

# Mindfulness for English Language Teachers

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UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
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**Mentor rada:**

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## **Sažetak**

### **Puna svjesnost za nastavnike engleskoga jezika**

Puna svjesnost (eng. *mindfulness*), zajedno s ponašanjima kao što su smirenost, jasnoća u izražavanju i mislima, ljubaznost, suosjećanje i opraštanje koji je prate u učionici, još uvijek predstavlja neistraženo područje stručnosti učiteljskog poziva. Cilj je ovog diplomskog rada predstaviti analizu novijih studija na temu pune svjesnosti, tehnike koja je pobudila interes u školskim zajednicama zbog pozitivnog utjecaja koji ima na smanjenje osjećaja stresa i nastavnika i kod učenika. Kako bi se predstavilo istraživanje o prednostima pune svjesnosti širim skupinama nastavnika engleskoga jezika, sažeto su opisani primjeri dobre prakse zajedno s tri dokazano učinkovita programa (“Emocionalna ravnoteža temeljena na punoj svjesnosti”, „Pristup zajednice punosvjesnom učenju“ i „Razvoj svijesti i otpornosti u obrazovanju“) koja se koriste za razvoj vještina pune svjesnosti.

**Ključne riječi:** *mindfulness*, smanjenje osjećaja stresa, učitelji, nastavnici engleskoga jezika, škole, *mindfulness* program

## **Abstract**

### **Mindfulness for English Language Teachers**

Mindfulness, along with embodied behaviors in the classroom such as calmness, clarity of form and mind, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, still represents an unnamed domain of teacher expertise. The aim of this diploma thesis is to present the analysis of recent studies on mindfulness, a technique that has aroused interest in school communities because of its positive impact on stress reduction for both teachers and students. In order to introduce research on benefits of mindfulness to broader groups of English language teachers, examples of good practice along with three effective programs (Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance, Community Approach to Learning Mindfully, and Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) used for cultivating mindful skills have been described briefly.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, stress reduction, teachers, English language teachers, schools, mindfulness program

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been an expanding acceptance of the idea that schools should not provide students with formal education only but should also nurture the well-being of the child. It is questionable whether it is possible to do so without considering the well-being of teachers as well. On top of everything, researchers point out the role of present-day teachers as “emotional hubs in the teaching process” (Cergol, 2018, p. 115). Educators, among many professions, have a potential to change society by teaching generations who can gradually create positive changes in their future environment. Therefore, qualities such as self-awareness, mindfulness and compassion are very much needed within the educational professions in order to create a favorable basis for new generations that are about to come.

Throughout various research, teaching profession has been categorized as a high-stress profession (Benmansour, 1998; Dunham & Varma, 1998; Kyriacou, 2001). By its nature, stress has a negative impact on the teaching profession and can cause burnout, a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress. In response to burnouts and stress that have been rising within the past decade, some schools and countries have been starting to implement techniques related to mindfulness in order to reduce stress consequences and improve working conditions in schools. Mindfulness practice has generally been used for the past three decades in many professions and has caused positive changes within individuals and communities. Not only does it improve teachers as individuals, but also their working abilities and additionally their students and school communities. Starting with Jon Kabat-Zinn’s<sup>1</sup> studies and examples of successful practice from the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts, mindfulness as a term and a practice has been spreading all over the world for more than twenty years. Consequently, this became more accepted in the western countries, whereas in the eastern some of these techniques related to mindfulness have already been popular for centuries.

This dissertation represents a collection of studies and research that have examined the impact of mindfulness-based practice for teachers, with the aim of introducing mindfulness for English language teachers specifically. It also includes examples of mindfulness-based

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn (born Jon Kabat, in 1944), Ph.D. is a scientist, writer, and meditation and mindfulness instructor. He is one of the first scientists to introduce mindfulness and its benefits in conventional medicine and modern society. In 1979, he founded Mindfulness-Based Stress-Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School where he works as a Professor of Medicine emeritus. He founded the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society in 1995 (Mindfulnesscds, 2022).

programs developed for teachers such as Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance, Community Approach to Learning Mindfully, and Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education. Furthermore, this dissertation explores the techniques related to mindfulness that have been used by educators in order to improve work quality in schools, teachers in general and their relationship with their colleagues, students and their parents.

## **1. Definition of Mindfulness**

There is no universal definition of mindfulness, and there have been diverse attempts from both Buddhist and scientific perspectives to specify what it entails (Taylor, 2016). The term comes from the Pali word *sati*, an old Sanskrit word which stands for remembering, which Buddhists have been referring to as an awareness that might accompany feelings and actions (Williams, 2008). However, there is one widespread definition for mindfulness that has been quoted over a number of decades in scientific literature. It is commonly defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Hawkins described it as “the opposite of forgetfulness” (Hawkins, 2017, p. 15), in means of focusing on what is happening right now rather than thinking too much about the past or the future. Mindfulness is developed through practices related to mindful awareness, such as meditation and yoga.

### *1.1. Jon Kabat-Zinn's Definition*

These types of practices, if they are continually engaged in, cultivate a mindful state in one's everyday life and thereupon implicate a higher awareness of one's mental and emotional development (Jennings et al., 2019). Furthermore, they develop a higher sensory experience that deepens the contact with the outer world and finally, these practices increase one's unity and calmness essential for interpersonal interactions (ibid.). Jon Kabat-Zinn also stated that this type of awareness is accomplished through paying attention as openheartedly as possible (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), which signifies that an individual who practices these skills for a greater period of time is more accepting and nonjudgmental toward both the inner and outer events of life (Jennings et al., 2019). The same author refers to mindfulness in two categories: deliberate mindfulness, if it is accomplished intentionally, and effortless mindfulness, a type that arises spontaneously as a result of intentional mindfulness cultivation (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). One and the other share the same aim, which is presence. According to Kabat-Zinn (2015), this sort of

necessary presence for intentional mindfulness has been a natural human capacity that can be lost throughout difficult times in an individual's life, but it can also be renewed through practice.

### *1.2. Teacher Mindfulness*

In compliance with the authors of Chapter 5 *Embodied Teacher Mindfulness in the Classroom* from the book *The Mindful School*, for better understanding of some yet unnamed needs of teacher expertise, teacher mindfulness can be divided into two categories, regarding two different levels of analysis (Taylor et al., 2019).

The first one is the “teacher behavior” (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 110) level, in which mindfulness can be seen as a reference to the invisible attentional, emotional, and social skills such as attention regulation, regulation of feelings, along with prosocial dispositions towards others (ibid.). For example, mindfulness has been implemented by Bishop and colleagues (2004) as a phenomenon that consists of two sides (as cited in Taylor et al., 2019). One part of it is attention self-adjustment, necessary within the immediate experience and therefore broadening the recognition of the present-moment mental happenings (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232, as cited in Taylor et al., 2019). The other one presents focus on the present moment toward one's experiences that is described as interest in others and themselves, being open to experience, and accepting the present moment (ibid.). This definition shares similarities with Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness from 2003 written in the introductory part of this chapter. The second definition proposed and augmented by Cullen (2011) and following Kabat-Zinn's already mentioned definition of mindfulness includes heartfulness. It is a term which can be described as a “general kindness toward the inner, outer and other realms of experience” (Cullen, 2011, as cited in Taylor et al., 2019, p. 111).

### *1.3. Mindfulness History*

In 1979, Jon Kabat-Zinn founded a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic in which he started to explore the impact of mindfulness techniques on patients dealing with work stress, emotional and immunity difficulties, physical pain, and even cancer. His first test group comprised patients who dealt with long-term illness and pain that for some reason could not be cured with traditional medicine (Hawkins, 2017, p. 15). Convincing the authorities at the University of Massachusetts Medical School to provide him with a meditation room, he started



weekly yoga and meditation sessions for them (ibid.). This later became developed into a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, an 8-week long course which today is taught in more than 30 countries worldwide (ibid.).

In 1995, Kabat-Zinn became the creator of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts. Over the last fifteen years, it has gained increased popularity in the West, and research has shown mindfulness-based programs to be beneficial for the mental health of adults (Khouri et al., 2013), management of stress (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009), attentional abilities, and emotional regulation that causes emotional balance (Sedlmeier et al., 2012). Mindfulness has been used in various therapies, such as MBSR therapy developed by Kabat-Zinn in 1990 in order to help patients dealing with stress and anxiety, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) and within dialectical behavioral therapy which deals with interpersonal conflicts and personality disorders (Chapman, 2006). In order to avoid improper usage of mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn warns authors and researchers that even though it is widely used in therapies, it cannot be understood as another cognitive behavioral technique or practice, but as a practice linked to meditation and with all that meditation implies (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In addition to that, Cullen (2020) stated in her article about Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance program for teachers that even though there are more than 2000-year-old programs and scripts related to mindfulness, they cannot be strictly followed in recent times because enormous societal changes have taken place that need to be observed in current considerations of mindfulness.

## **2. Reasons for the Use of Mindfulness in 21st-Century Schools**

Teaching is a challenging profession. To meet the basic demands of the teaching profession and at the same time manage students' needs, a teacher has to integrate certain skills and frames of mind apart from those related to subject matter and pedagogical knowledge (Taylor et al., 2019). Within the volume *The Mindful School: Transforming School Culture through Mindfulness and Compassion*, the authors have presented arguments for placing teachers first when it comes to mindfulness-based interventions. They have stated that teachers represent a foundational part for each educational attempt, and their social and emotional capability is necessary for any student growth in this domain (Jennings et al., 2019). Therefore, a lot of mindfulness-based educational initiatives have been started by working with educators first.

### *2.1. Modern Teaching Profession Obstacles*

Data collected from various surveys imply that teaching is a high-stress profession (Kyriacou, 2001, p. 29). For example, a MetLife study from 2013 on teacher stress in American schools showed an increase in teacher stress up to 35% from the previous survey done in 1985, and a 23% decrease in job satisfaction from 2008 until 2012 (Markow et al., 2013). A 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) has shown that approximately one third of Croatian teacher population experiences high levels of stress during their work (Markočić Dekanić et al., 2019). Some of the main origins of stress affecting teachers who took part in research on the related topic are teaching students deficient in motivation, discipline preservation, time demands and assignments, coping with transitions, evaluation from other colleagues and dealing with them, confidence, ambiguity and work status, administration and management, along with working conditions lacking sufficient financial support and management (Kyriacou, 2001, p. 29). The ever-increasing scope of the academic curriculum that must be covered along with assessments that have to be handled also increase educators' stress (Seigle et al., 2019), along with sleep deprivation that is more present with the digital growth phenomenon (Hawkins, 2017). Moreover, students generally bring their own private problems to the classroom caused by their life conditions, such as unstable financial situation, hunger, pain, social life issues or experiencing panic attacks (Cergol, 2018). Also, overwhelming academic demands within school can add to the increased stress within the classroom. By surveying a group of student teachers from the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Zagreb, Cergol's (2018) research demonstrates three important messages on students' emotions within the classroom: (1) emotions in classroom should not be linked to the academic achievement of students, (2) students are not emotional blank slates when they enter the classroom, therefore, their emotional experience does not depend on teacher's effort only, and (3) it is necessary to continually inform student teachers about all the possibilities of emotional complexities within individuals. The same can be applied to teachers as individuals.

Negative emotions within teachers that arise from inopportune conditions stated may lead to physical exhaustion, cognitive functioning disorders and impairment of teachers' well-being, consequently possibly leading to classroom management problems such as poorer instruction and strained relationships with students (Emmer & Stough, 2001, Richards, 2012, Greenberg et al., 2016, as cited in Jennings et al., 2017). Educators who find themselves often experiencing negative emotions may reduce their competences and intrinsic motivation (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003, as cited in Jennings et al., 2017) and continual experience may lead to burnout (Jennings et al., 2019).

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially classified burnout as “a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed” (World Health Organization, 2019). According to WHO, there are three main qualities that describe burnout: energy depletion or exhaustion, elevated mental distance from one’s profession or negative, cynical emotions towards one’s profession, and the reduction of productiveness (ibid.). During the past two decades a number of researchers have conducted their studies in order to explore the concept of teacher burnout. Educators’ burnout, as burnout in general, leads to high levels of attrition which might have a deteriorating effect on classroom management (Schussler et al., 2020). Teacher burnout has been defined as a state of exhaustion seen through emotional, physical and behavioral patterns that develop in teachers who have been unsuccessfully coping with stress over an extensive time period (Kyriacou, 2001).

In his article, Kyriacou (2001) stated the importance of being aware that the differences between the types of stress faced by teachers vary in different nations. Moreover, the definite characteristics of educational systems, the precise circumstances of teachers and schools in those countries, attitudes and values regarding teachers and schools held in a society also fluctuate from nation to nation (ibid.). Specifically, American studies on teacher stress have shown that schools that are characterized by an increase in poverty are likely to have the highest levels of stress and attrition (Jennings et al., 2017). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted a study using the TALIS survey on teachers from 48 countries, including Croatia. The results have shown that Croatian teachers (60% of primary school teachers and 50% of secondary school teachers) find administrative work to be the largest source of their stress and the responsibility for students’ final grades (56% of primary school teachers and 51% of secondary school teachers) the second one (Markočić Dekanić et al., 2020). Despite the variations among countries and nations, the fact that stress is rising in most of the nations and schools is a very important piece of information, and a call for help. The modern world is facing rapid social changes which yield uncertainty and inability to predict what is going to happen in the future (Jennings et al., 2019). For example, the current COVID-19 pandemic affected society with increased social isolation and distancing consequences (Cergol, 2018), but it has also brought up the mental health of the society in question. The growing popularity of mindfulness practices in schools and in general suggests that many are starting to recognize mindfulness as a potential approach for cultivating mental clarity, emotional calm and kindness.

## 2.2. Teacher Expertise Needs

For the same reasons, along with taking into consideration the emotional and attentional demands of teaching that have been stated in the previous chapter, there are many mindfulness-based programs that have been developed specifically for teachers.

Theoreticians have been discussing effective teaching factors within the past two decades. One of the theories is that it includes several factors, such as teachers' intellectual, formative, social, and emotional understanding of what students carry with themselves to the classroom every day, and teachers' incorporation and ability to teach fundamental attention and social-emotional skills related to mindful attention, regulation of feelings and balanced and coordinated relationship with others (Jennings et al., 2019).

Schools have started implementing programs dealing with professional development of teachers' emotion management and flexibility in order to respond to malfunctions of classroom management (Schussler et al., 2020). These programs commonly include mindfulness, compassion and yoga-based practice portrayed by Schussler as "contemplative interventions" (Schussler et al., 2020, p. 1078) because of their introspective, meditative and reflective qualities. As written by Patricia Jennings and other editors from *The Mindful School*, such programs have been established with the aim of creating "emotionally supportive learning environments while maintaining their own well-being and motivation to teach" (Jennings et al., 2019, p. 4). The results after implementing these programs have shown an early success in impacting the well-being of teachers and their ability to manage job-related stressors (ibid.). Additionally, these programs improved the quality of teacher-student interactions and the engagement of students (ibid.). In the mentioned volume, there is an introductory chapter called *Important Considerations* within which it is stated that before introducing mindfulness activities to students, educators have got to cultivate their own mindfulness and compassion. Also, all the practices should be offered as invitational, and as such can be opted out if the participants choose so.

Along with the mindful improvement of teachers, implementing mindfulness-based programs with students has encouraged fundamental skills for their success (Jennings et al., 2019). For example, some of the goals of the mindfulness-based programs for students are increasing their attentional span during lectures, providing them with stress-management skills and ways of navigating emotional challenges, and teaching students a more cooperative interaction with their colleagues (ibid.). However, the research on their effectiveness and proper ways of implementing the program is still elementary (ibid.). For example, researchers face problems when forming optimal didactic units for proper mindfulness implementation for

students (ibid.). The knowledge necessary to deliver mindfulness for students with an accurate approach should be a priority for teacher education, but as the research on the proper ways of implementing this to students is still nascent (Jennings et al., 2019), one of the first steps for successful transferring of mindfulness skills to students can be to have teachers master mindfulness techniques first with the purpose of addressing their own emotional well-being. A second step would be to have those same teachers use and transfer the knowledge of these techniques onto their students.

### *2.3. English Language Teacher's Well-Being and Obstacles*

When it comes to the well-being of the English language teacher, teacher needs from the previous chapter are the same. As an example of English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher within schools, the difference between their teaching methods and non-language teachers' is that EFL teachers simply use different language to conduct their lesson. Therefore, they use a different communication code. Sometimes, as the English language is not the students' mother tongue, it is harder for the EFL teachers to establish and strengthen a connection between them and their students. Furthermore, sometimes it is more difficult for English language teachers to find a suitable expression for some situations and thoughts that arise.

These examples show possible reasons for some of the main difficulties of EFL teachers. As Cavazos (2009) showed in her study (as cited in Chang, 2022) teacher-learner interaction difficulties and the difficulties of teaching a foreign language are the main causes of language teachers experiencing burnout and leaving their workplace. A number of researchers who conducted studies on educators in general, as well as language teachers, defined educators' stress as the appearance of disturbing emotions caused by poor educational management (Chang, 2022, p. 1). These emotions are anger, stress, frustration, and depression (ibid.). They can cause a lack of enthusiasm within the teaching process, because language teachers are the connection between learners and the language skills they need to acquire (ibid.).

Another state of mind which arises within teacher profession is apprehension, known as the expectation of undesirable events (Yang, 2022). Yang's (2022) study on EFL teachers, their stress and apprehension and the mediating role of hope and optimism reveals that optimism is a key characteristic within some teachers which lowers their stress and apprehension, enables them to focus on the constructive solutions for problematic and

challenging circumstances in the educational system and face them. It is not possible to expect from every teacher to maintain optimism at all times, because every individual has characteristic differences, but it is evidently possible to nurture some of the qualities that can help with teacher stress and the avoidance of more difficult outcomes.

### **3. Mindful Teacher**

Mindful teacher can be defined as clear-minded and aware, distraction-free, calm-bodied, as opposed to reactive, and kindhearted, not being critical, coercive, or biased in communication and in action with students in the classroom (Taylor, 2016; Taylor et al., 2019).

In Chapter 5 of the book *The Mindful School* edited by Jennings, DeMauro and Mischenko, various authors present the *Calm, Clear, Kind Conceptual Framework of the Mindful Teacher* in order to summarize research on the teachers' frame of mind and introduce mindfulness for teachers as a still unnamed domain of their competence (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 108). They give an example of a researcher E.S. Dottin who gives a title to fundamentals of teacher knowledge. He identifies them as "professional dispositions" (Dottin, 2009, as cited in Taylor et al., 2019, p. 108), in other words professional models of behavior and abilities and extends the definition by adding that such dispositions support teachers within classroom management effectiveness, create a gap between abilities and actions and connect teachers with their students in purposeful and beneficial ways. Another term derived from a same name program<sup>2</sup> "Habits of mind" (Costa & Kallinick, 2011, as cited in Taylor et al., 2019, p. 108) which is very similar in meaning to Dottin's definition and mindful behavior in general. A habit of mind is defined as "the ability to behave prosocially and intelligently when confronted with the inevitable instructional and interpersonal challenges that arise in the classroom" (Costa & Kallinick, 2011, as cited in Taylor, et al., 2019, p. 108).

Correspondingly, Taylor et al. (2019) report on Jennings and Greenberg's 2009 review of educational research in which the authors have examined the importance of relationship between teachers' social-emotional competencies (SEC) and social-emotional learning (SEL)

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<sup>2</sup> Costa and Kallinick, founders of the "Habits of mind" program, defined 16 categories of habits: (1) perseverance, (2) managing impulsivity, (3) listening with understanding and empathy, (4) adaptable thinking, (5) metacognition, (6) striving for accuracy, (7) questioning and problem posing, (8) applying past knowledge to new situations, (9) thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, (10) gathering data through all senses, (11) creating, imagining and innovating, (12) responding with wonderment and awe, (13) taking responsible risks, (14) finding humor, (15) thinking interdependently, and (16) remain open to continuous learning (Costa & Kallinick, 2022).

programs implementation in school (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; as cited in Taylor et al., 2019). In addition to that, they have also discussed the relationship between SEC in relation to healthy environment in classrooms for student learning in general. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) have defined SEC of teachers in five skills related to social-emotional learning. By their definition, these skills include (1) self-understanding and (2) understanding the societal needs, (3) self-managing and (4) relationship management, and (5) competence in making decisions (as cited in Taylor et al., 2019). According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), teachers who are rich in SEC skills are thought to increasingly change the learning classroom environment because of their ability to engage students, understand their emotional, behavioral and social patterns and because of their own prosocial patterns which add the same energy to the environment (*ibid.*). Furthermore, if teachers are modelling prosocial behavior to their students, they support students' tendencies toward socially acceptable behavior (Taylor et al., 2019).

To conclude on the important, but still unnamed domain of teacher expertise, there is a final quality named "teacher presence" (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 109). Rodgers and Raider-Roth define teacher presence as "state of alert awareness, receptivity and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate next step" (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 266, as cited in Taylor et al., 2019, p. 109). As one of the participants of the CALM program stated in the interview of Schussler et al. (2020) research:

"it has helped us...realize that we really do need to make the time and take the time to care for ourselves...And so making that an intention in your life, that I will do some of these things that I need to do for me...I think this is really an important thing for us to realize that we do need to help ourselves so that we will have the resource to help others" (Schussler et al., 2020, p. 1088).

Even though many theorists and researchers agree on the importance of these teacher qualities, there is still no universal definition of this unnamed domain of teacher competence as there has not been enough research on these qualities (Taylor et al., 2019). For example, the unfavorable part of SEC skills within the teaching profession, as well as the efficiency of these skills and its impact on students' and their learning environment is the fact that the research is still at a very early phase and has been going on for no more than a decade (*ibid.*). Therefore, it is still not fully accepted and adequately implemented in school systems or as a part of the obligatory educational training programs.

Lastly, research regarding adults and specifically teachers is in favor of the claim that mindfulness training can cultivate skills of attention regulation, regulation of feelings, and prosocial management towards others, in other words kindness (Taylor et al., 2019). In addition, Taylor et al. (2019) have proposed that teachers who go through mindfulness training not only acquire these specified skills, but also embody these acts in the classroom in the form of calmness, clarity and kindness in their verbal and non-verbal interaction with students. Calm frame and thought, in other words embodied and mind-implemented calmness are essential to adequate teaching (Hargreaves, 1998, Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, Roser et al., 2012, as cited in Taylor et al., 2019).

### *3.1. Calm, Clear, Kind Conceptual Framework of the Mindful Teacher*

In the latest contributions to the understanding of which needs and qualities are necessary for teacher expertise, Taylor et al. (2019) in *The Mindful School* present a study where incorporated teacher mindfulness is defined in terms of teacher's calmness, mental clarity and kindness in their communication and behavior concerning students in the classroom regardless of uncertain parts of work and other many challenges and needs of the classroom setting. In other words, the main outcomes of this teacher mindfulness training are attentional, emotional and social skills such as concentration regulation, regulation of feelings, along with prosocial dispositions towards others (ibid.).

Regulating attention and emotions is considered by the authors an essential self-regulatory process which is linked to conscious and intentional awareness in order to apply the wanted behavior within students and teachers (Taylor et al., 2019). Additionally, teachers' kindness in relationship with others is assumed to be based on their "empathy, compassion and forgiveness" (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 110), also mentioned above as prosocial dispositions by E. S. Dottin. Mindfulness is one of the prerequisites for compassion, which Jennings defined as "the process of recognizing suffering and the motivation to relieve suffering" (Jennings et al., 2019, p. 5). Empathy is incorporated in compassion, and compassion is considered to be one of the most important components of teacher's profession.

Lastly, forgiveness is a quality that includes modifications in "an aggrieved individual's thoughts, emotions, and/or behaviors toward a blameworthy transgressor" (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 110). These individual forgiveness-based modifications have to be taught and made for the benefit of the society in general because the quality of forgiveness improves the sense of understanding. In addition to that, these modifications include weakening or eliminating



animosity in schools and classrooms. The same assignment for forgiveness improvement within individuals relates to reducing or eliminating the need for vengeance along with “decreased behavioral avoidance of the transgressor” (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 110).

All the mentioned skills in this chapter are believed to be the primary results of mindfulness training, and authors also hypothesize that these outcomes have effects on stress management, task solving efficiency and relational integrity (Taylor et al., 2019).

### *3.2. The Importance of Attendance*

If mindfulness practice is supported by and taught in school communities or if teachers willingly decide to participate in such practice outside school environment, one of the components proven important for educators and their successful implementation of mindfulness practice is attendance (Schussler et al., 2020). Not only does it benefit participants as individuals, but it strengthens the group and adds to positive classroom atmosphere (ibid.). The research on the importance of attendance within mindfulness-based programs is still limited. However, in recent research by Schussler et al. (2020) participants were divided into attendance categories after the conducted mindfulness-based program. There were four attendance categories: low, medium, high and the highest (ibid.). Participants who had the highest attendance have shown the most desirable understanding of basic mindfulness practices: sense of awareness of oneself, setting intention for the day, and nonreactivity, or as one of the participants described as the ability “to have the mindset of just letting things unfold and not bringing...expectations or predispositions to it” (Schussler et al., 2020, p. 1088). Highest attending educators implemented awareness techniques and skills learnt in the program and improved their well-being and consequently their relationships with other colleagues and closely related individuals (ibid.).

## **4. Examples of Mindfulness Practice Beneficial for Teacher Profession**

In order to understand how to implement mindfulness more efficiently, it is useful to bring awareness to the concept of the “modes of mind” (Williams, 2008; p. 1). The first mode of mind, the mode of perception, or the sense mode is an awareness mode of mind constructed of the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch) which activates individual’s attention. The other mode is the mode of concept, or the thought mode, which consists of all the actions of thinking and oftentimes making the individual less present within one’s actions (Williams,

2008; as cited in Hawkins, 2017). The key component of training mindfulness is to learn how to switch from the thinking mode into sensing (Hawkins, 2017).

#### *4.1. Formal Practice*

Mindfulness practice consists of two important and inevitable parts necessary for mindful skill development. The first one is formal practice, a category where an individual takes time to build up internal capacity to awaken awareness (Hawkins, 2017). Bearing in mind that this chapter is about the mindful practice generally designed for teachers' professional and individual development, which also includes English language teachers, these exercises will be more focused on the development of teachers' professional well-being.

Developing personal practice leads to an upgraded relationship between intention and attention (Hawkins, 2017). Precisely, an intention should be set in the beginning of the practice in order to keep the attention active (ibid.), especially when the mind starts wondering, which happens oftentimes. Also, there are many guided practices available free online, in books (Hawkins, 2017) and articles about the research on mindfulness.

##### *4.1.1. Sitting Meditation*

This type of meditation requires a comfortable seating position and posture in order to keep the body and mind as relaxed as possible, but at the same time active. Hawkins refers to it as "relaxed alertness" state (Hawkins, 2017, p. 44), making the pose for this meditation effective enough to sit calmly in it for a longer period of time and feel active and undisturbed.

Although it is important to find a comfortable pose for this meditation right at the beginning, practitioners might be going through stages of discomfort and even extreme emotional reactions at first which is why it is important to enter the formal practice "gently" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 44). Oftentimes it will take time to establish an effective posture for this practice, but by doing so, the core muscles get stronger by time and the posture itself builds up individual's confidence. As one of the educators who participated in the CALM program stated: "...just lift the pinkies and all of a sudden you feel a dramatic change in your body" (Schussler et al., 2020, p. 1086).

Practitioners have to bear in mind that measuring the efficacy of these exercises is to be done by measuring quality and awareness managed in the exercise rather than the time spent on doing it. Practicing in short intervals with full attention is better than practicing for longer intervals without intention and attention. It is also necessary to disclaim that practitioners

should start with shorter exercises to establish the habit and, consequently, the routine of sitting meditation (Hawkins, 2017).

Parts of the sitting meditation are demonstrated in the table (Table 1), based on Hawkins' (2017) sitting meditation exercise proven efficient for students and teachers. The important notice is that estimated time of practice may vary based on the participants' experience, the will to exercise, or the decision to prolong it. But it is important to at least follow the time given in the table in order to keep and develop the intention and attention.

Table 1: Sitting meditation practice (Hawkins, 2017)

Step	Time	Exercise description
1	2 minutes	<p>Participants make a crouching pose, exaggerate it and stay in it for some time. After that, participants try to articulate how does the pose feel, and what sense does it leave to the individual's body: does it leave a lethargic feeling, the feeling of snoozing and dozing off?</p> <p>When they articulate this pose, participants change their posture by bringing their back up and try to sit in a straight pose, trying to manage a straight-back posture (Hawkins, 2017) and then again try to articulate the new feeling which arises from the pose.</p> <p>In the end, the goal is to find an "in-between position that's just right" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 45): not leaning entirely on the chair, if possible, having both feet flat on the floor and trying to feel supported both by sit bones, buttocks and feet rooted in the ground (ibid.).</p>
2	2 minutes	<p>Uplifting the spine to prepare for a proper sitting position, belly coming forward and a small curve appearing in the small of the back (Hawkins, 2017).</p> <p>Checking the shoulders: they should be down, backed and relaxed.</p> <p>Tucking the chin and prolonging the head by making an upward lift from the head top towards the ceiling, this way making the head more connected to the spine.</p> <p>Checking the spine centrality with swaying and rocking.</p>

		<p>Checking the breath: Is it free flowing?</p> <p>Closing the eyes. Another option for this is softening the gaze by lowering it to a metre in front on the floor (Hawkins, 2017).</p>
3	2 minutes	<p>Participants undertake a guided meditation led by a professional mindfulness instructor, yoga instructor online or in live sessions.</p> <p>The other option would be that an individual establishes a point in their body (part of the body, breath or sounds) and focuses on it for some time. Oftentimes the mind wanders so participants need to come back to the chosen point. (Hawkins, 2017)</p>

One of the important disclaimers for this practice is bearing in mind that it is not possible to always sustain focus, or have a clear intention and, consequently, keep the attention active. Understanding when the attention is lost is seen as a positive condition (Hawkins, 2017) because, paradoxically, it takes awareness to realize the loss of it. By accepting this statement, participants practice how to be less strict on themselves, too. Furthermore, sometimes meditation might not be the best to do individually, especially if dealing with some form of mental issue. In these situations, a guidance should be provided (Hawkins, 2017).

#### 4.1.2. *The Bodyscan*

Bodyscan is one of the basic methods used in the MBSR program in order to help patients who deal with stress and pain. It is also efficient in the mindfulness practice for teachers. Bodyscan represents a “guided tour” (Hawkins, 2017, p. 47) of the body led by a mindfulness guide while the participants are laying on their back in a comfortable position. The whole practice is based on participants’ “aiming and sustaining” (Hawkins, 2017, p. 47) of the focus onto a part of the body. By doing this continually, physical issues and stress are gradually weakened (Hawkins, 2017). The body scan might last from 10 minutes up to two hours or more, depending on the level of practice, the experience and body parts that want to be covered in the scan.

Sometimes this position might lead participants to a passive state of mind and feelings of sleepiness, which should be avoided because the aim of this exercise is to be both active and relaxed in body and mind. Nevertheless, a lot of participants fall asleep in the beginnings of doing Bodyscan, and this should also be accepted. By continually doing this formal practice, participants make it easier to focus and attain attention, awareness and activeness.

#### *4.1.3. Mindful Walking*

Another type of meditation but in motion and a third formal practice is mindful walking (Hawkins, 2017, p. 47). It is based on slowing down the walking activity in order to be more aware of it (ibid.) In everyday life, walking is considered a habitual action that requires almost no attention, but the main aim of this practice is to encourage participants in letting go of automatic behaviors (Gotink et al., 2016). This is a type of practice that is easy to implement into a daily routine, and it is used to bring more awareness to bodily sensations. Furthermore, individuals who exercise mindful walking find themselves feeling more grounded and present (Gotink et al., 2016).

#### *4.2. Informal Practice*

Mindfulness is a series of in some way simple activities, but it is very difficult to keep the practice and make it regular. In order to keep up with the practice, the informal part represents bringing mindful attention to daily routines, situations and life in general. For example, choosing a location which will become a reminder for bringing up attention on one's body and breath, such as the road that one takes to get to the working place, school hallway or courtyard (Hawkins, 2017, p. 49), and trying to focus more on breathing exercises or awareness of the body in the moment. Starting this part of mindful practice may be difficult for some because of the old habits that have to be dealt with, so it may be helpful to put reminders in form of post-it notes to laptop screen or in other parts of the living space, the classroom, or using computer and mobile apps as a reminder to focus on the awareness more (Hawkins, 2017, p. 49). Another example of informal practice is putting awareness on feet, legs arms and hands while walking (ibid.).

In the case of English language teachers, along with the mentioned examples, the additional focus of informal practice can be placed on their school environment and classroom. For example, taking a breath before conducting a new lesson in order to regain calmness and confidence. Also, taking a breath before responding to specific students' needs that might arise teacher's stress, or before attending to some classroom issues in order to take time, think about them, and respond to them in a calmer way. Additional practice might be to use those parts of the class when students perform tasks that do not require the teacher's help to shift focus on one's body or breath. As a reminder, all of these examples are universal for all the teaching professions.

## 5. Examples of Mindfulness Training Programs for Teachers

This section is used as a description of successful mindfulness training programs for teachers and the results they have made within teaching professions: Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance (MBEB), Community Approach to Learning Mindfully (CALM) and Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE). Along with that, some factors regarding successful implementation of the programs such as attendance, practice and collective work are noted.

Scientists who have made studies on the impact of these skills on teachers' well-being, awareness and stress reduction suggest more research is necessary that will focus on the varied impact of the level of exposure as opposed to home practice and program attendance (Schussler et al., 2020). Some topics have not been researched much yet, such as the importance of collective participation in these programs (ibid.). Still, the basis for mindfulness is individual work first.

### 5.1. *Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance*

Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance (MBEB) is a mindfulness program developed by Margaret Cullen and established explicitly for teachers' needs following the example of Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program from 1990 (Cullen & Pons, 2015, as cited in Taylor et al., 2019) and Ekman's theory and techniques for developing emotional literacy (Cullen et al., 2020). With guidance from Kabat-Zinn himself, Cullen attended a research study of the Cultivating Emotional Balance<sup>3</sup> (CEB) program after which she created foundations for MBEB to make the ideas connected to mindfulness accessible to wider audiences (Cullen et al., 2020). Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance uses roughly 50% of mindfulness practices used in the MBSR program. The remaining half of the program is focused on the emotion theory and regulation of feelings in a mindful way (approximately 30% of the program), along with the theoretical and practical parts (roughly 20% of it) related to compassion and forgiveness (Taylor et al., 2019).

MBEB program is taught in the course of eight weeks, each week having one two-and-a-half-hour-long class with a silent day practice between weeks 6 and 7 (Cullen et al., 2020). The main aim of this program is to introduce participants to the mindfulness practice covering

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<sup>3</sup> CEB program was founded by Paul and Eve Ekman. As a result of a meeting held with Dalai Lama where they discussed destructive emotions as daily obstacles to proper living, they created a program to help people manage such emotions. (Paul Ekman Group, n.d.)

different topics related to emotional balance and emotional patterns, attention, and setting intentions (Cullen et al., 2020). The goal is also to instruct them to reduce their “aversion toward, fixation with and criticism of oneself or others” (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 115). Each class varies thematically, and includes specific lectures on compassion, stress, and using mindfulness practice to regulate them (Taylor et al., 2019). A daylong “break” from classes is a silent day type of practice that takes place after the class on defensive emotions. This silent day practice is conducted in the form of guided meditations, movement and practice with the aim of deepening the training and improving MBEB topics comprehension (Cullen et al., 2020).

Furthermore, each class in a two-month program includes (1) guided meditations, such as loving-kindness and open-monitoring meditation, (2) introduction and guidance for next week meditation practice, (3) homework exercises connected to formal and informal practice created to assist teachers explore their challenging emotions, (4) experimental and dialogical pedagogy on the class theme, in other words experimenting in relation to the class topic individually or mutually and afterwards discussing the function of these practices in participants’ private and public lives, and (5) previous week practice recapitulation (Cullen et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2019).

To summarize the MBEB program, the following table (Table 2) presents the MBEB topics for each week and brief descriptions of every program class, based on Cullen, Brito-Pons and Roeser’s (2020) explanation of the program:

Table 2: Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance protocol description (Cullen et al., 2020)

Week	Class theme
1	<p>Introduction to Mindfulness</p> <p>The introductory part designed to inform participants with basic knowledge of mindfulness and its relation to emotional balance (Cullen et al., 2020). Also, there is an introduction of the first formal practice regarding breath awareness and setting intentions, a method used to create foundations for calmness and nonreactivity (ibid.)</p>
2	<p>Enjoyable, displeasing and unbiased feelings</p> <p>Basic features of emotional theory regarding “universal and personal triggers, automatic appraises, refractory period” (Cullen et al., 2020, p. 68) are introduced. Participants learn to identify enjoyable, displeasing and unbiased intonation of feelings, reactive patterns that arise from them and emotional pattern relationship</p>

	with these intonations (Cullen et al., 2020). With breath awareness, feelings awareness is added to formal practice (ibid.).
3	<p>Thoughts-related mindfulness</p> <p>Participants learn about perceiving thoughts as “mental events” (Cullen et al., 2020, p. 68). They gain understanding of the relationship between thoughts, moods and emotions and the impact thoughts have on emotional systems (ibid.). Mindfulness of breath and thoughts is introduced in formal practice (ibid.).</p>
4	<p>Forgiveness</p> <p>Forgiveness is presented as a malleable skill. The possible way of forming forgiveness is taught through a series of exercises where participants are learning to release animosity, recognize blockages related to it, forgive themselves and others and practice forgiveness for others (Cullen et al., 2020). Formal practice includes forgiveness meditation (ibid.).</p>
5	<p>Love and kindness</p> <p>Participants observe love and kindness, how they arise within close relationships (Cullen et al., 2020). They learn how to search for and manage love and kindness within broader circles of society (ibid.). Participants also learn to recognize the differences between these feelings that nurture emotional balance versus envy and jealousy that have a contrary impact on it. Formal practice includes loving-kindness meditation (ibid.).</p>
6	<p>Protective emotions: anger and fear</p> <p>Participants learn how to recognize anger and fear, understand the protective function of these emotions and how to accept their existence without feeling shame (Cullen et al., 2020). Exercises connected to embodying these emotions, along with exercises related to discovering and mapping participants’ anger profiles are provided (ibid.). Formal practice changes focus on mindfulness of breath, thoughts and emotions again (ibid.).</p>
Daylong silence break	<p>MBEB silent day practice</p> <p>Created to broaden the knowledge learnt through the last six weeks of practice in silent manner (ibid.). The day consists of mindfulness meditations and guided constructive practices related to forgiveness, love, kindness and compassion, along with mindful walks and movement (ibid.).</p>
7	Compassion



8	<p>Participants learn how to distribute compassion to others by first focusing on oneself (ibid.). They learn how to cultivate self-acceptance, kindness and caring skills towards self and towards others (ibid.). Firstly, participants start implementing these skills to the people they have close and trusting relationship with, then they learn how to transfer the mentioned skills to the less important persons in their lives that do not represent big importance in their social life but are still part of it. Finally, participants come to the point of sharing benevolence with difficult personalities from their lives (ibid.). Compassion blockages are explored, such as self-criticism, shame, and guilt. Formal practice includes compassion meditation (ibid.).</p> <p>Integrated practice and continuation</p> <p>Previous week classes are integrated into a practice that can be done by participants in their daily lives, after the program is finished (ibid.). Revision of emotionally balanced approaches that support growth of frame and mind and heart. Formal practice includes integrated meditation (ibid.).</p>
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## 5.2. *Community Approach to Learning Mindfully*

The Community Approach to Learning Mindfully (CALM) is an additional program dedicated to educators and their well-being but has a different approach and structure than Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance program. As opposed to MBEB and its focus towards individuals' emotion regulation with out-of-school classes, CALM program was established to give opportunity to educators for a mindfulness-based practice in schools (Taylor et al., 2019). The practice itself takes place in schools at the beginning of the school day and classes last approximately 15-20 minutes (ibid.). Because of its morning schedule and short-length lectures, CALM is more accessible to teachers, inviting them to start their day with well-being and resilience practice (ibid.). Along with mindfulness-based practice for educators, these classes include yoga lead by trained yoga instructors along with breathing techniques.

Within their short-time formats, the lectures are divided into three main parts. The first part consists of mindful awareness of the body and mind including setting intention for the practice (Taylor et al., 2019). After that participants practice yoga movements preceded by a warm-up sequence of neck-stretches, shoulder openers, arm and spinal movements that are repeated throughout every session (ibid.). The third part is filled with exercises that vary between "relaxation, caring and compassion, and gratitude" (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 117).

Finally, teachers are invited to set the teaching intention of the day. Within all three phases of the lecture, breathing techniques are used. They are introduced during the first intention setting for the practice, revised in the middle along with yoga movements and again conducted at the end of the practice (Taylor et al., 2019).

#### *5.2.1. The CALM program research by Harris et al.*

The research on this program and its impact on educators is still nascent, and the information regarding the full program is not available to the public. However, the first research on the CALM program impact on teachers has been conducted in two randomly assigned American secondary schools, one school taking part as a CALM implementation group, and another taking part as a wait-list control group (Harris et al., 2015; Taylor et al, 2019; Schussler et al. 2020). There were 64 educators who participated in the research (ibid.). The participants who were a part of the implementation group had 16 weeks of yoga and mindfulness practice, 4 days per week. The whole process was designed to test whether CALM sequences have an impact on decreasing stress in classrooms and improve the well-being of teachers (Schussler et al., 2020). The quantitative results have shown that teachers and staff who participated in the implementation group program developed mindfulness skills, positive methods for dealing with stress, tolerance toward stress and emotional regulation skills (Taylor et al, 2019; Schussler et al. 2020). Looking at the blood pressure and cortisol response, they decreased burnout symptoms and physical symptoms related to stress (ibid.). As opposed to the control group, their classroom management efficacy improved (ibid.).

#### *5.2.2. The CALM program research by Schussler et al.*

Another, more recent research on teachers' response to the CALM program was a qualitative study on the effect of attendance on mindfulness practice perception. The difference between this and other studies is that it focuses on attendance rather than home practice (Schussler et al., 2020). The program also lasted for 16 weeks, containing 34 educators (25 teachers and 9 learning support assistants) from the same secondary school in a small city district who had an average of about 14 years of teaching experience, among which 8 years of working at the current school (ibid.). After taking part in the CALM program, researchers invited the participants to a focus group interview on program acceptability, perception of the CALM program, its outcomes, and sensibility of developing resilience towards stress and burnout.

A codebook was developed for the focus group with researchers who took part in the CALM study and are familiar with qualitative methods. There were ten elements with which the researchers coded focus group's answers: "somatic experience, mindfulness, efficacy, positive and negative affect, relief of stress and burnout, emotion regulation, gratitude, collegiality and emotional calm" (Schussler et al., 2020, p. 1084). The elements for research were created in association with Baer et al. mindfulness conceptualization<sup>4</sup> from 2008 and Gross & John emotion regulation definition<sup>5</sup> from 2003 (as cited in Schussler et al., 2020). All of them were created based on prior research on teachers' professional development and definitions of emotions and conditions, adding companionship, gratitude and general calmness as additional elements that were evident from the collected data from the CALM study (Schussler et al., 2020). Out of 35 participants, 19 of them took part in focus groups and were divided into four groups depending on their level of attendance of the CALM program: low attending (LA), medium attending (MA), high attending (HA) and highest attending (HSA).

When they had to specify the CALM program, most LA participants described it as means to achieve stress-relief and mindfulness, while MA, HA and HSA educators described the program as a somatic experience (Schussler et al., 2020). In researching the commonness of mindfulness elements provided in the study by conducting an interview with participants, the most discussed element as an outcome of the CALM program for MA and HA educators happened to be somatic experience, while the HSA group emphasized mindfulness as the most important outcome (ibid.). The LA group once more emphasized stress and burnout relief as the biggest outcome of the program (ibid.)

The second part of the interview regarding resilience development and well-being improvement showed that all four groups improved their awareness (Schussler et al., 2020). For example, all groups noticed how small changes in posture might lead to an increased feeling of well-being (ibid.). However, the HSA group had the highest awareness percentage in means of transferring it into an active response and realizing the importance of setting an intention of the day and practicing self-care (ibid.). They were also showing the highest percentage of nonreactivity during the program. Some of the qualities which were, according to all the groups except for the LA group, stated as a positive consequence of the CALM program, were the

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<sup>4</sup> Baer et al. (2008) attempted to specify mindfulness through several qualities such as observation, description, acting with awareness, nonjudging of internal experience and nonreactivity to internal experience (as cited in Schussler et al., 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Gross & John (2003) defined emotion regulation as series of actions an individual takes in order to manage a condition that caused intense emotions such as reappraisal and emotional suppression (as cited in Schussler et al., 2020).

sense of gratitude, improved relationships with other people as well as less stressful feelings (Schussler et al., 2020). Therefore, more regular attendance can be linked to the improvement of the feeling of gratitude. The important information that arises from this research is the fact that participants from MA, HA and HSA focus groups described their experience both from the individual and collective perspective (Schussler et al., 2020), thus emphasizing the collective aspect of the program. This suggests that regular attendance improves relationships between participants and contributes to the sense of belonging to a community. For example, one of the participants stated:

“I would stay in the present moment...I think I’ve actually handled that and related sometimes to some of the teachers, the ones that I should be giving more gratitude to and also some of them that I need to give more, maybe they were emotionally depleting me...” (Schussler et al., 2020, p. 1089).

The last question of the interview was related to program acceptance. As a consequence of attending the program less than 11% of the time, the LA participants portrayed least acceptance of the CALM program (Schussler et al., 2020). Furthermore, the results raised the question of program readiness. The possibility that occurred was that the LA participants were not ready for the program implementation because they were less acquainted with yoga and mindfulness practice than other focus groups and they attended the program least frequently.

### *5.3. Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education*

Patricia A. Jennings’ 2017 study on the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) program for educators suggests that mindfulness-based interventions can improve teacher competence linked to emotions and social qualities along with classroom management skills (Jennings et al., 2017). CARE is an inclusive learning form for educators designed to primarily reduce stress identified in the teaching profession and improve teachers’ social and emotional abilities (Taylor et al., 2019). It includes practice on the awareness of emotions and their regulation, breath practice, mindful walking, and practice related to the improvement of listening and compassionate skills (Jennings et al., 2017).

The complete course is instructed in the period of one school year, but Jennings along with her colleagues (2017) structured a study on CARE within 36 elementary schools and 224 teachers in high-poverty regions in New York City, where the course on the program was delivered within several weeks. These regions were selected because a previous study on the CARE program from 2011 suggested that it is most helpful for teachers from these regions

(ibid.). Out of 224 teacher participants, 118 of them were assigned to the intervention group using the random assignment of schools, and 106 ended up in the wait-list control group (Jennings et al., 2017). 90% of participants from the intervention group completed 4 out of 5 in-person training days (ibid.).

There were 5 in-person training days, each day having 6 hours of training (Jennings et al., 2017). There were breaks in between sessions so the whole program lasted several weeks to provide teachers with the necessary time to reflect on the program, practice mindfulness, compassion, emotion awareness and regulation (ibid.). Each participant had a specialized CARE coach during the program and participants of the study also received three telephone calls for additional coaching between sessions for an increased support in these breaks (Jennings et al., 2017.). All of them were provided with material books and audio recorded material on mindful meditations and practice in order to nurture home practice (ibid.).

After completing the CARE program, data was collected through classroom observations and participants completed self-reports and reports of students' assessments in order to check their implementation of mindfulness, efficacy, the level of physical and psychological distress, as well as the regulation of emotions (Jennings et al., 2017). The results have shown that the intervention group, as opposed to the control one, had higher levels of the regulation of emotions and mindfulness, while their psychological distress levels appeared to be lower than in the control group (ibid.).

#### *5.4. Mindfulness Training Programs for Teachers in Croatia*

No school in Croatia has an integrated mindfulness-based program for teachers, and there are still no initiatives in the Croatian educational systems that would deal with continuous mindfulness-based professional development of students, including primary and secondary school pupils as well as university students, except for the International British School *Bright Horizons*.

The International British School *Bright Horizons*, a private school in Zagreb, makes an exception by starting the implementation of mindfulness techniques for their students in 2020. The main reason for this change, except for the fact that this is a school focused on the wellbeing training of students, was to develop better focus and productivity within students (Špiljak, 2020).

Croatian teachers who are willing to broaden their knowledge may take courses, either at their cost or at the expense of their school, if possible. For example, Croatian association for

cognitive-behavioral therapy (Hrvatsko udruženje za bihevioralno-kognitivne terapije HUBIKOT; <http://cabct.hr>), organizes an 8-week mindfulness course based on Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), with one double class each week. The course is aimed at individuals with prior knowledge in psychology, but it is open for everyone willing to learn these strategies. The same organization also conducts a silent-day retreat, the same concept as in the MBEB course for teachers. As a reminder, both MBEB and MBCT courses are based on Kabat-Zinn's MBSR course.

Another example of a mindfulness-based course is a project *Hand in Hand* (<https://www.handinhand.si/hr/>) co-funded by the Government of the Republic of Croatia and Erasmus+ Key Action 3 Program of the European Union. The project has been continuing for 3 years (2021-2024) and involves 7 countries and 24 partners with the aim of developing social, emotional and integrative skills (Hand in Hand, 2022). The theoretical background for this project is based on SEC skills and mindfulness. The project education is free and teachers who took part in it applied via their schools.

Along with certified mindfulness courses, there are Croatian organizations which promote mindful living, mindfulness practice and its positive outcomes in their work such as the Croatian unprofitable organization and psychological support center *Kako si?* (<https://www.kakosi.hr>) founded in March 2020 by a group of psychology students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb along with their professor Nataša Jokić Begić as a response to COVID-19 pandemic start and the first earthquake that hit Zagreb in 2020. At that time, they recognized that these issues would influence mental health of the society in general and decided to react as soon as possible and give support to people. Their aim still is to support individuals who struggle with mental health obstacles, and their team builds up the support by organizing workshops, having free online consultations and writing articles, some of which are related to mindfulness<sup>6</sup>.

Even though there is still no research on Croatian student teachers' knowledge towards mindfulness and its qualities, the student teacher interest in mental health became more visible in 2020, when the Faculty of Teacher Education Student Union at the University of Zagreb organized their second international summit for teachers *Student Teacher Summit* called *Mind Your Mind* (<https://www.ufzg.unizg.hr/studentski-zbor/>) with the aim of shifting more focus

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<sup>6</sup>More information on mindfulness provided by *Kako si?* can be checked at the link: <https://www.kakosi.hr/2020/05/25/mindfulness-ili-kako-mirno-promatrati-olujno-nebo/>.

on mental health of future teachers. This was the main topic for 2020 summit as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and two earthquakes that hit Zagreb and Petrinja and left major consequences on the infrastructure, as well as the mental health of people. Even though there were no lectures on mindfulness practice related to teachers, there were various lectures covering topics on emotion regulation, relaxation, the impact of music on mental health, positive classroom atmosphere during the pandemic, along with a yoga workshop held by a yoga instructor. All of these lectures listed above create a foundation for an interest similar to mindful awareness and mindfulness practice. Therefore, students show interest in the wellbeing of self and seem to search more for topics related to mindful living recently.

## **Conclusion**

Just as mindfulness implies a clearer vision and understanding of one's internal processes and their effect of the world, it can improve the collective vision of internal and external functioning of school systems, its impacts on children, adults, and society in general. By examining these relationships in society more clearly, it is less difficult to identify the source of issues regarding negative emotions within individuals, their relationships and malfunctioning of the society in general.

Most of the research on the effects of mindfulness training on teachers has been done in America, with American schools and teachers being one of the first test groups for a lot of programs such as Mindfulness-Based Emotional Balance program, Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education program and Community Approach to Learning Mindfully program. However, mindfulness implementation has become more popular in European countries within past years. Along with the courses on mindfulness for teachers available in most European countries, there are more and more schools which promote mindfulness in education. The United Kingdom Government invested into one of the biggest studies on improving mental health of youth in 2019 in more than 370 schools in England to study the benefits of mindfulness in the classroom and improve mental health of youth.

Even though a high rate of educator stress incited interest in the professional development programs related to mindfulness, the research on these programs is still small due to budget constraints (Schussler et al., 2020) and possibly due to the fact that problems related to stress increase started to rise more in recent history: the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the war in Ukraine, social media which oftentimes promotes unrealistic images of life, dissocializes

individuals and lowers their self-confidence. Therefore, some educational systems and schools have discovered mindfulness quite recently, while some still have not.

As there are still no integrated mindfulness-based programs in the Croatian educational system, both for students and teachers, and those that are available currently require personal or other forms of financing, the only solution to the present situation with regard to learning mindfulness techniques is providing financial support. When it comes to Croatian student teacher knowledge about mindfulness practice and mindfulness implementation, research on their stress levels both related to their future profession and other individual issues along with trial implementation of mindfulness techniques and its impact on their well-being would be one of the steps to better understanding the needs of Croatian teachers. When it comes to English language teachers that, as opposed to teachers who use their mother tongue, might deal with stress related to foreign language use and consequently unsuitable expression of feelings and thoughts, this type of practice could improve self-confidence, awareness, calmness, empathy and other qualities as well as lower stress levels within the individuals.

To conclude, localizing the source of the problem along with mindful practice use makes it easier for teachers to react in a calm, compassionate, emphatical way, without adding stress to the situation at hand. Consequently, by using mindful activities and techniques teachers set a good example for their students, leave a positive impact on the classroom atmosphere and deepen their practice by implementing it in the classroom. With all that has been said in mind, here is a final thought of this thesis: would it be easier to create mindful programs for students if the educational systems and schools start conducting more of this practice for teachers first?



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**Izjava o izvornosti diplomskog rada**

Izjavljujem da je moj diplomski rad izvorni rezultat mog rada te da se u izradi istoga nisam koristio drugim izvorima osim onih koji su u njemu navedeni.

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