards children and children's needs in day-to-day teaching	5	8
Children experiencing stress	This node refers to teachers perceptions of children's experience of stress through home and social situations	5	6
GOLD DUST		3	3
Use in SPORTS COACHING		1	1
MINDFULNESS - THOUGHTS FEELINGS	This node refers to teachers' responses regarding the impact of mindfulness on stress reduction in primary school teaching through awareness of thoughts and feelings	14	119
MINDFULNESS - VALUE IN SCHOOL	This node refers to the reported value of the practice of mindfulness in schools	13	74
Mindfulness and classroom management	The effect of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' teaching style, classroom management and response to pupils' challenging behaviour	14	47
Impact of mindfulness on children	This node refers to the benefits of mindfulness practice for the children when it is practised in the classroom	11	22
Mindfulness - relationship with children	This node refers to how the practice of mindfulness impacts on the relationship between teachers and children	5	5
Mindfulness and self-care in the classroom	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness and developing the practice for both children and teachers in the classroom from the perspective of teacher self-care	7	8
Mindfulness <i>as gaeilge</i>	This node refers to the delivery of mindfulness techniques to children in the Irish language within Gaelscoileanna	2	2
Mindfulness integrated into a school	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on developing mindfulness practice with pupils and integrating it across the school	3	3
Mindfulness practice with children	Teacher interest in incorporating mindfulness into the curriculum, giving children techniques to use and practice themselves and creating a harmonious classroom atmosphere and classroom management	16	30
Mindfulness and interpersonal capacity relative to colleagues	Teachers' perception of the impact of the practice of mindfulness on collegial relationships	9	16
MINDFULNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF		7	8
Mindfulness and its value with colleagues	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the establishment and maintenance of collegial relationships	3	4
Mindfulness and relationships with teachers	Impact of mindfulness on relationships with other teachers	7	8
Mindfulness and relationship with principal	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on relationships with persons in leadership roles	2	2
Mindfulness for staff Croke Park hours	This node refers to a call for mindfulness and self-care sessions to be delivered towards Croke Park hours	1	2
Mindfulness for teachers in school	This node refers to the establishment of mindfulness sessions especially for teachers within the school	1	1
Resistance to mindfulness	This node refers to colleague resistance towards teachers who integrate mindfulness into the classroom	7	10

Respect for colleagues through mindfulness	This node refers to the development of respect and value placed on colleagues	1	2
Staff response to mindfulness	This node refers to staff members' responses to the practice of mindfulness by their colleagues	3	3
Mindfulness and interpersonal capacity relative to pupils	Teachers' perception of the impact of mindfulness practice on pupil relationships, learning and development	8	12
Mindfulness and interpersonal capacity relative to pupils' parent(s)	The impact of mindfulness on relationships with parents of children in classroom or school	9	11
Mindfulness and empathy towards parents	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the establishment and maintenance of relationships with parents	3	4
Mindfulness and relationships with parents	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on relationships with parents	6	6
Mindfulness and workload management	Teachers' perception of the effect of mindfulness, i.e. a) on workload and b) on time management	12	17
Mindfulness driving force	This node refers to the driving force in initiating the practice of mindfulness among teachers	18	27
MINDFULNESS EXTERNAL	This node refers to the response of external factors to mindfulness, e.g. Department of Education and Skills	4	5
MINDFULNESS NEGATIVE FACTORS	This node refers to reported negative or perceived unacceptable aspects of mindfulness	5	5
Cost of mindfulness courses and training	This node refers to some teachers' perception of mindfulness training being expensive and thereby prohibitive	3	3
Not to tell people practice mindfulness	This node refers to a reference in a prominent mindfulness publication encouraging practitioners not to talk of their practice	3	3
Slow to talk about mindfulness	This node refers to teachers' discomfort in talking about their interest in and practice of mindfulness	3	3
Mindfulness outcomes - internal level	Indices of the internal impact of the practice of mindfulness at cognitive and affective levels	12	71
Awareness of feelings through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness teachers' awareness of their feelings	8	8
Better concentration through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development and maintenance of concentration	4	8
Confidence through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness confidence building among primary school teachers	7	9
Different perspective through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development of empathy and flexibility	7	9
Empathy, compassion and awareness of children's needs through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development of empathy and compassion towards children	10	14
Mindfulness and further education and CDP	This node refers to teachers' interest and participation in CPD and post grad education	4	8
MINDFULNESS VALUE TEACHER	This node refers to teachers' perception of the value of mindfulness to their teaching practice and profession	13	28
Change of thinking process through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness-changed thinking processes	6	9
Development of empathy through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development of empathy and understanding towards others	5	9
Mindfulness and assertiveness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' assertiveness	4	8
Mindfulness and clear mind leave work at work	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on work - home balance	2	2
Mindfulness and development of personal qualities	This node identifies personal qualities which teachers identify as being developed through the practice of mindfulness	4	6
Mindfulness and healing from stress related illness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on recovery from stress related illness	2	2
Mindfulness and limits and boundaries	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the development of appropriate limits and boundaries	4	4

Mindfulness and meaning	The implication of the practice of mindfulness on an understanding of the significance or meaning of life	5	5
Mindfulness and non-reactive responses	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on the ability to become responsive rather than reactive	12	14
Mindfulness and slowing down	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' pace	4	7
Mindfulness - seeing and thinking more clearly	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on levels of observation and clarity of thought	4	6
Mindfulness and present moment awareness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on present moment awareness	7	9
Personal awareness through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on self-awareness among teachers	9	15
Still learning mindfulness	This node refers to teachers' continued development of mindfulness techniques	5	5
Wellbeing through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on teachers' wellbeing	3	3
Work - life balance through mindfulness	This node refers to the implication of the practice of mindfulness on healthy work - life balance	6	8
MINDFULNESS OUTCOMES internal implication - professional level	Teachers' report of the effect of the practice of mindfulness on personal stress reduction in teaching	11	13
Usual practice of mindfulness	Indices of the regular mindfulness practice engaged in by primary school teachers, i.e. type and length of regular practice	15	28
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS External Stressors outside the school	This node refers to stressors external to the school, e.g. cutbacks from the Department of Education and Skills	13	43
Croke Park Hours	This node refers to the implication of Croke Park hours, extra mandatory working and training hours set out by the Department of Education and Skills, for teachers	3	4
Curriculum overload	This node refers to the perception of curriculum overload experienced by teachers and the difficulty in delivering all that they consider is expected of them	9	10
Department of Education and Skills	This node refers to specific cutbacks that have been established, e.g. Special Needs Assistants, funding etc.	9	10
Inspector visits stressful	This node refers to the relationship with the inspectorate and its historical implication	4	6
Paperwork and accountability	This node refers to the quantity of paperwork required of and the time implication experienced by teachers in day-to-day teaching	14	16
Resources	This node refers to the implication of resources or lack thereof on teaching capacity and stress	4	4
Social issues	This node refers to the implication of family and social issues on stress experienced by children, parents and teachers	5	9
Validate as teacher	This node refers to the outer perceptions that teaching is a very easy job with lots of holidays and days off	5	5
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS External Stressors within the school	This node refers to stressors external to the self and within the school context	16	97
INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY RELATIVE TO COLLEAGUES	Indices of stress inducing interactions with colleagues, i.e. a) person to person relationships and b) organisational interactions	12	26
Board of Management	This node refers to the relationship with the Board of Management as a stressor	3	3
Stress relationships colleagues	This node refers to challenging staff relationships as stressors	7	9
Teacher morale	This node refers to the presence of low morale among teachers as a stressor	1	1
INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY RELATIVE TO PARENTS	Stress inducing interactions with parents relative to communication, relationship, expectations and lack of expectation	12	20
Demanding parents	This node refers to significant demands made on teachers by parents	3	4
Lack of parental support	This node refers to challenging teacher relationships with parents	4	5
Parental pressure on children	This node refers to significant pressure placed on children for academic results	1	1

INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY RELATIVE TO PUPILS	Relationships	5	5
JUGGLING	Teachers' perception of a constant struggle to respond to varying needs within the classroom with both children's needs and curriculum needs. Some children exhibiting weakness in learning ability and others of whom are very bright	5	6
Juggling children's needs	This node refers to teachers' capacity to respond to varying needs of children all at the one time, e.g. special needs children, bright and weak children	8	9
Juggling the curriculum	This node refers to the need for teacher flexibility relative to the teaching plan for a particular day	3	4
Leadership	This node refers to difficulties experienced by teachers in relation to management and leadership within the school	4	6
Principal directs school atmosphere	This node refers to reported experiences of stress relative to principals' leadership style within the school	3	3
Principal stressed	This node refers to the impact on teachers of principals being stressed	4	5
Relationship with principal	This node refers to teacher - principal relationships as stressors	2	2
Roles	This node refers to roles of responsibility taken on by teachers	5	7
Learning support teacher	This node refers to teachers in roles of Learning Support	3	4
Unsuitable role	This node refers to teachers carrying out roles that are unsuitable to their skill set	2	2
PLANNING, PREPARATION AND DELIVERY	Class preparation and lesson prep	10	14
Interruptions while teaching	Interruptions like messages, etc. while teaching	4	5
Variety of stressors	All sorts!	8	10
PUPIL BEHAVIOUR	Indices of stress inducing pupil behaviour in the classroom, i.e. challenging behaviour and interpersonal capacity relative to pupils	10	12
SPECIAL NEEDS	The implication of the integration of special needs children into the classroom	2	2
SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS = SNA		2	2
Special needs children integrated		4	4
Special Needs integrated into school		5	6
Special needs school		3	6
Need for SUPERVISION	FOR TEACHERS IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS	0	0
TIME CONSTRAINTS	Overview of the implication of workload and daily timetable on teacher capacity to deliver the curriculum and to interact with colleagues	5	5
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS Internal experience of stress	This node refers to teachers' own perception and experience of stress at a physical, mental and emotional level	19	45
Darmody and Smyth stress percentages	This node refers to teachers' opinion of stress in teaching relative to Darmody and Smith report that 45% teachers and 70% principals experience stress in primary school teaching	17	20
INDICATORS OF INTERNAL STRESS	This node refers to teachers' reference to their personal experience of internal stress, i.e. physical, mental and emotional	15	21
Internal stress impact on children	How teachers' stress impacts on the children	3	3
Isolation	This node refers to the impact experienced by teachers of long days alone in a classroom and minimal contact with colleagues	4	4
Isolation in classroom	This node refers to the impact experienced by teachers of long days alone in a classroom and minimal contact with colleagues	5	6
Isolation in Home School Community Liaison	This node refers to the impact experienced by teachers of being out and about in the role of Home School Community Liaison with minimal contact with colleagues	1	1
Stress is part of the job...	This node refers to teachers' perception that stress is an ongoing part of the job and that it is integral to being a teacher	4	5
Stress Responses	This node refers to the physical, emotional and	10	17

	mental impact of stressors		
Stressed and not realise		1	1
INDICATORS OF NON-STRESS	Evidence of teachers' experience of little or no stress in teaching and reporting good relationships, workload management and harmonious classroom and pupils	4	10
COLLEAGUE relationships	This node refers to schools where collegial relationships are generally supportive and harmonious	2	3
COUNTRY schools	Less stress re country schools	1	2
PARENT relationships	This node refers to supportive teacher - parent relationships	2	2
INDICATORS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE	Indices of personal and professional boundaries and interaction of the personal and professional interface	0	0
BIGGER classes	in recent years	3	3
Need for SELF-CARE		1	2
Used to be stressed	Now has changed	3	4
Validate summers off	Teacher validation	2	2
Work and life stresses	Work and life stresses affect each other	6	9
NQT INTERNAL STRESS	Teachers indicated particular stresses experienced when they were newly qualified at both cognitive and affective levels	6	11
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS - INDICATOR OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTION	Reported perception and understanding of the term 'occupational stress'	20	21
OUTCOMES OF LONGTERM OCCUPATIONAL STRESS	This node refers to the effects of longer term relationship with stress and its impact on wellbeing and development of burnout	0	0
Burnout	This node refers to the experience of long term stress and burnout	3	3
Time off school due to stress	This node refers to teachers taking extended time off from work due to issues of stress	3	6
TEACHING ENVIRONMENT	Teachers reported the impact of the teaching environment on them as individuals and as professionals	0	0
24-7 job	This node refers to teachers constantly thinking about the job and the children and doing mental planning and consideration	4	4
Long day no break	This node refers to teachers' long day without a break due to the need for child supervision	4	4
MIXED classes	Teachers teaching different classes and different abilities concurrently	1	1
More stressed than used to be	This node refers to teachers' perception of greater stress being experienced than in earlier teaching years	1	3
New role	This node refers to stresses attributed to taking up a new role in a school	2	2
No time to eat	Teaching goes on all day within certain situations with little or no time to have lunch or a break	4	5
Stress changed over the years	This node refers to teachers' perception of stressors and level of stress changing in recent years	2	2
Take work home	This node refers to the regular task of teachers taking work home with them in the evenings	3	3
Time constraints	This node refers to stressors relative to teachers being available to children throughout the day leaving little time to eat or confer with colleagues	5	6
PREVENTATIVE MEASURES	This node refers to various strategies used by teachers to maintain calm and reduce stress	15	84
PRIVATE STRATEGIES	This node refers to reported preventative personal strategies employed by teachers, e.g. physical, mental, emotional or spiritual initiatives	15	32
Class choice	This node refers to the implication of class choice as a strategy of stress reduction	2	2
Exercise	This node refers to the integration of regular exercise as a strategy of stress management and stress reduction	8	9
Glass of wine	This node refers to the use of a glass of wine in the evenings as a means of stress reduction	2	2

Holidays	This node refers to the value of regular school holidays for teachers	3	3
Positive attitude	This node refers to the use of a positive attitude as a means of stress management and stress reduction	3	4
PUBLIC STRESS REDUCTION STRATEGIES IN SCHOOL	This node refers to organisational responses to challenging behaviour, i.e. a) classroom strategies and b) whole school strategies	14	59
Collaborative support	This node refers to collective support strategies, i.e. a) Personal collegial support and b) collegial support at classroom level	11	24
Curriculum non-stress	This node refers to teachers for whom the profession and the curriculum are not stressors	4	4
Institutional supports	This node refers to the availability of resource staff to develop learning and reduce stress through appropriate responses to children's learning needs, e.g. Home School Community Liaison, Teacher for children for whom English is a second language	2	3
Leadership	This node refers to the impact of professional support and empowerment by principal on teachers	11	23
Organisational stress reduction strategies	This node refers to a school response to self-care and the development of a culture of care among teachers and staff members	2	2
School culture strategy to reduce stress	This node refers to school norms and culture that help with stress reduction in the absence of an official school self-care policy	11	15
School policy for teacher self-care	This node refers to the presence or absence of an official school self-care policy for teachers	16	28
Self-care	This node refers to organisational responses and initiatives to self-care and self-care policy	7	7
Strategic organisational responses to challenging behaviour	This node refers to the incidence of organisational responses to challenging behaviour, i.e. a) classroom strategies and b) whole school strategies that aim create respect, discipline and harmonious classrooms and school environments	13	22
Special needs	This node refers to the response to behavioural issues in a specific special needs school	1	1
PUBLIC STRESS REDUCTION STRATEGIES OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL	This node refers to various external supports available to teachers, e.g. a) management structures, b) counselling and c) Continuing Professional Development	7	10
QUOTES	Some quotes from interviews that may make appropriate quotes in write up of data analysis	12	62
24-7 job		1	1
Activity with children to reduce stress		1	1
BENEFITS Children	Practice of mindfulness in the classroom	1	1
BETTER PERFORMANCE		1	1
BETTER TO RESPOND TO CHILDREN		3	3
CHANGED TEACHING	PLEASED mindfulness CHANGED TEACHING	1	2
Classroom MANAGEMENT		1	1
Culture of CARE		1	1
Departmental CUTS		1	1
EMPATHY EVERYONE TRYING BEST		3	3
HAPPIER IN SELF		2	2
INTO Focus on WELLBEING		1	1
LEARNING support		1	2
LISTENER Mindfulness		1	2
MENTAL HEALTH		2	2
Mindful through the day		1	1
Mindfulness important		3	3
Mindfulness STRESS REDUCTION		3	4
need for SELF-CARE	FOR TEACHERS	1	1
no time to talk to colleagues		2	2
PRIORITISATION OF PAPERWORK		2	2

PARENT INTERRUPTION		1	1
POLICY CHILDREN not TEACHERS		2	2
PRINCIPAL		1	1
REASON to start mindfulness		1	1
STRESS		1	1
School NOT STRESSED		2	2
Seen as unstressful job	By outsiders	2	2
SELF-AWARENESS		4	4
SICK LEAVE due to stress	Teachers who took long term sick leave	2	2
STAFF GET ON WELL		1	2
Stress comes SLOWLY		1	2
SUPPORT PARENTS AND STAFF		5	5
Teacher MORALE		1	1
TEACHER TRAINING		1	1
Teachers stressed		4	5
WELLBEING		2	2
WISH discovered 20 years ago		1	1
WORKLOAD		2	2
School type	This node refers to the type of school in which teachers teach	8	10
TEACHER	This node includes aspects of a teacher as identified by teachers themselves, including teacher traits, roles and early years	13	39
Additional PROFESSIONAL experience	Teachers who have worked in alternate professions	3	7
Roles	This node refers to roles taken up by teachers in their day-to-day teaching, e.g. classroom, learning support and roles of responsibility	11	16
Teacher driving force	This node refers to the 'highs' experienced by teachers during their years of teaching	19	20
Teacher traits	This node refers to qualities or general descriptions of teachers by teachers interviewed	10	14
TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS	Teacher recommendations for advancement	11	20
Create awareness	Create awareness with teachers and parents	2	2
CURRICULUM		2	3
Encourage Mindfulness across the board		4	5
LEADERSHIP	IN SCHOOLS	1	1
MENTAL HEALTH	IMPORTANCE OF FOCUS AND TO ENCOURAGE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH	2	2
Mindfulness AVAILABLE to TEACHERS		1	1
Mindfulness integrated School		1	1
Mindfulness integrated in curriculum		1	4
Niche area - mindfulness for children		2	2
SELF-CARE in TRAINING		1	1
SELF-CARE policy		1	1
Teacher TRAINING	MINDFULNESS - need for it in teacher training	0	0
Validate work of teachers Dept. of Ed.		1	1

APPENDIX 6: CODEBOOK – PHASE THREE – DATA REDUCTION

Phase 3 - Data reduction (Researcher Led Codes)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning Coding
INTERNAL RESPONSE	1	1
INTERNAL MINDFULNESS OUTCOMES	20	38
Present moment awareness	9	18
Self-regulation of thoughts	12	18
Self-regulation of emotions	16	19
Changed attitudes	9	12
Thinking processes	8	18
Internal stress reduction	11	18
INTERNAL PROFESSIONAL TEACHER ATTRIBUTES	17	39
Calm - slow down	14	17
Respond v React	15	21
Development of meaning	6	6
Confidence	14	18
Personal development skills	13	21
Empathy	15	19
Empathy and compassion in teaching	12	25
Empathy and compassion toward self	14	20
EXTERNAL IMPLICATION - PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	12	106
Mindfulness and workload management	12	17
Time management	13	18
Mindfulness and classroom management	15	48
Professional relationships	18	53
Relationships - parental	8	10
Relationships - collegial	11	16
Work-life balance	7	9
Self-care and wellbeing	15	15
CLASSROOM OUTCOMES		
Relationships - teacher-pupil	12	19
Empathy, compassion and awareness of children's needs	10	15
Mindfulness strategies in the curriculum	18	53
MINDFULNESS UNACKNOWLEDGED	9	16
Negativity/resistance towards mindfulness	2	2
Resistance to mindfulness	9	13
Staff attitudes towards mindfulness	3	3
STRESS UNACKNOWLEDGED	18	109
Culture of care	9	12
Need to address stress in school	4	4
Organisational policy	15	27

APPENDIX 7: PHASE THREE – DATA REDUCTION WITH QUOTES FROM FINDINGS

Phase 3 - Data reduction (Researcher Led Codes)	Units of Meaning Coding	Quotes from interviewees
INTERNAL RESPONSE		
INTERNAL MINDFULNESS OUTCOMES	38	
Present moment awareness	18	<p>It creates a stop gap in the hustle and bustle ... It creates a space to stop to look at what the reality of things is. It has taught me to recognise what a feeling is, what a thought is and what the reality is, that you are not the feeling, that you are not a mood, you are a bunch of everything together and you can control them ... Living in the now in the middle of stressful situations can be as wonderful as we can be. Kate</p> <p>I don't get caught up in the small things – in the little things – I can let go of them more easily and get on with things ... it works! If I am doing something then I am doing that something – trying not to let other thoughts take over. I have become more focused trying to be 100% in the moment. Eleanor</p> <p>You have to renew yourself nearly every day and say 'this is a new day and what happened yesterday is gone and tomorrow we don't about' or whatever. So you just do your best while you are here. Brenda</p> <p>Being just aware of the present moment and just to being aware of exactly where you are sitting on the chair and cutting all the, the ... I suppose taking yourself out of the distractions of your mind and your thoughts. To me it's just being just aware of where you actually are in that moment. Teresa</p> <p>Again it's the thing of do you let the problem run over and over in the mind instead of just going – I'm quite good at empathising anyway – I can see where the other person is coming from – it does help me to go 'hold on a second now' – differentiating between my thoughts and projections – am I getting annihilated about what might happen as opposed to what IS happening – most times you get frustrated because you think something is going to blow up or something. Chloe</p> <p>It allows you to be more at peace and takes some of the pressure away, living fully, being in the moment and it's more real. It's more real by living in the moment. You're present to somebody like as if you are talking to them. Sometimes I can be talking to somebody and can be somewhere else in my head or wishing they would go. There's more enjoyment in life walking along and listening to the birds, seeing the flowers, more happiness and more joy, reduced stress and reduces your heart rate. Mari.</p>
Self-regulation of thoughts	18	<p>I suppose it is disconnecting from the mind for a little while and not relaying everything again and again and again... I am calm and see things in a different light that maybe may not have seen before. Brid</p> <p>It's a matter of recognising it for what it is ... living in the present, in the now and I think if in the middle of stressful situations – living in the now – present attendance – in the middle of stressful situations to be as wonderful as we can be – not always – but if we try – the stress and antagonisms with self and others – exacting own abilities and limitations – can only do one thing at a time – it takes the pressure off yourself. Kate</p> <p>In my own life I think I'm still trying to create a boundary between work and home. So, that is something I am working on but haven't quite reached. But it helps me in school in that I am not rehashing what has happened or planning the next day so much. You know, I am not living in my head as much so that helps in terms of like family and things like that and in terms of my own levels of energy to give to family and life. Moya</p>
Self-regulation of emotions	19	<p>I think for my own self it just gives me a little distance or space from some of the immediate emotions. I can be aware they are there but I don't have to be dragged into them or get lost in them. Moya</p> <p>It does help me to go 'hold on a second now', differentiating between my thoughts and projections. 'Am I getting annoyed about what might happen as opposed to what is happening?' Most times you get frustrated because you think something is going to blow up or something. Chloe</p> <p>I notice if I am feeling uncomfortable or frustrated or annoyed. I</p>

		recognise that feeling. Like I had a pupil that wasn't cooperating with me and I really noticed feeling uncomfortable, thinking what am I going to do and I am so uncomfortable here and it was lovely, I didn't react. I just let him be and another pupil in the group rescued me. It was beautiful you know. Jacinta.
Changed attitudes	12	Non-judgmental. I am very judgmental of myself critical but now am aware of doing it – when I am planning I now tell myself that I don't need to do quite so much but can see out of the box of it now – almost comfortable in my own stress and take myself there anyway – co-ordination – helps me recognise when I am on the right part and where I need to be – and would be quick to realise when I am off the path, that it's not where I need to be – not the best place for me to be – equally makes me think that I have a choice here. Sadhbh Yes, I think non-judgementally but you're conscious of it as well. So maybe I am in a controlled place to make a better decision. Whereas before I wouldn't even be aware that this headache was coming on; that you were breathing faster; that you were going to ... you know? So you kind-of say that and then you say 'Okay, now calm down' or whatever. Brenda
Thinking processes	18	I just think to myself, as a result of doing it, I have more energy and more enthusiastic. I don't get as bogged down. I feel myself that I don't get as bogged down in things. That you can look at things from different perspectives and just see things more clearly, I think. I definitely think it reduces your stress levels but you don't get as stressed about things. I think you're able to look at the whole picture. Teresa I suppose it is that you are disconnecting from your mind for a little while and you are not relaying everything again and again and again which makes everything more stressful. That you are calm and it makes you see things in a different light that maybe you mightn't have seen before. Bríd
Internal stress reduction	18	I suppose it is that you are disconnecting from your mind for a little while and you are not relaying everything again and again and again which makes everything more stressful. That you are calm and it makes you see things in a different light that maybe you mightn't have seen before. Bríd It was due to stress, yes it was, yes. And I was determined I wasn't going to go the medical route. I wanted to find an alternative. It worked very well for me, yes. Sheila Yes, I definitely think it has made me look at the whole picture. Because it just takes the clutter out of your head and stops you stressing about trivial things really and focus on more important things. I think definitely you have more energy as well, mental energy as well as everything else. Teresa
INTERNAL PROFESSIONAL TEACHER ATTRIBUTES	39	
Calm – slow down	17	I definitely think I myself have changed. It's funny I probably don't notice it as much but then other people have said it to me. Even my boyfriend has said it to me 'God you are an awful lot calmer!' Like stress might come along and I am much better at dealing with it. Louise With junior infants who were all going mad I try to remain calm and do Thich Nhat Hạnh breathing technique – breathing in saying 'I remain calm in my body' and breathing out saying 'I smile, it makes me nice and calm'. I did it one to one with an autistic child one day and continued it as it worked. We had a story to go with it and gave him time to take some quiet breaths – it helped him. Gráinne
Respond v React	21	Again I suppose, I could see I would have been reactive with the kids. I tolerated a certain level of talking, a certain level of not being focused because I knew where they were coming from or I understood where they were coming from before ... So I tolerated them maybe not having the uniform on and would have said that it really doesn't matter whether they wear the uniform or not because they (these kids) are going through far more than what the clothes might dictate. So I just saw them as little people there in front of me and so I wasn't reacting to every little incident – I let an awful lot go. And then saw the bigger things – the bigger picture. Sheila
Development of meaning	6	It might be that you get a deeper sense of yourself and that in itself gives the confidence to say 'This is me' like it or lump it. So yes, a deeper sense of self is a big thing as well. Like – you kind of know who you are and what you want ... at the same time you also have to love yourself and know yourself and that is a huge thing too in mindfulness for me. Bríd
Confidence	18	So I think it is really important to pass it on as a teacher and it is also really important to be aware and in touch with your own feelings on

		<p>matters and love yourself. I mean if you don't, you have to get to the stage where if a parent doesn't agree with what you are doing or you don't agree with them, or a child is upset with you that you have to say 'That is not me'. That it might be what THEY are going through at the time or ... You can't take everything upon yourself otherwise you'll get destroyed. Bríd</p> <p>I suppose I prioritise, but it's not even that. I will quite happily, if I'm doing something and somebody goes 'Well can you' or 'I need this' or 'Can you do this for me?' I think now I'll go 'I can, when I've this ready; when I've this done', you know, 'I'll get to it'. Whether that is Mindfulness – me taking the pressure off myself? I am now no longer afraid to say ... I don't feel I HAVE to do it now. I'll quite happily say 'Yes I will do it' but it has become MY time when I want to do it, when I'm ready to do it. Nora.</p> <p>For me it's more communicating them – it's that assertive thing of saying 'No – 'Ya' – it's the knock on effect of it – it's not that people stop asking to do things – people still ask – I try to remember how I am today – I'm really tired – leaving it open – and it has made the workload more manageable. Sadhbh</p> <p>Yes. I think so. Because I am more aware of who I am, I think that certainly helps your confidence. Whereas before when I think back I suppose, it sounds like I'm ancient with all of my 8 years, but in my earlier years of teaching I was more conscious of what other teachers perceived of me and if they thought I was doing a good job and it was 'perceptions of me'. Now because I am more aware of who I am and I am more comfortable in myself and I suppose when you are mindful you know more about yourself because you are present with yourself. Louise</p>
Empathy	19	<p>I think that I am growing in empathy as well, out of the mindfulness, probably empathy and compassion and therefore I can see where the kids are coming from a lot more easily and connect with them. Sheila</p> <p>I notice that I am better able to face something that potentially could be upsetting. Or if I am abrupt with somebody, I am better able to acknowledge that and apologise for that ... Well, I noticed how impatient I was with other peoples' mistakes and how judgemental I was. Then when I started to notice it, I could try to let it go, you know what I mean. I realise that everybody is doing the best they can really, 'cause everybody is doing the best they can. Jacinta.</p>
Empathy and compassion in teaching	25	<p>Once you've got that belief in your mind you can't discriminate. Daniel ... that you are seeing it from one perspective or that you could nearly put yourself in someone else's shoes. That you are not as hung-up about it or ... I suppose it makes you think about the other person. I suppose it is empathy and compassion. It just gives you the space to really think about it, the situation or NOT think about the situation and then come back to it another stage and give you a fresh outlook on it. Teresa</p>
Empathy and compassion toward self	20	<p>I am still learning mindfulness and how to use it. I used to think it was something wrong with the job when things were going wrong. Now I step back a bit more and review situations and realise they are temporary and will pass. Working with people who are challenging I have learned to change my attitude – I realise I can't change someone else – can just change me and how I deal with them and bring the right attitude of empathy with me in a given situation. Gráinne</p>
EXTERNAL IMPLICATION – PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	10	
Time and workload management	18	<p>Now I think 'Now I am going to sit down and I am going to be present' and I do that one task and actually get it done an awful lot quicker than having my mind wandering or finding another thing to distract me. I would have always found distraction whereas now it's that filtering of 'this is important' or 'this is what I am doing right here right now' and not other things that are cluttering up. (Louise)</p> <p>'I think mindfulness teaches me to say 'Right I am going to spend an hour doing this and if I don't get it done, I don't get it done'. Bríd</p> <p>Jacinta reported changing her attitude, deciding that she was 'not responsible for the whole thing and so the curricular workload is not such a pressure'. Gráinne had a similar attitude reporting that she did not consider that she had a big workload 'because I do my best and know that is as good as I can do in a particular day ... mindfulness is good to try to leave the work at school when I leave'.</p> <p>Sheila's responding strategy has enabled her to 'see the bigger picture and to focus on the children in front of me more than the curriculum. Sheila</p>
Classroom management	48	<p>You listen to yourself kind of going 'This is what makes me happy' and 'This is what I enjoy' and then you realise actually, because you are doing it and you enjoy it and the kids see you enjoying it well actually it becomes a nice relaxing atmosphere because we are all doing something we enjoy. And yes then your confidence in that develops because you realise that it actually is okay to be. Louise</p>

		Sometimes there are difficult children in the class. I do mindfulness every day – a small bit here and there and it certainly helps with the classroom management. The children are generally calm and have a nice way with them. Simon
Professional relationships	53	
Relationships – parental	10	Probably, in as much as you would be a better listener maybe, with parents. And you would be more conscious of listening to them rather than coming up with a quick solution, for want of a better word. Because when you are talking to them you are very conscious of who they are, they are the parent of a child and you are conscious of how much they have invested in that whole situation. You know, they are invested in it, they are knee deep and it means an awful lot to them. I'm relaxed enough now to just sit back and listen to them for a good bit first. You don't feel the need to jump in with a solution, you give them a good chance to give their point of view first. Again, for me, that is coming from mindfulness there and reading around that, you know where you are Daniel
Relationships – collegial	16	<p>Relationships with colleagues. I suppose in terms of being in staff meetings, I would be very much more present. What would have happened would have always been but that I would be more grounded I suppose in what I would want to either bring or say to it. I'd have a bit more confidence in leading from the inside. I don't know does that make sense? I suppose I wouldn't be saying things because that was what people would want you to say. Are you meant to say 'Yes' or are you meant to say 'No'? So I suppose it definitely helps me to be more true to what I think my principles are or what I think should happen at school. Kelly</p> <p>I suppose, that you may not see it – that you are seeing it from one perspective or that you could nearly put yourself in someone else's shoes. That you are not as hung-up about it or ... I suppose it makes you think about the other person. I suppose it is empathy and compassion. It just gives you the space to really think about it, the situation or NOT think about the situation and then come back to it another stage and give you a fresh outlook on it. Bríd</p> <p>The principal can affect the rhythm of the school' (Jacinta)</p> <p>Four teachers indicated that their principal was particularly stressed, one suggesting the role of 'teaching principals is highly stressed' (Moya) While some referred to the principal as 'a very difficult person' (Gráinne) or struggling with 'the way she has dealt with certain things' (Jacinta), all other interviewees reported that principals were particularly supportive, helpful, dependable, and had 'an air of confidentiality'. Nora</p> <p>Relationships with colleagues – I can sit with anyone in the staffroom or when out socially. There are no cliques on the staff. We are always growing relationships. Many staff members want to practise mindfulness who have never done it themselves and who have been in a classroom of teacher who practises it. They want to model it and try it when they see the children so calm and the classroom peaceful. Róisín</p>
Work-life balance	9	<p>In my own life I think I'm still trying to create a boundary between work and home. So, that is something I am working on but haven't quite reached. But it helps me in school in that I am not rehashing what has happened or planning the next day so much. You know, I am not living in my head as much so that helps in terms of like family and things like that and in terms of my own levels of energy to give to family and life. Moya</p> <p>Managing it, yes. I tend to focus on what I'm doing rather than going 'I have to do this, this, this and this'. I used to be great at making lists. I would make a list of everything I had to do. I now make no lists. None. It actually only dawned on me now that I am speaking to you that I would actually put that down to mindfulness. I don't know the last time I made a list, whereas before I would have. I remember a couple of years ago I literally would have lists of ... on a Friday afternoon I would go 'Right, these are all the things I have to do next week' whereas now on a Friday afternoon – it's Friday afternoon. I go in on Monday and okay it's not 'What have I to do this week?' It's today, it's now. Nora</p>
Self -care and wellbeing	15	<p>I definitely think it helps your wellbeing. I am certainly able to cope much better with different challenges that come along. And oftentimes, I think even in the classroom, it helps because I am more aware and mindful of the children. Like, parents would have even said to me 'God, you really know the children' and I don't think anyone said that to me before. But because you are completely present you actually get to know the children you are so with them, you are watching them, you are listening to them. Louise</p> <p>Particularly now that I am talking about it I realise how little we actually do think about ourselves as a staff, you know – as teachers. Sheila</p>

CLASSROOM OUTCOMES		
Relationships – teacher-pupil	19	<p>I think I am better able to respond to my pupils... I think I am more helpful with kids who have had emotional issues. Jacinta</p> <p>I trust myself a lot more and that gives the message to trust other people – I do notice children's trust – they know I will be there – am more aware of them and my relationship with them. Sadbh</p> <p>I enjoy the relationship I have with the kids an awful lot better. It is very hard to identify it. I suppose I'd know when I looked in the kids eyes. I'd know if I smiled and I'd get a smile back I'd just feel it. I'll tell you one aspect of it, I suppose, was really emotional that fact that I was able to joke with them a bit more. So I was more me with them. And I think they were more authentic with me. So that led to a sort of a relaxed situation in the classroom despite the problems, a more relaxed situation ... a certain sense of the children being more relaxed without even bringing it in formally. Sheila (who did not introduce mindfulness into the curriculum.)</p> <p>My relationship with children is calmer – can handle my own emotions and help them to handle their emotions so children are happier. I talk to the children about their emotions and feelings and have lots of discussion. Mindfulness with children helps them to be calm – it's about not pushing the ego, that it's ok to make mistakes – we can all make mistakes. If I make a mistake I apologise to a child or children and when I do they appreciate it – it builds respect in both directions. I am perhaps more authentic with myself and with others. Gráinne</p> <p>You cannot function properly unless you have a good relationship with the children – and it's easy to have a good relationship with children who are with you – the challenge is to bring the children with you who might have issues and who are angry with the world – the challenge is to bring those children with you – and giving you won't do it ... and yet I have to bring that child with me – and I do – and that's a high, when you bring a child with you – and you have to work very hard on it – we don't all get on with everyone – it's not fair if you don't give every child a chance to be with you – and that is not every day – there are days when we all have an off day. Mari</p>
Empathy, compassion and awareness of children's needs	15	<p>I think it gives me that as well. In the classroom though it lets me be a little bit more creative or be a little bit freer. I sometimes think, stop the curriculum for now, there is 6 kids sitting in front of me on a Monday morning and they are wrecked tired, so let's just check in and see where we are in our bodies or in our minds or whatever. It just has given me that freedom as well. Like yesterday I had one guy that who was either pretending but I think he really did fall asleep. I know it was Monday morning but for 15 minutes. I mean knowing the chap that did fall asleep I know his weekend would be particularly chaotic. You at the end they say 'Thanks, can I come back again and do more of this?' And I think prior to that for the first 15 minutes of his day he was all over the place in everyone's way and he was getting himself into lots of trouble, you know. Moya</p> <p>I think I understand the kids an awful lot better. I see them now as people, little beings, as opposed to little students ... I can connect with them ... on a more deep level and I think a more human level ... I am more understanding of where they are coming from and that helps me to deal with their stress, from their stressful homes, because I've got empathy and compassion for them'. Sheila</p>
Mindfulness strategies in the curriculum	53	<p>Mindfulness with the children ... the biggest thing, for the children is that sense of self and self-confidence, the empathy and the awareness of the world around them. Bríd</p> <p>Some is not workable with very young children. You can do jelly bean tasting one day and other days just go outside and feel the grass. If people saw what you are doing they would not be scared about it at all. Kate</p> <p>The kids are now in the mode for mindfulness and will ask me if we haven't had it for a few days. They really, really love it ... one child in my class is quite antagonistic and creates problems in the yard. So, suddenly having a class going out to the yard in good form, they come back with a serious atmosphere. If I sit down and do some mindfulness with them it dissipates it'. Kate</p> <p>The mindfulness has been brilliant for me. That has been one of the biggest pluses in managing those children (children with special educational needs). Chloe.</p> <p>'It is so useful for classroom management' contending that 'for challenging pupils if I use the mindfulness in the class it gives me a quiet space and also the children'. Kelly</p> <p>I need it sometimes too ... it gives a general air of calmness in the classroom. Louise</p>

MINDFULNESS UNACKNOWLEDGED	16	
Cultural aspect	3	'Irish primary school teachers are going to Buddhist meditation centres. Jacinta
Negativity/resistance towards mindfulness	13	<p>Don't tell me you were off doing meditation again (comment from a colleague) Teresa</p> <p>Mindfulness is one of those things – we need to be discreet – it's not everyone that I would say it to in case they would say 'Oh she's one of them' – find it difficult to say it to some people. Sadbh</p> <p>Mindfulness might jar with the ethos of the school. Jacinta</p> <p>I am just thinking that teachers in general are resistant ... I am just thinking of the three schools that I go to. They wouldn't be as open to meditation as I would be. You know a principal in one of the schools would say to me 'Ah, don't tell me you were off doing meditation again' or 'You were up early this morning doing meditation' or 'That's a load of ...'. Teresa</p> <p>We did do some mindfulness for our Croke Park hour recently – myself and a couple of teachers tried to infiltrate it into the school but you realise that nothing happens unless it comes from the top – it's like flogging a dead horse. Helen</p>
Staff attitudes towards mindfulness	3	<p>It's such a hard sell to teachers. Some are so positive and some are not. I so love it and some are not into it. For myself I did it part for me and part for my Mum. I was really surprised that I got so much into it – I would love if people would take it on. Kate</p> <p>Maybe my colleagues' reaction to this because I find very few are interested in it, Ann. I don't know what it is. They wouldn't question me up on it that much or anything. So, em ... they know I am doing this and but there wouldn't be too much quizzing me up on what it is about, you know. Jacinta</p>
STRESS UNACKNOWLEDGED	10	
Culture of care	12	
Need to address organisational stress	2	I do think it should be a part of our lifestyle like as well because we do have a stressful job and we do need to learn how to manage it. You can pretty much spot people who aren't coping very easily within the staff.
Organisational policy	27	<p>No stress/care policy in the school that I am aware of – and I am aware of a lot of policies because I am involved in drawing them up. Health and Safety is seen as are the man-holes in the yard and are the blinds in the windows high enough that they won't damage the kids ... self-care is down to the individuals – in our school we are very lucky that we have a wonderful caring staff by and large. Mari</p> <p>Without an official policy for self-care – is there a policy that would help ye deal worth stressful situation – to respond? Helen</p>

APPENDIX 8: ATTRIBUTE VARIABLES OF INTERVIEWEES

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Years of teaching experience	How learned mindfulness	Length of mindfulness practice	Usual mindfulness practice	Reason to learn mindfulness practice
Kate	F	20–29	0–5 years	MBSR	2–5 years	2–4 weekly	Wellbeing
Nora	F	50–59	20–29	Online course	2–5 years	2–4 weekly	Stress
Jacinta	F	40–49	10–19	MBCL Post-grad MA	2–5 years	Daily	Wellbeing
Brenda	F	30–39	10–19	Online course	6mth–1yr	Daily	Wellbeing
Teresa	F	50–59	30–39	Books Courses	2–5 years	Irregularly	CPD
Bríd	F	20–29	5–10	Books Apps Internet	6mths–1yr	Daily	Stress
Moya	F	40–49	20–29	Summer course	Over 5yrs	Daily	CPD
Louise	F	30–39	6–9	Books Apps Internet	6mth–1yr	Daily	Stress
Daniel	M	50–59	0–5	MBSR	Over 5yrs	2–4 weekly	Wellbeing
Sheila	F	50–59	20–29	Summer Course	6mth–1yr	Daily	Stress
Gráinne	F	30–39	0–5	Summer Course	Over 5 years	2–4 weekly	Wellbeing
Kelly	F	20–29	6–9	MBSR	1–2 years	2–4 weekly	Stress
Simon	M	30–39	6–9	MBSR	2–5 years	Daily	Stress
Róisín	F	40–49	20–29	Books Apps Internet	Over 5 years	Daily	Health related
Chloe	F	30–39	6–9	Books Apps Internet	Over 5 years	2–4 weekly	Health related
Fiona	F	40–49	10–19	MBSR	2–5 years	Daily	Health related
Sadbh	F	40–49	10–19	Books Apps Internet	Over 5 years	2–4 weekly	Wellbeing
Helen	F	30–39	6–9	Books Apps Internet	6mth–1yr	Daily	Health related
Mari	F	50–59	30–39	Books Apps Internet	2–5 years	2–4 weekly	Health related
Julia	F	30–39	5–10	Course	1–2 years	2–4 weekly	Health related

APPENDIX 9: MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

Body scan	A type of meditation with a focus on the breath and paying attention to body parts scanned from the toes up to the head.
Sitting meditation	A mindfulness meditation which focuses on the breath, body, sounds, thoughts and feelings in the development of choiceless awareness.
Mindful movement	Mindful movement is created as a moving mindfulness meditation. It aims to notice thoughts and emotions and how the body feels as it moves and to be mindful of anything and everything that is present.
Loving Kindness practice	The basic focus of the Loving Kindness practice is to focus on benevolent and loving energy towards oneself and others.

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