VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

A Case Study of Mindfulness Practices
for Students in Elementary Schools in British Columbia

by

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B.Ed (English)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of
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MINDFULNESS PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS

We accept this Thesis as conforming to the required standard.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counselors regarding mindfulness practices with elementary school-aged students in British Columbia. This research explored how school personnel implement mindfulness practices in the classroom with emphasis on exploring professional development for mindfulness skills, the use of strategies and facilitating techniques, as well as identifying the benefits and challenges associated with incorporating mindfulness practices with elementary school-aged students. This research study used a qualitative case study approach, which included a semi-structured interview to collect the data from four school-based personnel (two classroom teachers, one resource teacher, one counsellor) who had experiences using mindfulness practices with their students.

The results of this research highlight that school-based personnel use mindfulness practices with their students in a variety of ways to support diverse groups of students. This research emphasized the importance of having a set process for implementing mindfulness practices in both classrooms and schools, as well as the importance of professional development for school personnel in mindfulness skills development. In addition, the findings support the need for ongoing support for mindfulness implementation in schools, and this was seen as a fundamental requirement to sustain mindfulness practices from year to year.

Keywords: mindfulness practice, professional development, strategies for mindfulness
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Research

During the past decades, there has been a growing body of research which has examined optimism and positive mental health during childhood and adolescence (Gillham & Reivich, 2014; Oberle, Guhn, Gadermann, Thomson, & Schonert-Reichl, 2018; Rybak, 2013). Based on evidence-based research information, educators and school health professionals are introduced to new perspectives and practices associated with positive mental health. Morrison and Peterson (2017) presented that:

The Public Health Agency of Canada describes positive mental health as the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and to deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity (p. 4).

Adopting a positive mental health approach in education not only strengthens student learning outcomes and school commitment but also addresses concerns of social behavior relationship such as bullying, personal distress and emotional challenges (Andrews & Conte, 2005; Morrison & Peterson, 2017; Stolp, Wilkins, & Raine, 2015). Recent research has shown that school settings play a critical role to the development of mental health and psychological well-being (resilience) in children and provides fundamental context for constructing children’s self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sense of control over their lives (Allison, Adlaf, Irving, Schoueri-Mychasiw, & Rehm, 2016; Atkins, Hoagwood, Kutash, & Seidman, 2010; Poland, Green, & Rootman, 2000; Steward, Sun, Patterson, Lemerle & Hardie, 2014).
In a survey by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001, it was reported that more than 25% of people experience at least one mental or behavior disorder during their lifetime (WHO; Ebrary, 2001). In addition, the U.S. Public Health Service (2000) indicated that approximately 20% of children and adolescents encountered mental health problems severe enough to seek mental health assistance; however, less than 15% received adequate health services (National Health Council, 1990). In a recent study conducted by Georgiades, Duncan, Wang, Comeau, and Boyle (2019) the prevalence of any mental disorder in Ontario varies from 18.2% to 21.8% depending on age, in which approximately 25.6% of children, and 33.7% of youth with parents diagnosed with mental disorders, are also reported as meeting the minimum requirement for mental health services. In British Columbia (BC), there have been several studies and reviews examining prevalence rates of mental disorders of child and youth (Angold & Costello, 1995; Offord et al., 1987; Brandenburg, Friedman, & Silver, 1990; Costello, 1989; Heyman et al., 2001). The general result reports that approximately one in five children from four to 16 years of age have moderate or severe mental disorders (Waddell, McEwan, Hua, & Shepherd, 2002).

Findings of Bowes, et al. (2009) determine that social environmental factors including school, neighborhood, and family were associated with groups of children as victims, bullies, or bully-victims. Additionally, as cited in Winsper, Leraya, Zanarini, and Wolke (2012), the significant health problem among youth in many countries which is closely related to bullying is suicide. Further, psychologists in education indicate that children in the United States and Canada encounter a wide range of serious issues that involves chronic health conditions, lifestyle, violence among students, stress and behavior/emotional disorders, abuse, sexuality and negative interpersonal relationship (Andrew & Conte, 2005). In the school environment,
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Aged children experience increasingly innumerable social, emotional, and behavioral trauma, that often disrupt their social relationships, school performance, and competent development, all which have impact on their future success (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001). As cited in Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010), child mental health problems are considered the utmost concern of researchers, clinicians, and educators, today.

Several programs to support children and adolescents with mental health disorders and behavioral issues have been introduced and offered. Indeed, a growing number of educators have recognized the importance of integrating social-emotional skills into the school-based program to promote resiliency and to prevent the escalation of aggressive behavior and mental health problems in students (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Unfortunately, many approaches and interventions are not well supported by research evidence, scientific theoretical ground, comprehensive domains, and long-term implementation (Greenberg et al., 2003; Morrison & Peterson, 2017). Additionally, the cost associated with health care services, social services and educational services for child and youth with mental disorders is an existing burden in many provinces of Canada. Therefore, adapting evidence-based and cost-effective intervention programs and creating positive learning environments are necessary to address the psychological well-being and mental health in the K-12 education system, today (Morrison & Peterson, 2017).

Mindfulness is one approach associated with positive mental health perspectives and practices. Current day mindfulness practices in schools has its origins in the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn (2013). Kabat-Zinn emphasizes that practicing mindfulness not only improves physical and psychological symptoms, but also produced the positive changes in health, attitude, and behavior. To add to Kabat-Zinn’s ideas, Rybak (2013) defined mindfulness as the specific practice used to focus a person’s attention, such as, meditation, breathing, or single-pointed
concentration on an object. When applied in education, when students pause and reflect on their thoughts and emotions, they are more likely to be open to a wider range of options and are apt to discuss areas of concern before responding. The benefits of regular mindfulness practice are far reaching and include enhanced problem-solving skills, increased impulse control, stronger relationship building, decreased emotional distress and behavioral concerns, and increased greater capacity to manage stress. Additionally, mindfulness is also defined as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Further, mindfulness has becoming increasingly beneficial in therapeutic relationships in recent years. Pearson et al. (2015) reported that there was individuals who practices mindfulness reported a sharp contrast in emotional functioning, pre and post mindfulness intervention. Zoogman, Goldberg, Hoyt, and Miller (2015) also determined positive effects of mindfulness practice for adolescents, which are consistent with findings reported for adults. Recent studies also indicate that mindfulness-based practice can be successful in reducing stress, depression, improving learning outcomes and general mental well-being in the school context (Raes et al., 2013; Shonin et al., 2012; Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz & Walach, 2014).

In recent years, the question of whether mindfulness practices are suitable as universal preventative interventions in schools has been raised by researchers, mindfulness practitioners, and educators. Lawlor et al., (2010) determined that mindfulness-based SEL programs can lead to positive improvement in social relations. In BC, the Ministry of Education has adopted mindfulness (mental well-being) as a physical and health education subject in BC’s new curriculum education program. Mindfulness has also been widely adopted using the Hawn Foundation’s MindUp program at universities throughout BC, such as University of British Columbia, University of the Fraser Valley, and the University of Victoria. There are varieties of
mindfulness research in education regarding the healthy teacher, MindUp evaluation, effects on pre-adolescences, mindfulness in high school, and so on. However, there is limited research that has investigated school personnel’s experiences and perspectives regarding mindfulness practices for elementary school-aged students (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

**Purpose of the Study**

The examination of the experiences and perspectives of school personnel regarding mindfulness implementation for students in BC elementary schools is limited in the current research literature. This qualitative case study investigated how mindfulness practices are implemented by the school personnel (classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counsellors) in the elementary schools of BC.

**Research Questions**

The questions this study sought to answer were:

Central Phenomenon Question: What are the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices for elementary school-aged students in BC?

Sub-questions:

1. How do classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counselors develop professional skills of mindfulness?
2. How do classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors implement mindfulness for diverse groups of students in BC elementary schools?
3. What are the benefits of mindfulness practice for diverse groups of elementary school-aged students in BC?
4. What are the challenges of mindfulness instruction?
Significance of the Study

There has been an increasing interest from educators in BC to introduce mindfulness practices into educational programming from primary through high-schools; however, few studies have provided a detailed description of how mindfulness is implemented in the elementary classrooms and how teachers are trained in mindfulness practices. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap in the literature. The findings of this study are important because they will extend our understanding of how mindfulness is instructed, as well as how teachers experience the use of mindfulness in their work. Additionally, it is hoped that the findings of this study will highlight the benefits and challenges school personnel face when implementing mindfulness with their students. It is further hoped, this study will provide directions for future research studies.

Definition of Key Terms

Mental well-being. Mental well-being is defined as a state of psychological wellness that reflects people’s self-perceptions (feeling and cognitions) regarding the fulfillment of three basic psychological need areas. These include the need for relatedness, competency and autonomy. (Positive Mental Health Toolkit, n.d.)

Mindfulness. In Jon-Kabat Zinn (2005), “mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. (p.4)

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is an eight-week evidence-based program that offers secular, intensive mindfulness training to assist people with stress, anxiety, depression and pain. It is a practical approach which trains attention, allowing people to cultivate awareness and therefore enabling them to have more choice to take thought-out action in their lives. (Kabat-Zin, 1970)
Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). MBCT is an 8-session group intervention program with 8–15 participants designed for prevention of relapse or recurrence among patients with major depressive disorder (MDD) in remission. (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002)

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBI). Mindfulness-based interventions, therapeutic approaches grounded in mindfulness, promote the practice as an important part of good physical and mental health. Mindfulness-based stress reduction, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), dialectal behavior therapy (DBT), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) are some mindfulness-based interventions currently utilized in therapy. (Good Therapy, 2018)

Social-emotional learning (SEL). Social-emotional learning is about the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills that assist students in identifying and managing their emotions, in communicating caring and concern for others, and in forming and sustaining positive relationships. (“Positive Mental Health Toolkit”, n.d.)
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a synthesis of justifiable research, historical background of mindfulness, neuroscience-based of mindfulness, the relation between mindfulness and mental well-being, mindfulness in education settings, the benefits of mindfulness practice on teachers and students, and the challenges of mindfulness instruction. First, I will present the historical background and scientific concepts of mindfulness then follow by the review of the benefits of mindfulness for educators and students, and the challenges it presents.

Historical Review of Mindfulness

Mindfulness practices stemmed from the Eastern cultures of Buddhism practice which has existed over the centuries (Baer, 2003). Jad’on (2010) presented that Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh is seen as a leader in mindfulness. He is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who was recommended for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 by Martin Lurther King, and also the author of more than 100 books on peaceful and mindfulness living. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the director of the Massachusetts Medical School, is considered the founder of the widespread mindfulness movement as a secular activity (Moon, 2016). Kabat-Zinn’s work began during 1980s, when he started working with clinicians and researchers to pilot mindfulness training and practice on adult patients for the medical experiments of human distress relief. Kabat-Zinn developed a therapeutic mindfulness approach known as, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) which is an intervention programs for patients with chronic illness, pain and psychological disorders (Grossman, Nieman, Schmidt, & Wallach, 2004). The development of this approach laid the foundation for the development of Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT),
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(Zindel, Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). The design of MBCT as an intervention is to help adults who suffer from repeated courses of depression and chronic unhappiness. Furthermore, other mindfulness programs for therapy include: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) which was developed by Hayes, Strosahl, and Wilson (1999); mindfulness for family known as Mindfulness-based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) developed by Barrack; Mindfulness in education includes Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) for Teachers (Jennings, DeMauro, & Mischenko, 2019).

Neuroscientific Basis of Mindfulness

In terms of neuroscience assessment, Meiklejohn et al. (2012) reported there is a substantial research base which highlights the effectiveness of mindfulness training on the mind, brain, body, and behavior. Research has shown that regular mindfulness practice builds brain matter by creating new neurons and neural connections (Anacker & Hen, 2017). This research set the background for the development of neuroscientific studies of the mindfulness training of the brain and cortical functions (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). In addition, mindfulness training has positive effects on executive function (EF) and social emotional function of human’s brain areas. Additionally, Lazar et al. (2005) and Laneri et al. (2016) reported that the prefrontal cortex and right anterior insula of individuals who have adopted long-term meditation practice were thicker; therefore, these individuals have improvement in attention and sensory processing.

Davidson et al. (2003) found that the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) training program reduced stress by both decreasing negative activity in the brain, and increasing positive emotion and sense of well-being. Some findings also showed that even short-term practice of mindfulness provides benefits to improving ones immune system.
Greeson (2009), reviewed a hundred empirical studies of mindfulness and found that mindfulness training can influence “the brain, the autonomic nervous system, stress hormones, the immune system, and health behaviors, including eating, sleeping, and substance use, in salutary ways” (p.1). Also, McGreevey (2001) reported that mindfulness meditation can gradually change the gray matter of the brain.

Furthermore, Ivtzan (2019) concluded that mindfulness can implement in any population at any age, for any challenge condition in any circumstances. However, he asserted that people are different; therefore, mindfulness methods should be used appropriately for each individual experience.

### Mindfulness and Mental Well-being

According to Armstrong (2019), the core of mindfulness practice is the focus on the present moment with an accepting mind, open mindedness, and a lack of judgement. This process includes three main components: (a) focus on the breath, body sensations, eating, walking, or any activity which is part of daily life, (b) open monitoring and noticing of internal and external arousals sensations, and (c) sustained non-judgmental attitude towards whatever experiences that come during our practice. Kabat-Zinn (1990), suggested that mindfulness refers to a compassionate and non-judgment moment-to-moment awareness of one’s experiences. Also, Bishop et al. (2004) defined mindfulness as two parts: (a) “the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment,” and (b) “a particular orientation toward one’s experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance” (p. 232).
Mindfulness practice is well documented as having positive impacts stress, anxiety, and depression (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). Mindfulness also showed significant impacts to the resilient capability, which include the reduction of depression and stress and the improvement of a greater sense of well-being, as compared with those that do not practice mindfulness (Burke, 2010). Mindfulness also offers the potential to promote personal self-compassion and empathy, and an increase in cognitive function and attention. Furthermore, mindfulness has the potential to support children’s academic performance by promoting focused attention, thus, stopping mind wandering (Shapiro et al., 2008). In addition, practicing mindfulness has been shown to enhance the quality of social and emotional management in children such as attention, concentration, self-representation, self-compassion, empathy, sensitivity, creativity, and problem solving. Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010) indicated that early adolescents who received mindfulness education program showed higher levels of optimism, better socially competent, and a more positive self-concept, than those who did not receive mindfulness training. In a following up study, Lawlor (2014) asserted that mindfulness-based intervention is considered a universal approach in schools to promote effective educational outcomes including, resiliency, wellbeing, self-regulation, and attention.

**Mindfulness in Education Setting**

Improving school climate is very important, and mindfulness is identified as an important approach in creating this positive influence on students, teachers and the school community. As presented in Armstrong (2019), if mindfulness practice is designed and utilized in a systematic and strategic way in educational system, not only the school but the whole community can benefit. The whole-school approach of mindfulness is also defined as one of the critical decisions to maintain the sustainability of the positive school learning environment. Furthermore, when
schools lack of health and mental well-being condition also affect to the educational outcomes of
the community (Armstrong 2009).

With this in mind, school has been suggested as an important environment for promoting
positive mental health and wellness. The first study researching mindfulness-based intervention
(MBI) in schools was conducted by Napoli and colleagues (2005). They carried out a
comparison approach between randomized controlled trial on groups and the passive control
group of bimonthly mindfulness training for students from Kindergarten through Grade three.
The result indicated that the intervention group had moderate improvement on focus, social skills
and text anxiety. The findings of this work set the direction for the follow-up research which
focused on the impact of MBI on social and mental health issues for youths in schools (Felver et
al., 2016; Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014).

In addition, mindfulness has been adapted and replicated core practices of MBSR and
MBCT such as mindful breathing and mindful yoga for adolescents (Biegel, Brown, Shapiro, &
Schbert, 2009). Finding from randomized control trial research proved that mindfulness
intervention on different groups of students are positive in improving attention, social skills and
test anxiety (Napoli, Kretch, & Holley, 2005). Additionally, findings from Felver et al. (2016),
and Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach (2014) showed more evidence of positive learning
outcomes across social and emotional skills, cognitive and behavioral development, and
academic achievement of youths in schools.

Thornton and McEntee (1995) indicated that mindfulness addresses many school issues
socially and emotionally. Practicing mindfulness enhances the capability of understanding and
accepting another’s perspective. This practice activates the curiosity and the openness to other
experiences, cultures and social relation as well as creating safer learning environment for
students in school. Critically, the application of the MBSR and MBCT training program which was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues are non-religious and fall within a secular curriculum. Therefore, these programs can reach different populations to practice mindfulness in an open way.

Over the past two decades, there has been an vast increase in the number of scientific studies with MBI in schools. For instance, MindUp (Hawn Foundation) is the evidence-based mindfulness intervention specifically developed for use in K-9 school settings. Maloney, Lawlor, Schonert-Reichl, and Whitehead (2016), provide an overview of the MindUp program and explains its focus on fostering social-emotional competences, including self-awareness, self-regulation, maintaining healthy relationships, and respect of other with caring. MindUp’s approach includes four major units: getting focused, sharpening your senses, it’s all about attitudes, and taking action mindfully. Other mindfulness-based programs for children and youth (K-12) include: Learning to BREATHE (adolescents), Mindful School (K-12), and Inner Kids Program (Pre-K-8) (Meiklejohn, et al., 2012).

Many schools have found useful ways of utilizing mindfulness to improve school climate. For example, the Renfrew Community Elementary School in Vancouver, BC, has started a mindfulness breathing exercise (Lunau, 2014), and at Kermit McKenzie Intermediate School in Guadalupe, California, all students are instructed to quiet their minds for five minutes twice a day in the morning and in the afternoon by the school counselor who uses the school’s intercom system (Cone, 2016). Additionally, Southern Elementary School in Lexington, Kentucky, students are guided to take part in yoga program of the school (Phipott, 2018).
Mindfulness for Teachers

Improving academic performance and social-emotional competence for students are becoming central goals in educational settings (Greenberg et al., 2003; Rose & Gallup, 2000). The programs focus on helping students with their social skill interactions and improving their healthy behaviors. Students are able to practice positive and respectful behavior towards others. In turn, they can improve on basic competences, work habits and values in order to build up a meaningful employment and engaged citizenship (Philibert, 2016; Durlak & Domitrovich, 2015). It is also clear the students learning context is mainly formed and shaped directly by teachers. Teachers have a crucial role in creating a classroom environment that strengthens social emotional well-being for students (Flook, Goldberg, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013). However, many teachers encounter job-related stress and burnout because of the overwhelming workloads, test scoring pressure and lack of support. They are also struggling to respond to student misbehavior, to establish relationships with their students and students parents or to build a positive learning environment (Jenning & Greenberg, 2009; Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2012; Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, & Ma, 2012).

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) argue that teachers who have good social and emotional competencies and well designed lessons, create good learning environments with students. Therefore, these teachers help strengthen students’ intrinsic ability and encourage cooperation and communication among students. Teachers who have supportive resources to manage social emotional challenges may recover their joy in teaching, have strong focus and interest on task, be responsive and supportive to the needs of individual students, and foster respectful communication for problem solving (La Paro and Pianta, 2003). On the other hand, if a teacher lacks basic strategies to develop social emotional competence and well-being, the consequences
of burnout may lead to negative effects on classroom climate and relationship with students, leading to difficulties with classroom management.

Mindfulness-based practices improve teacher well-being which in turn contribute to a pro-social classroom environment and positive student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Findings from Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, and Davidson (2013) suggest that a mindfulness intervention adapted for educators boosts aspects of teachers' mindfulness and self-compassion, reduces psychological symptoms and burnout, increases effective teaching behavior, and reduces attentional biases. Recently, mindfulness has been incorporated into training for teachers with aims to increase teachers’ personal well-being, reduce crisis and enhance positive classroom management. Results collected from reviews of mindfulness program for teachers and students show an positive effects on mindfulness practice, teacher self-efficacy, overall emotional well-being, and promote a supportive teaching style (Elrada, et al., 2018; Garner, Bender, & Fedor, 2018; Meiklejohn, et al., 2012).

**Mindfulness for Students**

Research has also showed that the number of students who face problems of anxiety, trauma, distraction, and isolation have been increasing in recent decades. It is reported that approximately 10% to 25% of preschool students have challenging behaviors (Fettig & Ostrosky, 2011; Powell, Dunlap, & Fox, 2006). These behaviors include noncompliance to request, physical and verbal aggression, self-harm, property damage, and temper tantrums (hitting, kicking, crying or screaming). Similarly, the prevalence of students with neurodevelopmental disorders and developmental disabilities who have challenging behaviors are about 6% to 32% (Hattier, Matson, Belva, & Kozlowski, 2012; Holden & Gitlesen, 2006; Rojahn & Meier, 2009). Additionally, research has shown that approximately one in three adolescents meet the criteria
for an anxiety disorder by the age of 18 (National Institute of Mental Health). And, nearly one in two of all children in the U.S. have experienced at least one traumatic event occurring in childhood (National Survey of Children’s Health), and four in ten children in high school reported feeling isolated, left out, and lonely (Jayne, 2019). To help support children and youth’s mental health concerns, mindfulness practice is recommended to be included in schools from K-12 (Greenberg & Harris, 2012).

There is an increasing number of research studies which emphasize the use of mindfulness programs for students from K-12. Napoli et al. (2005) conducted the random control trial research with groups of students from Grade one to Grade three in elementary school who had mindfulness practice over 24 weeks. Results showed improvement of attention skills, reducing test anxiety, and enhancing social skills. Similarly, Wall (2005) conducted a study for a group of students from 11 to 13 years of age who used 13-weeks modified MBSR program where participants reported feelings of calmness and relaxation, feeling less reactive, experienced improvement in sleep, and had a greater sense of well-being than before engaging in mindfulness activities. Beauchemin et al. (2008) presented a study of adolescents with learning disabilities who used mindfulness practices for five to ten minutes at the beginning of each class period, over a five weeks timeline. Students’ self-report and as well as teachers’ ratings showed a decrease of anxiety and an improvement in social skills, problem behaviors, and academic success, from pre- to post-assessment.

**Challenges of Mindfulness Practices**

In terms of a sustainable approach, Hess (2018) asserts, different people have different perspectives of mindfulness and school districts do as well. The discrepancies of goals between individuals and the organization produce challenges of mindfulness practices and the program
efficacy assessment. It is crucial to have a consensus at the individual level when setting the common goal for mindfulness practice in school. Hess (2018) also indicated that the discrepancy of mindfulness practices among grade levels are one of the issues. Students in elementary school are likely to be involved in the practices; however, sustainability of mindfulness interventions from year to year was unconfirmed. Furthermore, mindfulness practice in schools is not a mandatory program; therefore, teachers are free of choose or not to choose this approach. Certainly, not all teachers have interest in adopting mindfulness interventions in their classrooms, nor do they have interest in discovering more about the topic.

Further, Maloney et al. (2016) highlighted the critical issue of professional training in mindfulness and noted that the more experience and training in mindfulness a teacher has, the more successful they are at introducing it to their students. At the sometime, however, teachers in this study express they don't have enough mindfulness training. This is noteworthy in the context of some of the mindfulness curriculums, such as MindUp that the program can be used without teacher professional development. This point raises the question about the necessity of targeted training in mindfulness practices for teachers.

Summary

This synthesized literature review provided a wide range of theoretical background and evidence-based perspectives on mindfulness in terms of neurocognitive sciences, mindfulness in educational settings, and the social-emotional impacts for both students and teachers. The evidence for the success of mindfulness presented here represents interdisciplinary perspectives across different sectors including, education, psychology, and clinical settings, over many decades. Overall, the evidence from these studies has consistently shown positive impacts of mindfulness-based interventions. Specifically, on executive functions and emotional regulation
capacity, reducing the impact of clinical depression, and decreasing overall stress levels. Mindfulness practice is also associated with promoting resilience and social-emotional well-being in adolescents and adults. However, as noted, to maintain a sustainable mindfulness approach in education, school-based personnel need initial and ongoing professional development in order to develop their own mindfulness skills and teaching practices. With this in mind, the current study aims to further explore the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers, resource teachers, and counselors in BC elementary schools regarding the implementation of mindfulness in their professional practice.
Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

There is limited research exploring how mindfulness practice is implemented by teachers for students in the elementary schools in BC. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of the school personnel (classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors) of the implementation of mindfulness practices in students of BC’s elementary schools. Particularly, this research investigated the school personnel regarding professional development of mindfulness, the experiences and perspectives of mindfulness implementation in diverse groups of students, the effects of mindfulness on students and the challenges in mindfulness practices. This study conducted individual interviews with classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors who have used mindfulness practices with students in the classrooms. As stated in Chapter 1, below are the guiding questions:

Central question: What are the experiences and perceptions of classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counselor regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices in BC elementary schools?

Sub-questions:

1. How do classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors receive professional development training of mindfulness?
2. How do classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors implement mindfulness for diverse groups of students in BC elementary schools?
3. What are the benefits of mindfulness practice on diverse groups of elementary school-aged students in BC?
4. What are the challenges of mindfulness instruction?
The organization of this chapter includes the description of the research design, sampling and participant recruitment process, research method, instrument and tools used for data collection and data analysis.

**Research Design**

This study used a qualitative case study approach because the questions of “how” and “why” were designed to detect the issues of investigation (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.18). Merriam (2009) defined “a case study is an in-depth description analysis of a bounded system” (p.40). Also, as cited in Merriam (2014) “a bounded system” is understood as a “single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p.40). Additionally, Bromley (1986) described case study as “getting close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural setting, partly by their access to subjective factors (thought, feelings, and desires), whereas experiments and surveys often use convenient derivative data, e.g. test results, official records. Besides, case study tends to spread the net for evidence widely, whereas experiments and surveys usually have a narrow focus” (p.23). Other qualitative approaches that included phenomenology (individuals experiences of a phenomenon), grounded theory (generating and developing a theory form data) and ethnography (culture description) are not appropriated for this research.

Different with a historical, observational and an instrumental case study, this qualitative study was conducted as a collective (multisite) case study. Merriam (2014) described a multisite case study “involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within” (p.49). This
qualitative case study was an interpretive one. The purpose of this study was to describe, understand and interpret the findings in multiple realities (Merriam, 2014). In particular, the investigation expected to explore teachers’ practices and conceptions regarding utilizing mindfulness in the classroom for elementary school students in order to understand how diverse children were involved in this practice and how they get benefits as well as challenges from this application. The study also explored teachers’ opinions with respect to their recommendations and suggestions for improving mindfulness in the classroom.

To gain an understanding of their experiences, this study used a individual, semi-structure interview format, with open ended questions to collect the data from four teachers who have used mindfulness practices in their elementary school. deMarrais (2004) defined interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p.55). The interview used in this research was face-to-face and explored participants’ perspectives, thoughts, and experiences.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE) in January 2019. A Research Ethical Review form was submitted to Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board (VIU REB) for approval prior to this study being conducted. REB application for Ethical Review was approved under file number 100104 on November 19, 2019. The related consent document, interview protocol and participant invitation were included for submission in November 2019 and revised in January 2020. The research demonstrated no harm to study participants and affirmed voluntary participation. Following this approval, I sought the permission from the participant to conduct the research. See REB certificate in the appendix A.
Recruitment

This study used purposeful sampling method. In Patton (2002) purposeful sampling techniques have been defined as:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations. (p. 230).

Palinka et al. (2013) presented that purposeful method is widely used in qualitative research. This approach aimed to identify and select cases who can provide rich information related to the phenomenon of interest of the research. This approach includes individuals or group of people who have experiences and knowledge about the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Additionally, it is important to ensure that they are capable of sharing, available and willing to participate in the research (Spradley, 1979).

In this research, the criteria for purposeful sampling selection were school personnel who have experiences of implementing mindfulness practices for students in the classroom in different elementary schools of BC. There was no specific requirement of age, sex, race, or years of teaching experiences. The recruitment of four school-based personnel (classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counselors) was done through snowball sampling as a purposeful method of recruitment for this research. The teachers who had interested in the interview will introduce or provide information of one teacher as referral for the researcher. The snowball recruitment method was used because the use of mindfulness practices in schools was still
uncommon and therefore, it was difficult to recruit interested participants through other sampling methods in BC public schools.

**Data Collection Tools**

This research used individual interview as the data collection approach for this qualitative multisite case study research. The study employed a semi-structured and open-ended interview protocol for gathering the data from the participants. The interviews were conducted either, face-to-face (in person), or via Facetime over a computer, by the lead researcher. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed for data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were conducted after the participants read and understand the purpose of the research and the consent of the study.

The lead researcher conducted all of the interviews, and the thesis supervisor attended two of the four interviews. Each interview was guided by a standard interview protocol (see Appendix B).

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis of this research is a thematic analysis method. In Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is defined as a method of “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (p.6). It also interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Phase of data analysis in this research included six steps, including familiarizing data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clark, 2006). Below is the detailed description of data analysis of this research.

The interviews were audio recorded by a digital recorder of the researcher. They were then transcribed verbatim and used as the raw data for the research, at this point all name were
replaced with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants. An inductive coding method was used in this qualitative research where raw data was collected from the interview conversations without pre-conceived expectations of the themes. The coding process was implemented for every transcript on the ground of identifying the contents of my research interest and codes were highlighted by the categorized colors on the dataset (generating initial codes). Then all codes of every single transcript were generated as categories to form the potential themes. All of related data of each theme were again organized hierarchically to identify sub-themes (searching for themes and sub-themes). Codes and themes were verified by the research supervisor (producing the report).

Based on identified themes, key findings of the research were concluded. The process of interpretation and analysis of findings aimed to provide the answers to a series of flexible the questions such as: what are key findings? what do these findings mean? how they connect to previous research? how they are different? what are common or differences between opinions of the participants, and so on.

**Reliability and Validity**

The validity and reliability of this research is determined through careful attention to the way in which data were collected, analyzed and interpreted. The data was collected and used from the in-depth interviews with teachers. Then, it was critical to consider ways of interpreting the data to make the study trustworthy. This step required careful design of contexts, the process of objective observing, gathering data and systematic forming. Furthermore, in order to promote the study validity, the thematic formation a member check procedure was performed, where a summary of the emerging themes and sub-themes were sent to each participant. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions.
1. Do the emerging themes resonate with your experiences?

2. Do the emerging themes contribute to your understanding of mindfulness practice in schools?

3. Would you like to make any additions/subtractions from these finding?
Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counsellor in terms of the implementation of mindfulness practices for elementary school-aged students in BC. Particularly, the research explored the aspects of professional development of mindfulness for teachers, the way teachers facilitate mindfulness practices for diverse students in the class, as well as how teachers are using the strategies to promote mindfulness in the school settings. Additionally, the research investigated teachers’ perceptions regarding the effects that mindfulness may have on students, and highlighted the challenges educators face when trying to engage in mindfulness implementation in elementary schools.

Chapter 4 includes detailed descriptions of the participants’ demographics, and the identification of themes and subthemes which emerged from the data analysis. The data for this research was collected from teaching and counselling personnel who work in elementary school in BC.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following central question and sub-questions:

Central question: What are the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors regarding mindfulness practices for elementary school-aged students in BC?

Sub-questions:

1. How do classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counselors develop professional skills of mindfulness?
2. How do classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors implement mindfulness for elementary school’s aged students?

3. What are the benefits of mindfulness practice for elementary school-aged students in BC?

4. What are challenges of mindfulness practices in the classroom?

**Participant Overview**

This case study included four participants who have experiences in teaching mindfulness for elementary school-aged students in BC. The participants had at least 15 years teaching experience and have had mindfulness practice in the classroom with at least 7 years of experience. Most of the participants had the Bachelor of Art and a Master’s degree in education related fields. The participants also had a variety of professional development training courses, specifically designed to instruct mindfulness in educational settings. Note: All names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

**Table 1**

* Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Academic Background</th>
<th>Yrs. Teaching</th>
<th>Yrs. using Mindfulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grade 1-2</td>
<td>B.A., B.Ed. M.A. (Linguistics) MSc. (Audiology)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grade K-1 School Counselor</td>
<td>B.Ed. M.Ed. (Counselling)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Resource Teacher</td>
<td>B.Ed. M.A. (Special Ed.)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

The following section of this chapter presents the detailed descriptions of the results, including themes and sub-themes which emerged from data analysis. Three participants took part in the face-to-face interview and one took part in an online, facetime interview. All interviews were digitally recorded then the raw data was transcribed verbatim using Microsoft word. Interview transcripts were analyzed using a thematic content analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2016). As a result of the thematic coding, four main themes and eight sub-themes were created, including: (1) professional development of mindfulness, (2) mindfulness practices in the classroom, (3) benefits of mindfulness practices, (4) challenges of mindfulness practices in the classroom. The below table summarizes the emerging themes and sub-themes of this research.

Table 2

*Themes and Sub-themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Professional development of mindfulness</td>
<td>• Opportunities for professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School’s support in mindfulness implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Mindfulness practices in the classroom</td>
<td>• Strategies for mindfulness practices for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilitators of mindfulness practice for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Benefits of mindfulness practices</td>
<td>• Benefits for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers’ perspectives on positive changes in students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Challenges of mindfulness practices in the classroom</td>
<td>• Barriers for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The consistency of mindfulness practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1: Professional Development of Mindfulness

The participants of this research are school personnel of four different elementary school districts in BC, who teach from K-12. Throughout their careers, they also worked in varied positions such as classroom teacher, school counselor and resource teacher. All four participants shared their experiences related to mindfulness practice and professional development opportunities. The analysis emerged two sub-themes regarding this discussion including 1) opportunity for professional development, and 2) school’s support in mindfulness implementation.

Opportunities for professional development. All four participants shared that they have had opportunities of professional development of mindfulness which were provided by the school district or taken by themselves. Professional development opportunities for staff include, skills training, workshops and seminars which varied from lasting for full day, four to five weeks, seven to eight weeks, or all year round. Additionally, teachers also had opportunities to ongoing skill development, including, self-research, self-learning and self-reading. All participants found that mindfulness is beneficial to their personal lives.

For example,

Michelle. Is currently teaching Grade 4 and previously taught Grade 3-5 and Grade 7. She had yoga training and meditation practice in herself own life for the past ten years. She also got the training of yoga for children, mindfulness and MindUp program. Michelle found that incorporating mindfulness and yoga practice is very helpful for students and herself. She said, “I find lots of benefits of doing that and I am really interested in that”.

Kelly. Is currently a Grade 1-2 classroom teacher. She has approximately ten years’ experience using mindfulness in the classroom. Over this time, she took a variety of professional
development training in mindfulness by herself including the MindUp training, Restorative Circle program workshop, weekly Peace of Circle training workshops. These workshops included topics such as, solving problems, building community relationships, different typical conversation practices and social and emotional learning. Kelly said that mindfulness training not only helps her ways to solve the problems but also make her think more critically about things, increase awareness, being in the present moment and relax.

**Jade.** Is currently a Grade K-1 classroom teacher. She started to become interested in using mindfulness for students after she took a master’s degree in counselling. Jade has had good opportunities to receive professional development training provided by the school district. She took the MindUp training with a group of school counselor and got sort of yearly training on the importance of using mindfulness practices with all kindergarten teachers in the district. Additionally, Jade registered for a lot of the professional training by herself, including an eight-week mindful meditation with a group of mindfulness practitioners, MindUp training, Zone Regulation, Meta Mindfulness and yoga practice. Some years ago, she acted as a school counsellor. Jade said, “I did my master of counselling psychology, and so through that I learned more about mindfulness and how emotions set in our bodies, so I used that in my counselling”.

**Catherine.** She previously taught as a classroom teacher in elementary and high school. She also worked as an educational assistant teacher (EA) but most of her career she worked as a resource teacher in elementary school. Catherine had chances to take seminars in mindfulness many years ago and she has also researched mindfulness techniques by herself to learn more about its application in schools, then she adapted it in her teaching and sharing with colleagues. She also has yoga and meditation practice and incorporates these things into her daily life.
School’s support in mindfulness implementation.

Michelle. Michelle’s school adopted the mindfulness concept many years ago. The school was interested in introducing this concept through a workshop to the entire school board and school teachers. Also, there was a weekly yoga practice conducting at her school for all teachers. However, mindfulness was not a mandatory program within the school but rather suggested teachers trying it if they are interested in it. Michelle said, “they never say we have to do it and in the school they say here is something you might want to try, it is up to you”. Currently, there are about one third of teachers in Michelle’s school using mindfulness programs with their students.

Kelly. Though Kelly had great interest in mindfulness practice and had taken opportunities for professional development on her own, she experienced barriers promoting interest in ongoing professional development for mindfulness supported by her school. To attend a MindUp training ran in the district, Kelly said “the whole school has to go” if they want to do a pro-D on it. However, none of teachers in her school were interested in the training.

Jade. In contrast with Kelly, Jade had a positive response on mindfulness implementation support at her school. Mindfulness was becoming very popular in her school district. Teachers were active in implementing mindfulness. Jade said, “I guess they have the collaboration from the school right now”.

Catherine. Although mindfulness is a popular theme in helping to maintain a balanced well-being, it was still not prevalent in application in her school because not every teacher was interested in using it. Catherine said that as many teachers do not use it, so there is discrepancy in mindfulness practice and it’s “just like a little drop in the pocket”. In her opinion, schools would
have significant benefits buy-in from staff if the teachers were involved in setting an annual goal which included mindfulness in the school.

**Summary of theme 1.** All four participants had opportunities for professional development of mindfulness practices; they either pursued it on their own, or it was offered by the school. A wide variety of professional development mindfulness program were used with several types of mindfulness training (such as, MindUp, Pace of Circle, Zone of the Regulation, Meditation mindfulness), and yoga practices, self-researching, self-reading and self-learning. For those participants whose schools adopted mindfulness practices, they expressed positive experiences and found that using mindfulness strategies advantageous in the classroom. In particular, all of the participants indicated that their personal interests, strong passion, and strong beliefs about the benefits of mindfulness were crucial reasons that they engage in mindfulness practices for students in the classroom. In addition, schools had a very important role in promoting mindfulness training and practices by setting specific goals for promoting mindfulness practices among teachers.

**Theme 2: Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom**

This section offers a description of one of the crucial parts of this research exploration regarding mindfulness practices in the classroom for elementary school-aged students. The emerging theme of *Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom* is formed and grounded by the common responses of all four participants which includes two additional sub-themes, 1) strategies for mindfulness practices for students, and 2) facilitators of mindfulness practice for students. Each participant shared different experiences in mindfulness practice in terms of the strategies and facilitation of skills they have used with elementary school-aged students.
including, attention control, sharpening senses, self-regulation management, mindfully action, and body scan.

**Strategies for mindfulness practices for students.** This sub-theme addressed the following questions.

1) What types of mindfulness practices do teachers use for different students in different contexts?

2) What specific components of mindfulness do teachers use to support diverse groups of students in the classroom?

3) When do they use them for students in the classroom?

**Michelle.** Michelle taught Grade 4, which is comprised of half the students she also taught in Grade 3. Many of them had learned about mindfulness practices when they were in Grade 3, and were already used to the routines of mindfulness including daily practice. Therefore, she did not utilize priority approach for this group any more. However, depending on the group dynamic, flexible practices were used for them such as attention control (breathing practice), mindful action (involving students in daily reflection), and improve physical well-being (practicing yoga).

In the previous years, Michelle also used MindUp curriculum in her mindfulness teaching. However, she preferred using only parts of the lessons to weave mindfulness content into her own lesson and activities. The components she incorporated into practices included sharpening the five senses (seeing, listening, smelling, tasting and feeling), mindful action in learning (reading a story, writing, drawing and articulating practice), and self-regulation management (doing circle activities to practice breath attention, emotion sharing, setting classroom climate expectations, and setting intention for the day’s planning). However, she
especially appreciated the using of circle activities and “do it quite regularly”. For her, this way helped students learn better how to share feeling, being aware of their own thoughts, emotion, and daily actions. She said, it was “sort of the daily basis like let be mindful about what we are doing and discussing about it.”

For group of students who had problems with anxiety, psychological disorders, attention difficulties, and social behavior problems, Michelle had a priority to practice strategies which was specifically designed for the student’s needs. She included different ideas on improving self-regulation management and relaxation methods so that the students learned to solve the problems, to calm themselves down when feeling stressed, and to have opportunities for relaxation. As Michelle noted, teaching mindfulness for different groups of students needs to be flexible but also consistent. She suggested new teachers “just start small and then try the things out to see how they can set it up with their group”. Critically, she said, “don’t give up because that’s difficult at first cause students once it becomes more of a routine then it is part of the routine”.

Michelle used mindful breathing at multiple times a day and then couple of times a week. She said, “everyone just come to a circle like close your eyes and be quiet and just focus on our breath”. Michelle shared that the best strategy is having a daily practice of mindfulness and incorporate moments in the day to practice reflection. The moments included after lunch break, recess break, transition activity, or to bring up the classroom energy. She found that “it was most useful after a big transition” because students need to come back to the group after those moments.

**Kelly.** Kelly taught students in Grade 1-2. She had fourteen students in her class. Kelly used circle activity as the major strategy of mindful practice in her classroom. This practice was
aimed at improving attention skills, self-regulation management, and mindful actions for students. For example, she conducted different circle activities to practice critical thinking, sharing thoughts and emotions, having open discussions and setting intention for the day. She also included other practices such as building classroom community’s friendships, solving problems, kindness practice and respecting practice. She said, with all those things, they “will go through a bunch of activities”. She often combined using chime as an effective tool for drawing students’ attentions during this practice.

Also, Kelly found it was helpful to incorporate physical movement activities like doing yoga practice, stretching and dancing party for young children. For her, the mindful movement would help students re-energize between transition periods, take relaxation and go back to the group activity quickly.

According to Kelly, mindfulness practice did not work well for students who was undiagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) because he cannot control his behavior, attention, as well as following teacher’s instruction. Her solution was to collaborate with an EA teacher and used modifications and adaptations of the mindfulness strategies to support him.

**Jade.** Jade taught Grade K-1 as a classroom teacher, but is also a school counselor a few years ago. In order to keep Grade K-1 students engaged in mindfulness practice, Jade used an online GoNoodle program with nice screen and music to introduce attention and breathing focus skill to her students; for example, bunny breathing and bee breathing.

Jade also targeted her focus on helping her students sharpen the five senses of seeing, listening, tasting, smelling and touching. She did outdoor education activities for students to connect them to the environment and had the practices of noticing things in the nature, walking
meditation and coming back for reflection. In terms of self-regulation management and physical well-being, she used calm apps and yoga card, half-yoga pose breathing practice for helping students stay calm and getting better energy. Jade said that these tools are “quick and easy to use” in between instructions.

As a role of a counselor, Jade also used mindfulness strategies to work with a different group of students, especially students with anxiety. She used a one-on-one mindfulness approach, taught students about the brain and incorporated tools from the Zones of Regulation program in her work. This way helped student learn about their feelings and ways to manage their anxiety at school. She also used a combination of the progressive muscle release, including reducing tension and body relaxation techniques to help students with anxiety.

For Jade, maintaining consistency in practicing mindfulness with her students is one of the utmost important factors.

**Catherine.** Catherine in a elementary school resource teacher and support students Grade K-6. As a resource teacher, Catherine had a chance to work with diverse groups of students and teachers. Like other participants, she also used variety of strategies to promote attention control, sharpening senses, self-regulation management, mindful action, and physical relaxation. For example, she incorporated breathing practices and stretching exercises for helping students reduce stress and anxiety before doing a test. Besides, she adopted visualization strategy (describing a happy place) and guided students to make stress balls as a solution to reducing anxiety and stress. Catherine especially appreciated using Mindfulness apps such as MindShift to support both the general population of students and students with anxiety,

Catherine did not use MindUp in her major training in mindfulness, but she said her strategy is to use different ideas and available activities from the curriculum. For her, training
students in being aware of their own emotions, aware of their thoughts and behaviors are “really important topics”.

Catherine indicated that one of the important strategies for resource teachers is being able to share her mindfulness experience and knowledge to many classroom teachers, education assistants (EAs), students and people in the community. She often conducted mindfulness sharing sessions with colleagues through staff meetings through teaching breathing techniques and encouraging teachers in using mindfulness strategies in their classrooms.

Facilitator of mindfulness practice for students. This sub-theme describes how school personnel facilitate mindfulness practices in terms of breathing techniques, circle activity, social emotional learning, body scan and classroom management.

Michelle. Michelle regularly used a chime for the circle activity and get everyone come together, close their eyes, keep quiet and focus on their breath. In fact, not all students can keep calm and quiet for mindful breathing practice. So, she instructed them gradually “for 30 seconds then to a minute” or sometimes they can get up to two minutes or longer to focus on their breathing, not to focus on nothing else.

For groups of students with highly anxious, stress and anxiety, she adopted facilitation skills such as using effective language and communication skills to guide them learn how to calm themselves down. In different contexts, she used flexible facilitation skills such as allowing those students using headphone in class when needed, allowing them to sit in silence and listening to meditation music until they were ready to join the class. She might also set a little tent in an area of the classroom so that the students could take a nap or lay down by themself and relax their bodies, or let students sit close to her and kept encouraging them to participate in the class.
Michelle shared that the best facilitation strategy for students with special needs was to include all of them in different kinds of mindfulness practice activities. She said, “I included everybody else together, so I wouldn’t do it differently for different kids”. Michelle said that all students are capable in their own ways and they all have the ability to participate. Also, any student wants to feel that they belong to a group.

Finally, Michelle shared that it’s important for teachers to try different practices, use different ideas, and to decide which approach works best for them. It is especially important to use mindfulness in a natural and authentic way, to promote comfort and ease in a variety of mindfulness practices.

**Kelly.** To help the young students be more focused, Kelly especially liked using chimes while doing a variety of circle activities and using of a centre table where students could sit comfortably around. She used effective language to help students build the classroom community and to be aware that they are all the same. For example, she explained that they all have this kind of food, that kind of food, they all do stuff, they all get mad with their mom and dad, they all get mad with their friends, and so on. So, students would not see as much the difference as much as the similarities from each other.

Kelly tends to collaborate with an EA to modify and adapt interventions for students with learning difficulties. She said, “I have an EA who deals with that, I mean we just modify and adapt as we have to help him. No more we can do”.

**Jade.** Jade has the group of students at five and six years of age (Grades K-1) for many years. Her strategies included using a variety of age-appropriate tools. These included the GoNoodle program, yoga patterns, and breathing practice. Each of these strategies helped promote forming routine mindfulness practices, and encouraged skill development, such as,
In terms of breathing practice, Jade shared that depending on the moods of the students on a given day, she will take them step-by-step through different mindfulness practice. For example, if she found that the children need increase their energy up, she used physical exercises and games. But if she felt that the children need to calm down, she used breathing practices like bee breathing and bunny breathing in the GoNoodle program.

In terms of classroom management, Jade appreciated the importance of young children developing self-awareness skills—that is, being aware their body, mind, thoughts and emotions. She adapted to motivate the young students to practice and to improve their self-confidence and was persistent to work out the first time because on any given day, students can be on different moods and they can be silly and not comply.

Jade shared that using a one-on-one strategy to support students with special needs is an effective approach. However, she also noted that a school counselor has very limited time to support every single student with special needs in terms of mindfulness practice. Therefore, she suggested that consistency of daily mindfulness practice in the classroom is crucial to support students calmer.

Catherine. As a resource teacher, Catherine had different groups of students and teachers to work with. In order to support students in doing breathing practice, Catherine used a technique called “enveloped breathing”. To illustrate, she used a visualization example showing the lid of the envelop and showing the flap of the envelop opening. In addition, she helped her students make tools for reducing stress. For example, making balloon with flour inside and decorating them; having something to press into their palms; and coloring books.
Furthermore, in order to help her students access the knowledge and skills needed to develop emotional control and self-regulation, she also chose to work with small groups or one-on-one with students with anxiety and agitation. She used calming strategies to help them self-regulate with breathing practice. She said, “It worked quite easily that way.” Catherine included every student in the practice as much as they were able in the classroom. Her way was to make it more simplify language so that they can understand the instruction.

In brief, like other participants, Catherine also used flexible practices, a variety of ideas and strategies to integrate mindfulness into different lessons and activities.

**Summary of Theme 2**

This theme is presented to describe mindfulness practice in the classroom, and it also comprises of two sub-themes. These include 1) strategies of mindfulness practices for students, and 2) facilitators of mindfulness for students.

The first sub-theme presented aimed at providing the answers to the questions: what types of mindfulness practices do teachers use for different students in different contexts and what specific components of mindfulness practices that every single teachers use to support diverse students in the classroom. The results of four participants showed that every single teacher who teaches different group aged students has different strategies of mindfulness practices. However, most of them have similar focus on the components of mindfulness practice such as attention control, sharpening senses, self-regulation management, mindful action, and body scan.

The second sub-theme presented aimed at providing the answers to the questions: how teacher facilitate mindfulness practice for diverse students, and how they encouraged diverse students to participate in the mindfulness practice. All four participants provided a variety of
ways of facilitating mindfulness practice as well as sharing common components of mindfulness. Overall, teachers are similar in the ways that they facilitate and implement the concept of breathing practice, circle activity, knowledge of cognitive functioning, understanding of feeling zones, social emotional learning, self-regulation and self-management, and body scan. However, teachers also use different strategies and classroom management techniques to facilitate and implement mindfulness practice, such as differences in the strategies and the tools used, resources availability to incorporate into mindful activities, and flexibility of mindfulness methods.

**Theme 3: Benefits of Mindfulness Practices**

This section presents two aspects of effects of mindfulness on students in the classroom. The first emerged sub-theme identifies the benefited students of mindfulness practice, and the second emerged sub-theme identifies teachers’ perspectives on the changes in students. All four participants included these two contents in their responses to the interview.

**Benefits for students**

*Michelle.* Her school adopted an inclusive education program; therefore, she has different groups of students in her class. Michelle explained that mindfulness practices benefits all her students, however, are especially beneficial with students struggling with anxiety and stress, have ADHD, have behavioral issues, students with psychological disorders, students with moderate to extreme social emotional challenges, students with academic challenges, and students with have trouble sleeping.

*Kelly.* Kelly also included diversified of students in her class as an inclusive education program. The students who benefitted from the mindfulness practice in her class included
general students who are in Grade 1-2, student who have impulsive and misbehavior, and student who have undiagnosed ADHD.

**Jade.** As described in the interview, explained that mindfulness all of her students in Grade K-1, and students in Grade 6 who have anxiety.

**Catherine.** Catherine worked with different groups of students and teachers. She explained that mindfulness benefited general education students, and students with anxiety and agitation.

**Teachers’ perspectives on positive changes in students.** All of the participants determined that they see the benefits of mindfulness practice in their students. Most of the participants recognized positive changes in terms of self-regulation management, academic improvement, class participation, attention control, and emotional and physical well-being.

**Michelle.** The greatest benefit see was a significant change in student self-regulation management. Specifically, students were calmer in the class, especially when the students are with the same teacher for multiple years. Michelle said, “when it becomes a routine, it is becoming practice, so it is becoming something they are comfortable with and understand. She also noted that students were more responsive to try different things, and a bit more confident because they have better focus.

Mindfulness practices also have positive effects especially on the group of exceptional students in terms of class participation. Michelle shared that “I feel all kids can participate to whatever level that they can, I feel that they all can do to the best that they can to figure out what works best for them”.

**Kelly.** Responding to the interview regarding the benefits of mindfulness practices, Kelly shared that her students paid better attention and focused during circle activities. She found
that doing circle activities help the students understand both themselves and each other. She said, “they get to know the other kids, and they become like better friends”. Also, they learn how to better solve problems by themselves from circle activities.

**Jade.** Supporting groups of students from Grade K-1, Jade expressed many benefits of mindfulness practice. She said, “I use a variety of tools and I do find that it helps draw kids’ awareness to the present moment and be in their body and be grounded”. Secondly, students have learned a lot around feelings since they were able to articulate their emotions better and calm themselves more easily when they are upset. Thirdly, young students enjoyed engaging in yoga pose exercises and movement activities, “I find them more doing it”, Jade said. Finally, Jade indicated that breathing practices were beneficial all of her students. She guessed that most of the students could help control on that and they could use it anywhere.

**Catherine.** Catherine shared a concept of mindfulness practice called sharpening the senses, by observing and being aware of the surrounding environment. This strategy was helpful for students to calm down and deal with anxiety and stress. Additionally, she also found that her students are becoming more in control of their own emotions and using effective language. For example, young students were able to articulate around needing to take a break, to take a walk, or to take a drink.

**Summary of Theme 3**

This section presents the effects of mindfulness practice on students. Two emerged sub-themes helped identify the group of benefitted students, as well as presenting perspectives of the four participants regarding mindfulness effects on students. Major effects include, self-regulation management, attention control, class participation, academic improvement, and emotional and physical well-being. However, the changes varied from student to student.
Theme 4: Challenges of Mindfulness Practices in the Classroom

This section presents the barriers of teachers in mindfulness implementation and includes two sub-themes, 1) Barriers for students, and 2) the consistency of mindfulness practice.

**Barriers for students**

_Michelle._ Although mindfulness has huge benefits in some students, Michelle noted that other students have a hard time getting their brain to calm down and found it hard to focus. Michelle found that supporting students who have extreme behavioral challenges was difficult as they were not open to try new activities. Some students tried to participate; however, as the tasks became more difficult, they were likely to quit, saying, “when it is stronger, more difficult academic thing then that is when you see kids opting out a bit more”.

_Kelly._ The challenging students were some of the barriers that Kelly has to deal with when using mindfulness practice in the classroom because they could not understand teacher’s instructions. Furthermore, some had difficulty controlling their behavior and disruptive actions; therefore they could not participate with everyone in the class, even when EA support was offered. Additionally, Kelly shared that students who did not have mindfulness training in kindergarten were more challenging to work with. The longer the student is been trained with mindfulness skills, the harder they try.

_Jade._ Jade indicated that for some students, their mood might change from day by day, so some days they might collaborate well, but other days they might not.
Catherine. Unlike the other three participants, this interview found no information of Catherine’s response regarding the barriers to students. She mentioned to the challenges of teachers rather than of students.

The consistency of mindfulness practice.

Michelle. There are about four to five teachers out of fourteen teachers who use mindfulness practice with their students in Michelle’s school. Michelle said that those students who stayed with her in more than a year, appeared to be calmer and more confident as they get into a routine of mindfulness practice for longer.

Kelly. There are about one to two teachers in Kelly’s school who use mindfulness practice with their students. Mindfulness was not implemented consistently between grades because not many teachers were interested in it. Kelly indicated that mindfulness should become an educational goal at her school. She also thought that the school district should adopt the mindfulness program and make it mandatory, or they should have more training for all teachers to learn about it.

Jade. Jade determined that maintaining consistency is crucial for mindfulness practice. Additionally, being persistent and maintaining enthusiasm are also challenges to some teachers while implementing mindfulness. In regard to teaching resources, she said that some teachers may have challenges with the structure of the programs because some programs are very intensive, such as, MindUp. “Teachers really have to learn to do it and have strong commitment to practice it”, Jade said.

Catherine. Likewise, Catherine said that inconsistency in implementing mindfulness from kindergarten to higher education program is a challenge because many teachers feel that they are overwhelmed with too many programs. In addition, she indicated that not everybody is
interested in mindfulness practice. She said, “it is not something everybody is comfortable with and they might not have the experiences with the subject”. In fact, mindfulness is used inconsistently and very limited, “like a little drop in the pocket” and “not as prevalent” by teachers. Catherine believes that mindfulness practice should be a goal of a school district so that every teacher is trained and has the same language about it.

Summary of Theme 4

This theme presents the challenges of mindfulness practice for students. All four participants shared opinions and perspectives regarding this issue. Students who did not have mindfulness training in kindergarten, have undiagnosed learning disabilities, or social and behavioral issues, had more challenges with mindfulness practices. However, there were some positive effects in participating and belonging to the group. According to the opinions of all four participants, inconsistency in implementing mindfulness practice from kindergarten to higher grades is a major barrier to maintain practice. In addition, there appears to be limited numbers of teachers and school districts interested in implementing mindfulness programs. Therefore, it is important for the schools to set the school-wide goal in mindfulness practice implementation. Additionally, teachers are overwhelmed by the current programs and class sizes in schools, which is also a barrier to implementing mindfulness practices.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perspectives of classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors, as they implement mindfulness practices in elementary schools of BC. This chapter presents the key findings of the study and discusses the interpretative analysis of for each of the four emerging themes, included: (a) professional development of mindfulness, (b) mindfulness practices in the classroom, (c) benefits of mindfulness practices, (d) challenges of mindfulness practices in the classroom. This chapter also provides a response to the central research questions and sub-questions, highlights the unexpected findings, discusses the implications for practice and research contributions, outlines the limitations of this work, and presents areas for further investigation.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following central question and sub-questions.

Central question: What are the experiences and perceptions of classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counselors regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices in BC elementary schools?

Sub-questions:

5. How do classroom teachers, resource teacher, and school counselors develop professional skills of mindfulness?

6. How do classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors implement mindfulness for diverse groups of students in BC elementary schools?

7. What are the effects of mindfulness practice for diverse groups of elementary school-aged students in BC?
8. What are challenges of mindfulness instruction?

**Finding 1: Mindfulness as Professional Development**

All four participants in this study had opportunities to take a variety of mindfulness training programs, either initiated by themselves or offered through their school districts. Most participants had from eight to fifteen years of mindfulness capacity building and practicing in classrooms. All participants indicated a personal benefit from the mindfulness training. The participants showed a number of positive impacts including the ability to self-regulate, the ability to deal with stress and burn out, the ability to calm their body and mind, and the ability to self-reflect. This finding is consistent with Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, and Davidson (2013) who stated, mindfulness for educators promotes self-compassion, reduce psychological burden and burnout, and increases effective teaching behavior. Also, the work of Meiklejohn, et al., (2012), who presented an increase in teaching self-efficacy, well-being and positive teaching styles in teachers who participated in mindfulness programs.

This research found that the school district had a critical role to play in providing opportunities for professional development of mindfulness practices. The participants whose schools adopted mindfulness widely, expressed more positive implementation of mindfulness practices than those who did not have school-wide support. For example, these teachers were offered weekly yoga classes for school personnel’s stress reduction, as well as had opportunities to attend other related training and workshops offered by the school program. One of the four participants noted that she had a mandatory mindfulness program in her school and had full support from the school district to engaging in mindfulness practice and skill development workshops. Further, the participants who lack of school support in professional development had more challenges in convincing other teachers in the schools to use mindfulness techniques, and
they did not have time to collaborate to promote mindfulness implementation. This finding is consistent with La Paro and Pianta (2003), who found that teachers who lack of administrative support and supportive resources, have less joy in teaching, less interest on task and less responsiveness to students who are challenging of learning.

The value of this finding provided us a picture that the participants who are classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors in BC elementary schools had a good background of mindfulness professional development to support diverse groups of children from kindergarten to high school. Knowing that mindfulness is an intensive practice; therefore, this finding is especially important because it reflected the quality of mindfulness intervention for students in elementary schools. The more experiences and improvement of psychological health and well-being the educators get from mindfulness practices, the more effects they could help students in terms of mental health well-being promotion and social-emotional management.

Critically, the school districts in BC were determined to do their best to maintain a sustainable approach for mindfulness-based intervention programs for both teachers and students in terms of professional development and consistent goal setting.

**Finding 2: Mindfulness Strategies and Techniques**

All four participants shared a variety of strategies and techniques to help facilitate mindfulness practices. These included, mindful breathing, cognitive training, sharpening senses, self-regulate management, physical relaxation practices, and mindful action practices. Mindful breathing is a practice of paying close attention to their breathing during a moment of time and was commonly mentioned as the “go-to” strategy to support self-regulation. Depending on the school-age of children and students’ dynamics, the participants used various breathing techniques for their learning and practices (e.g., bee breathing, bunny breathing, and envelop...
breathing). Three of the four participants noted that they often did mindful breathing practices with the students many times a day, such as at the beginning of the lesson, during lesson transitions, at recess breaks, after lunch break, and at the end of the school day. However, they also used it when they felt students need to calm down, relax, dealing with a problem, or dealing with anxiety and stress before doing tests. This finding parallels the work of Maloney, Lawlor, Schonert-Reichl and Whitehead (2016) who present the four mindfulness practices included in the MindUp program: getting focused, sharpening your senses, it’s all about attitude, and, taking action mindfully. Given the strategies and facilitating techniques for mindfulness practices, presented by Collicott (1991) and Perner (2004), teachers can provide meaningful learning experiences for all students in their classes and promote classroom collaboration.

Differentiated Instruction was also noted as a key strategy for supporting students with diverse learning needs in terms of mindfulness implementation. All four participants expressed they engaged diverse groups of students, especially students with special learning needs into mindfulness practices, including students with high anxious, anxiety, stress, undiagnosed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), social-emotional disorders, and social behavior challenges. Each participant had a different approach to engage the students in classroom activities. For instance, Go Noodle program involved young students (K-1) in mindfulness movement activities, and Circle Activity was appropriated for social emotional learning practices and building classroom environment. However, they all used small group and one-on-one support, as well as offered quiet place in the classroom where students gain control of their behavior and learn self-regulation techniques (e.g., breathing, focused attention, and emotion understanding). This finding is in line with the work of Barrett-Zahn (2019) who also found that
students have different ways of learning by using multiple sources and methods, and learning is not an experience of “one size fits to all”.

As stated in the study, the participants included classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselors. Some of them had both roles of a classroom teacher and resource teacher or a classroom teacher and a counselor. Findings from this study showed that a school counselor and a resource teacher had different strategies in mindfulness practices for students compared to a classroom teacher in mindfulness practices. For instance, the school counselor had a group of students where she used MindUp in a whole class and then used Zone of Regulation with a smaller sub-group for mindful breathing practice. She talked about zones of feelings and working a lot with that program. In addition, she used one-on-one support and emphasized teaching about the brain function so the students could understand how the brain helps keep the body and mind calm. Specifically, she combined using progressive muscle relaxation, which was all related to mindfulness, tensing, releasing muscle group in the body relaxation. A resource teacher presented that she used mindfulness to provide one-on-one support for students who are experiencing anxiety. In these sessions, the resource teachers would provide students with knowledge about brain functions, use breathing techniques, provide coloring books, use stress balls for self-care, and encourage the use of apps for mindfulness support (e.g., Mindshift CBT).

In brief, this finding showed that the participants utilized the multiples mindfulness strategies, differentiated techniques, tools and resources for diverse groups of students. While suggestions of using “ready to use” mindfulness curriculum for teachers without further training were argued, this finding is important because it showed a different perspective from the participants in terms of mindfulness approach.
Finding 3: Impact of Mindfulness on Students

Feedback from the four participants included a wide range of positive effects in students. However, the most commonly reported opinions by all participants was that the implementation of mindfulness practices with elementary students increases their ability to focus attention, increase self-awareness and self-management skills, and improve relationship skills. All four participants responded that their students acquired better focusing ability and self-awareness by doing breathing practices. This positive effect has a close connection with the daily breathing practices that they took in the classrooms. The students were noted as being aware of their body, mind, and feelings. Three in four participants implemented mindful breathing practices for students, regularly. One of the classroom teacher participants did not use breathing practice, but rather used a chime and had circle activities to draw students’ attention and focus. Besides, two opinions from the classroom teacher and the counselor determined that persistence in taking daily mindful breathing was crucial for this practice.

Also, students were reported increasing the ability of self-management. The classroom teachers, the school counselor, and the resource teachers all said that the students were calmer; they were able to control their emotions, body, and mind, and learned how to reduce stress (self-regulate). This result was obvious for different groups of students, especially students with social-emotional challenges (e.g., anxiety, highly anxious, impulsivity, agitation, autism, and ADHD/undiagnosed ADHD). This finding fits with the conclusions of Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz and Walach (2014), that mindfulness had positive impacts on related stress, disorders, anxiety, depression and clinical problems in adults; however, Kabat-Zinn (1990), Lawlor (2014) and Schonert-Reichl (2013) also provided similar evidence for adolescents.
Similarly, all of the participants indicated that their students had improved self-management and relationship skills when mindfulness strategies were used. Specifically, they learned how to share their own emotions, and developed empathy for the thinking and feelings of others. In addition, the participants reported that the students learned to understand each other and realized that they are not different from each other. As a result, students knew how to solve the problems, how to accept others, and how to build better relationships with friends. Consistent with this finding, Lawlor et al., (2010) determined that a mindfulness based SEL programs can lead to an improvement in social relations. Three in four participants determined this result with positive feedback in terms of classroom environment improvement. Two participants used circle activities as the main activity for daily mindfulness practices as it helped students to manage their social-emotional skills.

In short, these results presented perspectives of four school-based personnel (classroom teachers, resource teacher and school counselor) regarding the effects of mindfulness on students in the schools of BC. Respondents showed many positive outcomes of mindfulness, including the improvement of attention and focus skill, self-regulation management and social relationships in their students. This theme is meaningful as it supports the positive impacts of mindfulness on students’ social-emotional well-being. It is also important to note that mindfulness practices were seen as most effective when educational leaders, as well as other teachers within a school were in support of the intervention. With this in mind, the findings of this study indicate the necessity for school-wide buy-in of mindfulness interventions, with the goal of promoting positive school health and learning environments.
Finding 4: Limitations of Mindfulness in Schools

Though mindfulness practices have a lot of benefits on diverse groups of students, there are barriers to the sustainable approach of mindfulness practices in the elementary schools of BC. The participants concluded that professional development and school supports were fundamental factors for a long-term implementation of mindfulness practice. First, most of the opinions suggested that more educators, especially young teachers should be trained in mindfulness instruction. Many teachers in the participants’ schools did not know about mindfulness nor were interested in using mindfulness in their classrooms. Regarding this matter, Bristow (2017) argued that it would be “difficult to ask a teacher who cannot swim to teach a swimming class from a textbook”. However, Lawlor (2014) asserted focusing on the teacher is very important for the implementation of a school-based mindfulness program.

Second, though the participants used a variety of programs and strategies for facilitating mindfulness, one opinion shared indicated that the structure and lack of flexibility of a predetermined curriculum/program is a barrier for some teachers. For example, current curriculum like MindUp is an intensive program. To use it effectively, teachers need to have high commitment to the program implementation. In fact, most participants agreed that teachers should try different programs and start with small things and check to make sure to see which program or intervention approach works best for their teaching style and approach. Lawlor (2014) indicated that there are many valuable resources available for educators to use on the CASEL website (www.casel.org), however, the key ingredients for successful program implementation, include teachers’ ongoing professional development, high-quality implementation, and ongoing evaluation of program effectiveness.
The last finding related to the barrier of consistent support of the school district. Three in four participants said there was inconsistency in implementing mindfulness practice between grades. Students did not have the chance to maintain mindfulness practices from grade to grade. Two opinions suggested clearly that the school districts need to set a district-wide goal for mindfulness practices, and then offer professional development workshops for teachers. Armstrong (2019) determined that if mindfulness practice is systematically designed and implemented in the educational system, not only the school but the whole community can benefit from it. The whole-school approach of mindfulness is defined as a critical decision to maintain the sustainability of the positive school health learning environment.

In brief, this finding presented three important barriers during mindfulness implementation in the elementary schools of BC, including limited teachers having knowledges and interests in mindfulness practices, lacking flexible predetermined mindfulness curriculum for teachers’ usage, and lacking consistency of mindfulness implementation between grades. This finding might be useful for educational leaders and researchers when making strategies for mindfulness improvement and interventions in the school districts.

**Unexpected Finding**

This research emerged a unexpected finding. Specifically, three of the four participants noted that mindfulness practices should be implemented for students from kindergarten to high-school. In fact, the earlier children receive mindfulness training and practice, the fewer problems they have in higher grades. Many mindfulness researchers have shown that mindfulness is useful for emotional well-being for adolescents and adults, but this finding indicated that school-personnel believe early intervention in early childhood education is also beneficial. Therefore,
this finding provides insight into how teachers, educational leaders, and researchers could focus their mindfulness practices from the primary school years.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings of this case study have implications for practices for not only teachers, but also educational leaders and researchers. First, the finding may be used sharing among teachers and school personnel in terms of mindfulness strategies to facilitate interventions in classrooms, as well as in professional development workshops in school districts. In addition, teachers and school personnel could benefit from the discussion of sharing experiences in using tools, resources, and methods for diverse populations of students in different classroom contexts.

Further, findings related to barriers to professional development provide helpful information to school administrators, as they revealed the importance of school-wide assessment of mindfulness practices, the necessity for school-wide goals related to mindfulness instruction and follow through, and the usefulness of go-to strategies and tools for classroom use of mindfulness techniques.

**Research Contributions**

Educational systems in the world today are shifting the focus on improving a healthy school learning environment where students not only having better academic performance but also having benefits from healthy living, mental well-being and social well-being. There has been a high need for having effective school-based intervention programs to meet the criteria. Mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) has been developed over the decades and showed significant effects in promoting a positive school health learning environment by a huge bunch of research work. Mindfulness is found useful to support the student in addressing the crisis included psychological disorders, social and emotional challenges, mental and physical
challenges. In BC, MBI is beginning to be adopted by educational systems from pre-schools to universities. There is a growing emphasis on research exploring mindfulness in schools, however, there are few pieces of literature describing in detail how the school personnel implement mindfulness for elementary school students in BC. This research aimed to explore this gap so that the picture of mindfulness implementation in the BC elementary classrooms is clearer. The central question to explore my research was: What are the experiences and perspectives of the classroom teacher, resource teacher and school counselor regarding mindfulness practices for elementary school-aged students in BC?

Key findings in terms of professional development, benefits, and challenges of mindfulness implementation in BC have similar results and conclusions with previous research works conducted at many places outside of BC. However, the key difference between previous research and this study is that this work provides the field with detailed descriptions about how mindfulness is specifically implemented with elementary school students by classroom teachers, resource teachers, and school counselors. The findings of this research are significant because they provided us more understanding and knowledge about the strategies, facilitating techniques, tools, and resources that the school personnel used to support diverse groups of students. In addition, through this work, we also understand how classroom teachers, resource teacher and school counselor provided their supports to students with mental, social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Finally, this work highlights challenges for the sustainable approach of mindfulness implementation in the elementary schools.

**Limitations**

This qualitative case study research had some restrictions in terms of recruitment, sampling size, and data collection, which influence the interpretation of the results.
First, the topic of this research was unpopular and uneasy to mobilize the participants publicly in the elementary school districts of BC. Therefore, this case study research was able to recruit only four participants who met the criteria of the research. This small sample size only enabled a snapshot view into the use of mindfulness practices and only limited detail about the what strategies resource teachers and counselor use to support mindfulness practices was provided by the participants. As a result, the information provided by the school counselor and the resource teacher was still not clear enough to know how they implemented and did the supports to diverse groups of students. To overcome this limitation in future research could include a larger sample of participants. Additionally, future research could include methods of triangulation (such as collecting data using classroom observations or parent surveys) to increase the scope and validity of the research findings.

Second, this study used a semi-structured interview protocol to conduct an in-depth interview to collect the data. All the responses from the participants to the questions regarding the benefits of mindfulness practices were not triangulated with other data sources. For example, the school districts where the participants were teaching, did not provide follow-up assessments on mindfulness intervention programs. Therefore, it is not possible to know the real effects of mindfulness practices on different groups of students. Additionally, future research could include methods of triangulation (such as collecting data using classroom observations or parent surveys) to increase the scope and validity of the research findings.

Finally, all of the participants in this study were from one geographic location (urban centres) and therefore, the perspectives discussed represent only a very limited view. Further research could purposefully recruit participants from other regions and have representation from rural and remote locations.
Suggestions for Future Research

A major contribution of this study was to reveal how classroom teachers, resource teachers and school counselor in elementary schools of BC implemented mindfulness practices for diverse groups of students. Future research specifically focusses on the implementation of mindfulness practices with diverse student populations (e.g., student with ADHD, student who have autism). In addition, future research could use differing research methods (e.g., survey, classroom observations) which would shed light on different aspects of mindfulness use in schools.

Conclusion

In closing, this research *A Case Study of Mindfulness Practices for Students in Elementary Schools of British Columbia*, provides valuable information about how mindfulness is currently being implemented in BC elementary schools. The findings of this study showed that on-going professional development for school personnel, as well as supportive school administrators are fundamental to effective mindfulness implementation. Also, this study adds to our understanding about what strategies and tools school personnel use to promote mindfulness practices in their classrooms. This research also found positive effects of mindfulness practices in terms of increasing focused attention ability, self-awareness, self-management and relationship skills of both students and teachers. It is hoped that the findings of this work will encourage ongoing investigation into effective mindfulness implementation strategies in our schools.
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influence of implementation non-program outcomes and the factors affecting

Enhancing students’ social and emotional development promotes success in school:


Appendices

Appendix A: REB Certificate

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Chi Thi Le Nguyen

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: 13 January, 2019
Appendix B: Teacher’s Interview Protocol

### Teacher’s Information

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience:</td>
<td>________________________________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic background:</td>
<td>_______________________________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade of teaching:</td>
<td>__________________________________________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have students with special learning needs in classes?</td>
<td>Yes_______ No _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teacher’s Perspectives

1. What is your training or background in mindfulness? How have you incorporated mindfulness teaching or practice in your daily life?

2. What are your thoughts on the curriculum involving mindfulness practices in classrooms? (probes: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills)

3. How are students with special learning needs involved in mindfulness practicing in the class?

4. How do you see mindfulness impacting both typical students and student with special learning needs?
   - How does it benefit them?
   - What challenges do they have?

5. What are your suggestions for enhancing mindfulness implementation in elementary classrooms?

6. Is there anything else would you like to add?
Appendix C: Consent Form with Teachers

Date: XXXX
Application: #100104

Please consider joining us for this important study!

Research Project Title: A Case Study of Mindfulness Practices for Students in Elementary School

Principal Investigator: Dr. Nancy Norman  Email: email@email.com  Phone ### ### ####
Co-Investigator: Chi Nguyen  Email: email@email.com  Phone ### ### ####

Dear Teachers,
I am Chi Nguyen and a Master’s student in Special Education at Vancouver Island University, completing my thesis project. I am conducting a study about perspectives of teacher instruction of mindfulness. My research title is “A case study of mindfulness practices for students in elementary school”. I would like to invite you to participate in this important work.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explores teachers’ experiences and perspectives on mindfulness practices in their classrooms. This study includes a follow-up 30-minute interview, where the teachers have an opportunity to discuss their experiences and perspectives of mindfulness practices in their classrooms.
In BC, there has been an increased interest from educators in introducing mindfulness practices in educational program from elementary school to colleges and universities. However, there are very few research studies which reflect teachers’ experiences and perspectives on mindfulness for students in elementary school. Therefore, this study is conducted with the aim to address this gap in the literature. This study is important because it will be extending our understanding of how mindfulness is instructed, and how teachers perceive and experience using mindfulness in their work. It is hoped that this study will provide direction for the future study about the importance and effectiveness of mindfulness across grades and across diverse student needs.

Participants: The participants of this research will be elementary teachers who include mindfulness practices in their teaching. This may be either a formal mindfulness program/curriculum or teacher designed lessons/practices.

What will you be asked to do? Teachers who agree to participate in this study will involve in an about 30-minute face-to-face or phone interview to discuss your perspectives about using mindfulness in your classroom. The interview will be held out of school time and at a location convenient to you. We anticipate that the interview will take place during February 2020. The interview will include a semi-structured discussion which will be audio-record for data collection purposes. Interview data will be transcribed and all identifying information (e.g., names) will be removed from the transcript, in order to promote confidentiality.

What type of personal information will be collected? This study is investigating teacher perceptions of mindfulness practices for students in the classroom. However, your privacy is protected during all other phases of the study, as all names will be anonymized or replaced with
numbers or pseudonyms. Particularly, all identifying information collected from audio of the interviews and transcripts will be removed from the data analysis. Further, upon the completion of data collection, the raw data of recorded interviews will be treated and transferred to a password protected computer file. Audio files will be erased from the recording device (smart phone) after the transcription and completion of the study report (in year 2020). The information we collected will be securely stored in a password protected computer file, and any hard copies of the interview notes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Investigator’s (Dr. Nancy Norman) office. Not any data from the transcripts and the interview is produced in any other research or publication post.

In addition, to support confidentiality and your privacy as participants, all data will be managed by the researcher (Chi Nguyen) and all the names will be replaced with pseudonyms prior to data analysis.

**What happens to the information you provide?** The results will be utilized by the researchers to inform the research in terms of mindfulness practice reflection for students in the classroom in BC. The digital recording of the interview & transcripts will be deleted within one year after the research completion.

**Confidentiality:** Your involvement in this study is confidential in terms of consent to participate.

All data collected during this study will be kept confidentially, including completed consent forms, interview notes and audio recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a password protected computer file, and hard copies will be kept in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator’s (PI) office. All names on the data will be anonymized or coded with number or replaced with the researcher given pseudonyms. If the researchers report on this study through published article, no names or identifiable comments will appear as part of the report.

**Are there benefits if you participate?** During the in-depth interview, you will have chance to share your experiences and perspectives of teaching practices which may enhance your teaching experiences.

**Are there risks if you participate?**
The research is expected having minimal risks or involving non-potential vulnerable circumstances for participants in the research. Teachers are fully informed beforehand about the research. Teachers will not also have risks to be judged because all the privacy data collected from the interview will be confidentially and securely protected during the data treatment and procession. Any identity data will be anonymized and coded as number or pseudonym prior to data analysis.

**Your participation:** Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you will be free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. Refusal to participate or withdraw/dropout after agreeing to participate will not have an adverse effect or consequence. If you decide to withdraw at any point during the study, the data associated with you will not be used and will be deleted from the transcript, unless you have informed us that we can maintain the use of your collected data. The final date to withdraw from the study is Feb 28, 2020, by contacting Chi Nguyen at email@email.com, Dr. Nancy Norman at email@email.com, or confidentiality by contacting Dr. Chris Turner at email@email.com.

After Feb 28, 2020, data collected during the observation and interview may be used in the research findings.
If you consent to participating in this study, you have not waived your right to legal recourse in the event of research related harm.

Note: In the event that new information arises which may impact your ongoing willingness to participate, we will inform you of any potential issues (e.g., ethical considerations that may adversely affect you or another participants in this study, or a breach of data security).

**Alternatives to participation for similar benefits:** If you choose not to participate in this study, you will be able to access the study's written publications.

**Statement of potential conflict of interest:** There are no known conflicts of interests between the researcher and potential participants.

**Persons to contact:** If you want to know more about this research, please contact the researcher at email@email.com or via phone ### ### ####, Dr. Nancy Norman at email@email.com. Or if you have concerns about the participants’ right or treatment in this study, please contact The Vancouver Island University Statement on Ethical Issues by phone at ### ### ### ### (REB chair) or email at email@email.com

**Acceptance of this form:** This consent form explains the research study you are being asked to join. Please review this form carefully and ask any questions about the study before you agree to join. You may also ask questions at any time after joining the study. See above for persons to contact.

Once you have read this document, or the document has been read and explained to you, please sign or make your mark below if you agree to take part in the study.

Your completion of this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate in the in-depth interview.

I have read the above information regarding this research study and consent to participate in this study.

Printed Name: _______________________________ Signature: __________________________

Date: ______________________

Do you agree to be quoted in the products of research? Yes □ No □

**Signed copies of this consent form must be 1) retained on file by the investigator, and 2) given to the subject.**
Appendix D: Recruitment Script

Dear elementary school teachers,

I am Chi Nguyen, a student researcher in the Master of Education in Special Education (MEDS) at Vancouver Island University (VIU), Nanaimo. For my thesis, I am conducting a research study on teachers’ mindfulness practices for students in elementary school from kindergarten to grade 5, under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Norman.

I am looking for interested teachers who would like to participate in this important study. This study is a face-to-face or on-phone interview conducted out of school hours, to explore teachers’ experiences and perspectives about mindfulness practices in their classrooms. The interview will be approximately 30-minutes in length.

If you are interested in the project, I would like to invite you to participate in this research. Please find more information about the study in the attached consent form in this email. If you would like to participate or would like further information, please contact me at ### ### #### or email: email@email.com

Sincerely,
Chi Nguyen