

Teaching to stress or stressing to teach?

Meditation and teachers' wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Well-being is both a personal and societal quest. Any imbalance in well-being promotes stress. The stresses faced by teachers lead to negative consequences that can undermine their ability to sustain emotional health and positive interactions. Teachers are in a situation where they teach to stress or stress to teach. Through the framework of a Foucauldian critique of technologies of the self and positive education (Reveley, 2015), I use narrative inquiry to conduct a critical narrative analysis of literature and anecdotal accounts of teachers who practice Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations to identify any roles meditation may play in their well-being. My three research questions include the perceived part of Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations to teachers' well-being, how teachers who turn to meditation relate their practice to stress management, and why? Furthermore, whether individual teachers seem to accept the narrative of using their meditative practices to solve social and political problems imposed by their job. Teachers' use of Mindfulness meditation is associated to Foucault's technologies of the self in this study (Foucault, 1988). Findings indicate that participant teachers practice meditation individually and sometimes with their students. These teachers perceive meditation as beneficial both to them and their students. I did not observe any collective effort by the teachers to confront the multifaceted challenges that besiege the teaching profession. Hence, while meditation leads to individual transformation, the system remains unchanged.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my best friend, Jasmine Viens, who passed away in October 2019 after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer

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Introduction

Stress and the Teaching Profession

The challenges of the teaching profession engender tremendous stress. (Kelchtermans, 1996). Research has shown that the stressors teachers encounter may lead to negative consequences that can undermine their ability to sustain personal health and positive interactions. (Csaszar & Buchanan, 2015). Mindfulness meditation, a practice with its roots in Buddhism, is being adopted and adapted in the West and is increasingly becoming popular worldwide as a source of medical and emotional aid. Many forms of Mindfulness meditation are being implemented in educational institutions worldwide. For example, England, Australia, and the United States are a few countries where mindfulness practices exist (Flook et al., 2010; Reveley, 2015). Another form of meditation which is growing in popularity as a form of stress relief is Jyoti meditation. This form of meditation is practiced at Darshan Academy schools in India and Columbia. In Canada, meditation is not officially mandated in any school system in the country. However, some teachers informally introduce it to their students, and resources such as the activity book *Mission Médiation*, developed by Catherine Malboeuf-Hurtubise and Éric Lacourse, is popular among elementary and high school teachers (Beaudin, 2017).

Several studies have explored the effects of meditation in education. Some researchers suggest that Mindfulness reduce psychological symptoms and burnout and increase effective teaching behavior. Also, Mindfulness potentially reduces attentional biases (Flook et al., 2013). Others, such as Shnaider-Levi et al. (2017), suggest that teachers can benefit from well-being promotion technique-based mindfulness. Researchers such as (Binkerly 2005, as quoted in Reveley 2015) argue against the introduction of Mindfulness at school, claiming that it is an

emotion-regulating self-technology that agrees with neoliberal imperatives. Any person can practice meditation regardless of their religious affiliation.

This research paper has five sections. Section One includes the introduction and purpose of study, my position as a researcher, meditation background, problem statement, and research questions. Section Two contains a review of the relevant literature in meditation at school, my methodology, and theoretical framework and analyses; Section Three provides the discussion of my participants on the topic. Section Four presents the findings from my three participants' interviews, with connections to the literature review. Section Five gives my conclusion and recommendations for pedagogical practice and further study. References and appendice follow at the end.

Researcher Positionality

I was born into a spiritual family. My father was a meditation teacher. He researched the comparative literature of religions and decided to join a meditative not-for-profit and a non-denominational spiritual organization called Science of Spirituality. Growing up, I observed and listened to discussions on meditation that my father gave to people who wished to learn how to meditate. He left us, his children, the right to make our decisions about our lives. Hence, I read literature vicariously about meditation to understand the theory before I started practicing it. I understood that the essence of life was to know who I really are, to spread love and positive energy to people around us, and connect to the creative force. I practice Jyoti meditation. I meditate early in the morning and before I sleep. I seat down in a comfortable position and repeat the name of God. Meditation has always been my anchor.

I teach English as a Second Language (ESL) at a Francophone elementary school in Montreal, Quebec. I have been teaching for over ten years. I have had the opportunity to teach at various schools. My first contract after I got my teaching license was the most difficult. I taught grade eight high school students and a few special needs groups. I found myself struggling to understand the intricacies of the school system, the internal politics of the particular school I was teaching, getting a full grip of the content of my teaching, grappling with classroom management, and sorting out challenges in my personal life. I discovered that the key to a teaching career is arguably the most daunting aspect of the field: classroom management.

Students have a significant stake in this concept. If a teacher can bond with them, everything goes smoothly in class, but it was a constant struggle for me in my first year. Most schools have a room for disruptive students. It is usually to enable the student to calm down, reflect, and have some quality learning for the rest of the class. School administrations encourage teachers to use this resource, but I realized it was better to bond with them than send them there. I had a feeling that the school administration would rather teachers managed their students themselves. I knew that if I did not take care of my holistic well-being, I could not be present for my students. Also, it was essential for me to evaluate my philosophy of education consistently. The thoughts of Parker J. Palmer (2007) resonate with me. In *The Courage to Teach*, the author reflects that teachers' exploration of their inner lives has tremendous effects on their classroom practice. Part of my philosophy of education is to provide my diverse students an empathetic environment to share and learn.

I presume a lot needs to be done to improve teaching conditions to make the job less arduous for teachers. Top of this list is class size. Elementary schools in disadvantaged

neighbourhoods have a maximum class size of 20 students. This is manageable, but usually, with students with learning disabilities or behavioral challenges, the impact on teachers is much higher than the actual number of students in the class. In advantaged neighbourhoods where the number of students ranges from 20 to 28, students' behavior is not necessarily different. Neither is there a significant reduction in the number of students requiring services for learning disabilities. The number of students at high schools ranges between 26 to 38. Teachers become stressed teaching an enormous number of students because they cannot give individual assistance to each student, and they are more difficult to control. The classroom then becomes a situation where both the students and teachers struggle to survive. This reality creates stress for teachers, and it is exceptionally harder for new teachers.

In addition to substantial class sizes are inadequate resources for students, especially those with learning disabilities. First, it takes a long time for them to be diagnosed, and when it is finally done, the resources are not sufficient. This leaves the onus on the teachers to manage the situation themselves.

My meditation practice helps me in the classroom. As an ESL teacher who teaches many groups, I am exposed to students at their best and sometimes at tense moments when teaching is challenging. At such moments in disruptive classes, I usually meditate with my eyes open, thereby calling for divine guidance and control. My meditative mode surrounds me with a circle of peace. A number of my student teachers and some of my students have commented that I am patient, but I know it is not a matter of being patient. It has to do with being enveloped in a sphere that offers me the force to diffuse the tense situation around me. I also know that my students sometimes get enveloped in this circle of peace from the way they look at me and how

they respond to my teaching. I do not tell them about my meditation practice apart from when I talk about my likes at the beginning of the school year.

I have noticed over the years that there are increasing discussions among teachers about mindfulness meditation. These discussions always concern the incidence of teacher burnout and students' and teachers' well-being. Hence, my interest in carrying out this research. As a teacher who already practices meditation, I am implicated in the study. Thus, this is a case of insider research. I wished to explore if meditation practice by teachers is a more general phenomenon.

Furthermore, to alleviate the multifaceted challenges teachers face in the classroom, it is paramount for me, as a teacher, to look beyond the usual practices and educational policies and explore if some teachers were able to achieve well-being through self-technologies like Mindfulness and Jyoti meditations. Technologies of the self are practices in which humans can recognize and conduct themselves as autonomous subjects. These techniques allow individuals to affect their bodies, thoughts, and behaviors. (Saari, 2018; Macmillan, 2011). Questions that I reflected on also pre-occupied Kyte (2013) who asks, "[...] if we cannot take care of ourselves, how are we to take care of our students? If we have lost our personal sustainable sense of self, how can we foster learning in our classrooms?" (p. 1145). Given my experience as a teacher, emotional and mental well-being are central to teachers' sustainability. Another researcher, Fullan (2013) suggests that there is a "need for a shift from superficiality in 21st learning skills to a more inclusive transformative pedagogy that could change the educational space in order to contribute to well-being for all" (p. 1148). I agree that resources for well-being at school should be inclusive; teachers and students should be considered equally. In addition, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) suggest that "While the continuing development of teachers' pedagogical and

content knowledge is essential to effective classroom instruction, so, too, is their emotional well-being" (as cited in Damico et al., 2018, p. 829). The quest for teachers' well-being has been a re-occurring issue. In this research, I intend to expand the research on the field.

My justification for researching these two types of meditation is because Mindfulness is one of twelve established meditative practices, and people who practice it often say they meditate. I chose Jyoti meditation because it and the concept of Mindfulness are related and sometimes used interchangeably. However, as indicated by their definitions below, they are not the same. While they both originated from the Buddhist tradition and aim at calming the mind, *Mindfulness* sensitizes us to the fact that our lives unfold only in moments (Kabat-Zinn, 2001), while practitioners of *Jyoti* meditation are focused on self-knowledge and God-realization. The attainment of peace, happiness and bliss remain by-products of this meditative practice. Also, researchers such as Purser (2019) profess that ethical and moral values initially proclaimed by the Buddhist founders of Mindfulness no longer exist in its practice. On the other hand, practitioners of Jyoti meditation are still committed to this mode of ethical living. The narrative inquiry lens of this paper critiques relevant literature about meditation and explores the stories and anecdotal reports of teachers who practice Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations.

Background of Meditation

Historically, some of the earliest known recorded writings about the meditation process and personal experiences come from India 5,000 years ago in the sacred scriptures known as the Vedas (Duggal-Stephens, 2012). Samuel (2013) states that Mindfulness meditation has been changing forms. It has some roots in monastic meditation in the early 19th century in Burma. In the 1950s, people practiced it as Lay meditation in Burma and Thailand. In the 1970s, it became

Vipassana meditation in Europe and America, and then in 1979 some versions of this practice became known as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Saari (2017) postulates that this tradition of "Mindfulness is described as being 'Buddhist' in its background but is also legitimized as being compatible with the theories of the mind in contemporary Western psychology and neuroscience." (p. 14). In this study, I will explore the commonalities amongst teachers that practice Jyoti meditation/Mindfulness in a bid to ascertain if it has any impact on their well-being.

Problem Statement

Overview

Inside and outside the classroom, teachers are expected to be dynamic, creative, and have pedagogical know-how, classroom management skills, and maintain a relationship with parents, teaching, and administrative staff. The practice of the profession can become frustrating with the increase and variety of these demands coupled with, in many cases, diminishing resources and insufficient support. Due to these challenges, including time demands, workload, student disruptive behavior, and organizational factors, including increasing pressure, scrutiny with accountability to standardized tests, and inadequate sources of emotional support (Fernet, C. et al., 2012; Flooks et al., 2013; Damico et al., 2018) teachers are succumbing to stress.

Kutsyruba (2012) notes that structured induction programs that involves mentoring new teachers help inculcate them into school cultures and result in decreased teacher attrition and increased retention of beginning teachers. Yet, the author alludes that government-instituted induction programs for new teachers are not very common in Canada. Furthermore, Fernet et al. (2012) in an extensive study of 806 French-Canadian teachers in public elementary and high

schools observed that “changes in teachers’ perceptions of classroom overload and students’ disruptive behavior are negatively related to changes in autonomous motivation, which in turn negatively predict changes in emotional exhaustion.” (p. 514). Hence, the problem becomes more profound as there is no definite provincial policies in Canada geared toward ameliorating teachers' situations. Therefore, teachers’ situation in Canada calls for urgent attention. Flook et al. (2013) suggest that teachers' stress in the classroom is not being given the attention it deserves despite their role in nurturing children's academic learning and social-emotional well-being. It is possible, and indeed probable, that the lack of attention to teachers’ stress is what sometimes leads some teachers to burnout. Research by Csaszar & Buchanan (2015) suggests dire consequences when symptoms of stress are ignored: "the stressors faced by teachers may lead to negative consequences that can undermine their ability to sustain personal health and positive interactions” (p. 4). On the other hand, other researchers hypothesize that effective coping strategies empower teachers to fight against burnout and work-related stress (Richards, 2012).

Burnout

Burnout is a psychological syndrome. It is defined as a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is an emotional overload resulting from the absence of mental resources. Depersonalization manifests in the form of alienation and a negative attitude toward the surroundings. Decreased personal accomplishment is the reduced ability to accomplish desirable results due to a lack of external or internal resources (Maslach, 2001, Vercambre, M-N et al., 2009 Schnaider-Levi et al. 2017). Burnout

presents itself in different fields. My study will focus specifically on burnout experienced by teachers.

Some researchers assert that one of the most common reasons that effective teachers leave the profession is teacher burnout (Roloff & Brown, 2011; Rupprecht et al., 2017). Furthermore, Farber (2016) notes that low morale and a high attrition rate in education today are symptoms of teacher burnout. Harris (2011) equally claims that teachers' stress increases teacher turnover, low teacher satisfaction, and adverse physical and psychological health outcomes. In the province of Quebec, Canada, "data suggest that from 12% to 20% of teachers report burnout symptoms at least once a week" (Fernet et al., p. 514, 2012). Sometimes, schools and service centres organize workshops by school psychologists to address the matter. In this case, seeing no immediate respite, teachers are looking for their own solutions, such as mindfulness.

Educational theorist Patrick Slattery (2008) captures this current state of education when he writes:

The postmodern worldview allows educators to envision an alternative way out of the turmoil of contemporary schooling, which too often is characterized by violence, bureaucratic gridlock, curricular stagnation, depersonalized evaluation, political conflict, economic crisis, decaying infrastructure, emotional fatigue, demoralization, and despair (p. 21).

Slattery's description of teachers' plight above informs why I frame the current contexts of teaching as either teaching to stress or stressing to teach. Canadian educators are surrounded by multifaceted challenges that are beyond their control.

Some teachers are taking up meditation. Studies of Flook et al. (2013) and Kyte (2016) suggest that mindfulness training to target attention and emotion processing is gaining traction in education. Proponents of Jyoti meditation suggest that it helps individuals to develop physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Also, meditation practitioners praise its psychological and physical benefits, and they offer its efficacy in helping quiet the mind, increase attention, awareness, and resilience (Singh, 2012; Cohut, 2017). In this study, I will explore the commonalities amongst teachers who practice Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations to ascertain if they impact their well-being.

Research Questions

In this project, my goals were to flush out some of the current practices and perceptions around teachers and their mindfulness practices as a popular way to address stress. I thus ask:

1. What is the perceived role of Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations with teachers' well-being?
2. How do teachers who turn to meditation relate this practice to stress management, and why?
3. Do individual teachers accept the narrative of using their meditative practices to solve social and political problems imposed by their job?

In the following section, I will review the relevant literature in meditation at school. It will be followed by my methodology, and theoretical framework.

Literature Review

Research has reported the positive effects of meditation in school environments. Shnaider-Levi et al. (2017) notes that "taken as a whole, such studies demonstrate that, across multiple contexts and countries, well-being promotion techniques-based mindfulness can be used beneficially among teachers." (p.76).

In 1980, Professor Miller of the University of Toronto introduced a meditation component to his graduate classes. Most of his students were teachers taking graduate courses. His research showed that "meditation encourages being in the moment and thus facilitates our presence as teachers" (Irwin & Miller, 2016, p. 88). Anecdotal evidence of students in Miller's class reported: "health benefits such as fewer headaches and an increased ability to address stressful events that come up both in their lives and in the classroom." (Irwin & Miller, 2016, p. 88). Having taken graduate classes, I resonate with the immense effort teachers spend to get through their jobs and attend these graduate classes. Similarly, Cohen (2005) reviewed the literature on yoga in an educational setting. The author considered how the mind/body connection developed in Hatha-Yoga could be helpful in academic adult learning environments. As an adult educator who meets students on intensive weekends where students sit in circles and engage in extensive intellectual exchanges and cognitive processes, the researcher finds that students are completely exhausted at the end of the talks. She suggests that Hatha-Yoga and other allied body practices can help students transform stress before producing cellular and brain changes (p. 4).

In addition, Csaszar and Buchanan (2015) infer that meditation is a tool that can mitigate teacher stress, promote emotional well-being, and contribute to affirming exchanges between teachers and students. This is probably why a study of meditation at school usually considers the students and the teacher, as I discovered in this research that teachers and students are two sides of one pendulum. Gutierrez et al. (2013) also researched the effect of a spiritually oriented form of meditation, Jyoti Meditation (JM) on stress. The authors conducted the study on student counselors and, "The most noteworthy finding of this study is support for the use of JM with student counselors as an intervention for reducing stress as measured. The results indicated that the positive effects of JM emerged when participants dedicated 172 minutes over the six weeks, which is approximately 30 minutes per week. (p.118). As a meditation practitioner, I know that one has to invest time in it to obtain results.

Also, research has shown that the process of Mindfulness transcends the individual teachers' lives and the school spaces. It begins within oneself, but its overreaching effect goes beyond the immediate environment of the practice because the practitioners realize themselves and become one with their Mindfulness (Kyte, 2016, p. 17). Hyland (2016) noted that some educators had welcomed the secular application of Mindfulness at school. Such teachers see it as a means of feeling up the spiritual, ethical, and affective dimensions of learning/teaching vacuum left by contemporary instrumentalist conceptions of education. Furthermore, the author reports the benefits of Mindfulness in American schools. It helps teachers improve focus and awareness, increase responsiveness to student needs, and enhance classroom climate.

On the other hand, meditation supports readiness to learn, strengthens attention and concentration, reduces anxiety, and improves social and emotional learning. (p. 98). The author

informs of similar positive results at British schools and claims some researchers noticed its value when combined with moral/religious education or personal and social health programmes (p. 98). The authors' positive assertions about meditation are why its school practice is still in contention.

Meditation and Mindfulness programs at school are not all leading to positive outcomes. Johnson C et al. (2016) investigated Mindfulness as a prevention program for anxiety, depression, and eating disorders in early secondary school. Contrary to earlier promising results across these psychopathologies in smaller populations, the authors could not replicate the improvements in young people's mental health. Self-rated anxiety was higher in the mindfulness group, and there was an increase in negative affect post-mindfulness-based intervention at follow-up. The authors' research indicated that this result could relate to the increased awareness of emotional states as mindfulness increases. The authors called for further studies to optimize key ingredients, dose, and delivery formats of mindfulness interventions in schools. Consequently, more studies of mindfulness/meditation at school are needed.

Furthermore, Hyland (2016) notes that it is possible "the short-term commercialised mindfulness strategies can be seen as a quick fix, a band-aid or panacea for all the current ills and anguish of contemporary life." (p. 111). However, since the evidence regarding Mindfulness at schools and colleges is generally favorable, the author suggests that it is impertinent to be over-critical of it.

Methodology

Data Collection

I used a snowball sampling on Facebook posts of a minimum of six teachers in Canada practicing Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations. I posted my request for teachers to participate in my thesis in November. By February, four teachers responded to participation, three from Quebec and one from Ontario. Throughout this paper, they will be referred to as Fidelity, Jessica, Cassandra, and Marcel for confidentiality purposes. All the teachers, including myself, are very busy throughout the school year. Hence, the only convenient periods to conduct the interviews were during the Winter holidays and the spring break. I interviewed each participant twice. Thus, my first interview with Marcel was in December, just before the winter holiday. I interviewed Fidelity, Jessica, and Cassandra for the first time after the New Year. My second interviews with the participants were during the spring break in March 2021.

All interviews were conducted remotely and recorded over Zoom. Fidelity practices Jyoti meditation, and she teaches in Ontario. The rest of my participants: Jessica, Cassandra, and Marcel, teach in Quebec, and they all practice Mindfulness meditation. Marcel and Cassandra are colleagues from my school in Montreal. They were practicing meditation individually and with their students, but I was not aware of it. Jessica teaches at a high school in Montreal, and Fidelity teaches at a preschool level in London, Ontario. I interviewed Marcel in French, and I later transcribed and translated the interviews into English. I interviewed the rest of the teachers in English.

I conducted qualitative interviewing to find out what was in the minds of my interviewees to gather their stories because "the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be

made explicit" (Quinn-Patton, 2001, p. 341). I let the answers unfold. Hence, I used two interview approaches - the informal conversational interview and the interview guide forms of interviewing (Quinn-Patton, 2001, p. 343). . The informal conversational interview style enabled me to plan a focused but informal conversational discussion where my interviewee could "go with the flow" (Quinn-Patton, 2001, p. 343). However, because I planned to interview my participants only on two occasions, I structured "the interview guide" where I had a list of issues "to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed" (Quinn-Patton, 2001, p. 343). My systemic and comprehensive questioning guided my interviewees to answer questions on stress, burnout, assistance from school administration, and their type of meditative practices.

While exploring teachers' stories, the scope of the interviews expanded on how teachers practiced meditation with their students. Therefore, the first part of my analysis extrapolates the perceived role of Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations to teachers' well-being and how teachers who turn to meditate relate their practice to stress management. The second part exposes how and why three participants practice meditation with their students.

Theoretical Framework

As stated previously, Saari (2017) defines technologies of the self as practices that enable humans to recognize and conduct themselves as autonomous subjects. The author comments on Foucault's (1990) study, which explains technologies of the self to include programs and ideals of societal power that individuals internalize. Saari (2017) expounds that Foucault studied the technologies of the self in early Greek, Roman, and Christian spirituality and religion and grouped them in four categories: ethical work, ethical substance, mode of subjection, and telos.

With *ethical work*, an individual observes practices that enable a subject to turn inward to work on his or herself for personal growth: these practices can include Mindfulness or meditation. *Ethical substance* refers to the material aspects the individual uses to function. The mode of subjection is the moral injunction of mastering oneself as a specific type of subject. In contrast, *telos* represent the ideal outcome of the practice (Saari, 2017, p. 144). Hence, technologies of the self enhance personal resilience, builds positive emotions, and encourages a healthy lifestyle.

Macmillan (2011) asserts that Foucault repeatedly explained that his work on techniques of the self was to make our present intelligible and not to deny his earlier work on 18th- and 19th-century Europe. Foucault had previously analyzed power and knowledge apparatuses: discipline and biopolitics as the two poles of modernity that control the human body entirely and regulate the populations. The author suggests that, for Foucault, “mastery and care of the self represent two distinct ways to articulate the process of becoming an ethical subject.” (p. 8). Also, the origin of techniques of the self is established in the political freedom that includes one’s right to use their privileges among other free people. Mindfulness meditation is therefore, one-way schools incorporate this teaching.

Researchers such as Reveley (2015) have linked Foucault’s technologies of the self to positive education. It has its roots in the work of one of the founders of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, who suggests that psychologists could work on preventing mental illness instead of just repairing the damage. Seligman et al. (2009) define positive education as education for both traditional skills and happiness. The authors advocate education emphasizing achievement, success, literacy, discipline, well-being, and achievement skills. They note that “More well-being is synergistic with better learning” (p. 294). The authors suggest that well-

being could be taught "as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking." (p. 295). Other researchers suggest that Positive education is a philosophy and a pedagogical practice that sees well-being as the fundamental desire in life and offers people the skills, self-technologies to achieve it (Adler, 2016; Reveley, 2015). Therefore, proponents of positive education support equipping young people with positive attitudes and skills and building resilience and hope to prevent ill health. (Reveley, 2015, p. 502). On the other hand, critics of the introduction of Mindfulness at school infer that teaching emotional self-regulation is a neoliberal tool.

Foucault and Seligman have one point in common in treating damage caused by illnesses. Foucault disapproves of how society treats madness, while Seligman believes that psychology could think ahead before these damages occur. Foucault (1988) suggests that technologies of the self "permit individuals effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and semis, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, to transform themselves to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." (p. 18)

Reveley (2015) cites Binkerly's research that opposes Foucault's positive education and links it to neoliberal ideologies that promote subjects responsible for managing their emotional well-being. As defined above, neoliberalism organizes all interactions to function in terms of free-market principles. In other words, the underlining reason for introducing meditation at school is to have power over teachers and students to ensure economic gains. Neoliberalism looms large in these studies about Mindfulness practices at school probably because the researchers have a consensus in condemning a system opposed to egalitarianism that ensured a

reasonably comfortable life for all. I have the same issues with neoliberalism. Furthermore, critics of Foucauldian technologies of the self and positive education suggest they promote neoliberal ideologies that entrust people with managing their emotional well-being. This idea seems to stem from the similarities in Foucault's technologies of the self and some characteristics of neoliberalism. Twenty-first-century competencies prepare self-regulated, adaptable, innovative, creative, flexible, and good problem solvers (Vassallo, 2013). On the other hand, when one employs the technologies of the self through ethical work, ethical substance, mode of subjection, and telos, the person becomes self-conscious and autonomous. The author concludes that a deeper reading of Foucauldian positive education self-technologies such as school-based mindfulness training can be mistaken as functioning to relay systemic neoliberal imperatives down to individuals. However, this position, he proclaims, overlooks the fact that young people are not automatically and unambiguously disempowered by the emotion management strategies they are taught at school, stating that,

In sum, teaching techniques of emotional self-awareness in schools can help to foster the development of an emotionally aware, resistant student that carries beyond the school gates and is eminently congruent with collective efforts to challenge neoliberalism.

(Reveley, 2015, p. 90)

The neoliberal model message that might be indirectly sent to teachers by the provincial governments in charge of education is that to survive and avoid burnout, they need to find ways to cope on their own time.

Despite the transformative nature of meditation, I am against any kind of policy requiring teachers to embark on meditation which "opens the door for neoliberal punishment-by-blame to

be meted out. At the level of subjectivity, the medicalizing force of mindfulness meditation increases the tautness of the neoliberal noose" (Reveley, 2016, p. 507) as indicated by some researchers. This is contrary to the liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1988) that I advocate. I support Paulo Freire's reflective and humanizing pedagogy because human beings are conscious entities and do not live in a vacuum. A fair and balanced education that is reflective, solid, and balanced gives people the opportunity to examine realities around them critically. This type of revolutionary liberatory education plays a critical transforming function and achieves the real purpose of education.

Teacher Backgrounds

Fidelia teaches at a preschool level at a school in London, Ontario. She started her schooling in Africa and completed it in Canada at Sudbury university, Ontario. The ages of her students range from 3½ – 6 years, and she has been teaching for the past eight years. She got interested in teaching while volunteering at her children's school, where she presently teaches.

Jessica teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) at a high school in Montreal. She explained that all her schooling was in Montreal. She went to Barclay elementary school, two high schools: William-Hingston and Sir Winston Churchill (now Lauren Hills). She also went to two universities: McGill and Concordia. She became a teacher later in life after working in business and having children. She had an epiphany to become a teacher as she volunteered and tutored students with reading and learning difficulties. Before she became a licensed teacher, she was a Sunday school teacher. As a certified teacher, Jessica has taught at Greek private schools and various schools in Marguerite-Bourgeoys School Board (now Centre de services scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys – CSSMB). She has done adult teaching all over Montreal; in Saint-

Laurent, Wager, in Cote Saint Luc; and with CACI – teaching immigrants. She has been teaching for about ten years.

Cassandra describes herself as an immigrant that came to Canada at 23 years old.

Cassandra did her elementary and high schools in her country of origin, Romania. She got a first degree in Marketing and had started a second degree in Theatre before coming to Canada, but had to return to Romania a year later to complete it. In 2011, she started workshops in Calgary. She also did after-school activities with kids, but as her acting career was not advancing as spectacularly as she wished, a friend advised her to do a Master's degree in teaching in the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). She applied and got accepted in 2018. In the same year, as there was a shortage of teachers, she was hired immediately. Since then, she has been teaching Dramatic Arts at various elementary schools in different service centres in Quebec.

Marcel started teaching 17 years ago. He trained as a comedian and worked at a hospital for about 20 years. He got the opportunity to teach through a colleague that he had studied with at the university. The colleague had taught Theatre and needed someone to replace him at school. Once into the school system, Marcel loved it, and to obtain his teaching license, he did a Master's degree in Teaching Arts. He has taught at various elementary and high schools in Montreal and its environs. Presently, he teaches at an elementary school in the Marguerite-Bourgeoys Service Centre, Montreal.

In the following section, I will describe the teachers' contexts, which include their local community and support network. I will then describe the particular meditation practices of the participants and their perceptions of these practices. Furthermore, I will explain how the teachers connect their meditation practices to their stress management perceptions. I will follow this

section up with my participants' suggestions on what they think could help teachers alleviate stress. Then, my participants will relate the perceived benefits they derive from meditations. Following this, three of my participants will describe how and why they practice Mindfulness meditation with their students. Teachers will also explain their perceived benefits of meditation to students. Finally, I will relate teachers' perceptions of the controversy about meditation and their feelings about using meditation to solve social and political problems imposed by their jobs.

Analyses

Context: Local Community and Support Network

All the teachers describe their teaching community as pleasant and supportive. Fidelia confirms that social workers help kids who have stress at her school. According to her, there is one that comes in twice a week. Jessica describes her colleagues as “Very pleasant, very welcoming and helpful.” For her students, Jessica mentions that “some days I am better at coping with them than others.” According to her, “it all ties in on how well-rested and tolerant I am with them.” She says that her secondary three students are challenging groups. It turns out this group has become a source of concern to the whole school. There is a concerted effort by the vice-principal, the resource teacher, and all the specialists to tackle the “problem” students in this group are posing to various teachers to make it more manageable. Jessica emphasizes that “There is a general lack of respect, behavioral issues, and... it is not a good class to teach.” She believes the efforts the administrative and teaching team has engendered there has been a significant improvement.

Cassandra mentioned getting help from the pedagogical counselor, technical support from the computer technician, and a mentoring program with a colleague. According to her, the courses she is taking at UQAM are primarily theoretical. Moreover, she finds that teaching is practical. She also took some workshops on "effective teaching." She commends Marguerite Bourgeoys Service Centre for having a few programs and tips to help new teachers integrate.

Marcel describes his local community as a great team. He says teachers exchange ideas academically and interact socially. Being a specialist allows him to see many students as well as teachers. He teaches 90% of the school. He infers that having contact with everyone is fun and, at the same time, demanding.

Type of Meditation Used

Fidelia started practicing Jyoti meditation a long time ago for her spiritual enlightenment. She describes her type of meditation as "a meditation on the light and sound." She suggests it is an easy meditation where you find a quiet place to sit down in a comfortable position. Fidelia seems to employ Foucault's ethical work which makes her to turn inward to work on herself for personal growth. Again applying Foucault's ethical substance, Fidelia suggests that to avoid distraction while meditating with people, meditators must have space between each other. Then "you close your eyes and look in front of you like you do when you go to sleep at night, and you can see the light and hear the music inside." Her regular meditation hours are in the morning when she wakes up and at night before she sleeps, but during her recess, when she has time, she meditates in her class.

Jessica started practicing meditation due to the demands of her job about a year ago. She also got inspired by a few people that meditate that she had met. Jessica admired their sense of

serenity and peace, behavior and attitude, and how they handled issues (good or bad) around them with poise. She describes her type of meditation as a time of serene quiet. She wakes up early in the morning before everybody else and takes a few moments to herself. Reflecting, she infers that, “It's a time of reflection, a time of pause, and prayer.” Jessica experiences her telos or ideal outcome of her meditation practice. According to her, meditation gives her the inner strength to get through her day. Jessica does not meditate every day, but she does it as often as she can.

Cassandra's meditation practice started with her theater practices in the university and knowing the importance of being relaxed. Cassandra opines that it is essential, in theater practice to be in the moment. For her it is necessary to connect to the breath, take it easy, and give oneself time. She also discovered a yoga practice called Yenga when she traveled to India with a friend. She does not describe herself as a prolific meditation practitioner but says it is still growing and developing in her. Cassandra's ethical substance is her guided-active yoga meditation. She has a CD where someone talks, and she follows the instructions. She does her meditation in postures and all the time with dhyana (a profound meditation that is the penultimate stage of yoga), and finishes in shiv-asana (a relaxed position after yoga). And then, there is a moment of recollection or self analyses of events.

Marcel affirms that he started practicing meditation a few years ago with his colleague, a former priest inspired by everything spiritual. Marcel thinks there is something significant about meditation, and “it is important to stop, watch, and just be in the present moment and not where we want to be.” Being connected to oneself is essential to Marcel. He would love to practice his meditation in a more disciplined manner.

Teachers and Stress

Fidelia asserts that her meditation practice helps her to prevent stress, "My meditation is my medication. It is for the body, the mind, and the soul, and can help you to calm down without taking medication." She suggests that those who do not practice meditation go through stress and need help coping with stress.

Jessica agrees that teaching is stressful. She is also one of those teachers with additional family challenges because apart from her teaching and immediate family responsibilities, she also takes care of her aging mother. So, Jessica makes an effort in terms of self-care to get enough sleep because she noted that if she does not sleep enough, she is on edge and is very tired and her tolerance level is limited. In this state, what she could tolerate from her students is also limited. She explains that she was getting only four or five hours of sleep just before the Christmas holidays. Lack of sleep impacted her and translated to her not investing in her teaching. She was going day to day in a "very mechanical, very robotic" way. She became rejuvenated after having some rest during the holidays. Self-care is paramount to her. Hence, she keeps grounding and guiding herself with internal thoughts like, "Take care of yourself." "Get up in the morning; Take a few minutes to yourself." "Go for a walk." "Do something for yourself." As mentioned above, Foucault's work indicates mastery and care of the self as two distinct ways to articulate the process of becoming an ethical subject. I have noticed, that many teachers are in Jessica's situation at some point during the school year. They feel overworked and mechanically go through their daily responsibilities. With the teaching conditions they are posed with, they find themselves stressing to teach or teaching to stress.

Cassandra also confirms that she is always working because even though she works three days a week as a teacher, she has to report for an audition in her second job the other two days. She says what makes it very stressful for her is because she teaches at two schools. In addition, at her second school, she has a group that she does not know how to connect with them. She has only 45 minutes a week with this group that feels that their previous teacher dumped them. Cassandra finds this condition stressful, "I am afraid to go and see them because I feel something bad will happen." She says that they reject her because she is not the other teacher.

Cassandra admits that personally, "I need to improve my management strategies in dealing with this group and how to ensure that they listen. I have about three students that as soon as they interrupt, then, everything is gone and I am not able to see the good ones." Teachers in Cassandra's situation usually blame themselves when things do not go well in their class. Teaching this group is a big challenge for her, "When I finish with this group, I always sit on a bench at a park nearby, and I am just looking at the trees." Furthermore, I say to myself, "If you survive that 45 minutes, you will survive your week." Most teachers, including me, have confronted the type of group Cassandra described at least once in their teaching career. Just like Cassandra, when it happened to me, I re-evaluated and took courses to improve my teaching strategies. But this is entirely stressful.

Cassandra feels that stress crops up because teachers deal with other human beings and sometimes forget to slow down and breathe. She recommends that teachers need to be extremely careful when dealing with the young ones because very little can change their entire perception. She also feels that somehow, "being a teacher in North America is not appreciated to the level of work we put in. There is not as much respect." With such experiences, teachers like Cassandra

feel undervalued. Cassandra was philosophical on how she could help herself cope with stress. She suggests, she will need to express herself and tell her stories, and maybe she will interact with some teachers who have undergone the same experience as her. She advises that one can "find that in everything in life you can learn and become better. Just do not let it affect one's self-esteem. So, I say, I will try, I will never give up." I encourage Cassandra's optimistic stance.

Marcel agrees that some teachers are stressed. He admits seeing teachers who are more tired than others and even stressed at his school and tell him a bit about it. He suggests that often, in addition to this job, stress manifests due to other reasons at home, with teachers' partners, children, and family, making it more difficult. He explains that, "Certainly, stress and burnout will manifest whether you realize it or not. At a point, the body will react - it will unplug." Marcel enlightens that stress or burnout show signs gradually, "Before the bird perches on the branch, it has to get there." Moreover, it happens when the body reacts because we refused to slow down. Marcel's insight is similar to research findings on stress and burnout.

Who Can Help Teachers?

Fidelia suggests that meditation teachers can assist in meditation for anyone interested in learning how to meditate. Jessica infers that the school psychologists could help teachers that show symptoms of stress. She elucidates that the school board is offering some support to teachers at this COVID-19 period, but she has not looked into it. From my experience, teachers' responsibilities leave them no time to access the few wellness resources offered by their school boards. Jessica says that as a teacher, you always have to be in control, and when you come to the point where you may lose control, it is too late to avoid burnout. She proposes that teachers emphasize looking for solutions for stress and burnout during their training on pedagogical days.

Cassandra conjectures that the service offered by the technicians in special education could help students and teachers. She suggests that probably, after a stressful week, it could be excellent for teachers to talk to a psychologist or a psychotherapist for about 10 minutes to figure out what worked or what did not work that week. Cassandra has the impression that people leave their work at work in other jobs, but she goes with her students in her mind, and she is wondering what to do with them the following week. She would love the possibility of reflecting and moving on with her life at the end of the day.

Perceived Benefits of Meditation to Teachers

According to Fidelia, meditation helps her to create a calm and peaceful environment in her classroom. It also allows her to have more hope and positive energy. This energy, she suggests, spreads to people around her, like her colleagues and students. Fidelia means that meditation makes her more efficient because people around her feel this energy when she meditates. They become enveloped in this positive energy without her explaining to them what she is doing, "If I meditate, I'm calm and, so many kids around me are going to be calm without me telling them to be calm." This peaceful environment with her students and colleagues is what Fidelia hopes for in her classroom environment. In other words, Fidelia demonstrates having achieved Foucault's telos - the ideal outcome of her practice.

Jessica indicates that meditation plays a significant role in her self-care. It sets a good routine for her day. She suggests that she would try to be mindful of doing it more frequently because it positively alters her: "it changes my whole being; my whole viewpoint; my tension; and my stress. Like if I am wired before it, I diffuse, I calm down, and I'm okay." She asks "What will be the alternative? You shower, you go to work, and you face the day." This to her is

no longer realistic after practicing meditation for a while now. She thinks that "as we move forward, everybody is becoming more and more aware that we have to disconnect and we have to turn inwards. In addition, we have to do a lot of reflections. Be it about our teaching or otherwise." She thinks reflection is a good thing because you are always fine-tuning. Her only regret is that she did not start this practice earlier.

Cassandra opines that meditation helps her to realize that life is not complicated. She claims that meditation connects her to a universal place where the clatters of the brain or the demands of society mean nothing. She does not relate meditation with efficiency. To her, it is more about being alive and present; and about taking it slow and not forcing things. Cassandra comments, "education is a process of life, and it's never-ending." She adds that transforming education into a production field contributes to the stress in education today.

Marcel suggests that meditation can make teachers more efficient. "It brings us to the level where we are present for the students, higher than if you do not do it. So, meditation brings you to a high level of self-consciousness." He adds that the idea of being benevolent helps him to bond with the students. He infers that meditation is a practice that makes people healthier; they become physically and mentally fit. He elaborates that it is crucial to stop and just be in the present moment. Marcel harps at being present as his telos. He likens people that do not take the time to stop and try to connect to their inner self like a driver that continues driving even when there is no more gas in the car—implying that the vehicle will stop automatically by itself.

Practicing Meditation with Students

Research indicates students' disruptive behaviors as a significant source of stress for teachers. (Fernet et al., 2012). Findings reveal that some teachers practice meditation with their

students to reduce stress. Meditation also helps to calm students down. Three participants, Fidelia, Cassandra, and Marcel, disclose practicing meditation with their students. Below is the overview of these experiences.

Fidelia practices meditation with her students. They do 20 minutes of physical activities every day, and sometimes, she incorporates meditation in it. In particular, she shared an anecdote of how meditation helped in her classroom two years ago. It relates to a student who could sometimes be very disruptive. The child came in furious one morning and started throwing things around all through the day. Fidelia tried everything to calm him down to no avail. Since she had another teacher in her class, she suggested to the student, "Come with me, and we are going to go to another room." As soon as they are seated in that room, she told him to "Be quiet, and we are going to do some meditation." "We are going to close our eyes and repeat the name of Jesus." She advised him to repeat the name of Jesus (because that is what they do at their school) or any name of God that he wanted, but he started repeating Jesus. Fidelia was pleased to see the difference in the kid because he was quiet after meditation. So, meditation became a strategy that she used whenever she noticed that he was angry and unable to control his temper.

Cassandra practices meditation with her students. She explains that as a routine, after taking the attendance every day, her students lay down on the floor in shiv-asana (she calls it pizza-plate), and it goes with restorative music of 342 hertz at the end of the meditation. In addition, she uses an online site called "la méditation des grenouilles"[frog meditation] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnxOoifQ398>). In this video, a woman speaks to the students in French, and Cassandra explains how important it is to lay back on the floor and connect with the earth. She urges the students to be absorbed and enjoy every bit of the moment;

"This is your moment for you; a moment when you are not doing anything, and you are finding your breath, because then, you are going to start and we are going to do something. Just go into yourself." She is doing it with the younger ones because she wants to develop a habit they will remember when they are older. Cassandra's approach is relatable to Marcel's practice with his students.

Marcel elucidates that two years ago, he and his colleague saw the need to explore Mindfulness at their school. They suggested this idea to their school administration. The principal and her team accepted the proposition. As a result, he takes about 5 minutes of relaxation with his students at the beginning of the class. He says the students can call it whatever they want. For him, he is careful at giving it a name. Marcel expounds that at school, they do not relate everything that has to do with meditation to spirituality because this could bring them to Buddhism, and he does not want to talk about Buddhism or philosophy at school. He does not want to deliberate on whether it is good or it is not good. Or whether that should be or that should not be, "I pay attention in naming it – at the words that I use. Why do I do that? It is not because I am afraid that I do not want to necessarily name it. I know what it is. So, I know that it lasts for 5 minutes, I know that it's a pause and there is music."

He says it is a moment of calm, meditation, and Mindfulness, and the students just have to be there and put everything off. He advocates for students saying that adults place a lot of demands on them: "We ask them to do things at home; we are expecting them to have good grades, we want them to be busy doing something." The meditation period is the only time he asks students to do nothing. However, it is an active part of inaction because students stop for 5 minutes and should not look at anybody; Marcel instructs them to "... observe yourselves

without judging.” Students live and function in a society that operates in a fast paste. Their well-being is more important, but we give them the impression that excellence is paramount.

Students, while observing, are to evaluate and accept their state: "I am hot; I am cold; it is okay. I am happy to be here or I am not happy to be here; It is okay; Everything is okay; you have to look and watch what is there." Marcel links this practice to his art dramatic training program where he brings the students to observe, explaining that "If you play the role of an animal, a cat, a firefighter, or a princess, you must observe them. Observe them in a film, in a book, or along the street ." Marcel tries transforming his students into good observers of details of their outside environment and inside of their being. Again, Marcel intends to achieve telos with his students.

Teachers' Perceived Benefits of Meditation to Students

Fidelia admits that meditation brings a calm and peaceful atmosphere to her class. She is quiet, and it reflects on her students and colleagues. Cassandra appreciates the moment of silence with her students. She concedes that teaching is a demanding job, and teachers require some presence in their bodies and with others.

Marcel has more to say regarding the benefits of meditation to students. It has been at least a year that he has systematically incorporated meditation in his teaching program, and he has the impression that the students need it, and it is well-received. Marcel suggests that regular practice of meditation gives the students the reflex to immerse their spirit in gymnastics that brings them to the present moment. Marcel intones that meditation helps us disconnect and that the class offers the students and teachers an appropriate environment to practice it. He continues

that meditation helps us to understand who we are; "You cannot go to point two, three or four if you have not recognized and accepted something."

Therefore with meditation, Marcel guides his students to accept their present state before moving on to the day's activity. They might be happy or not happy to be in his class; they might not have slept well at night. All these have to be "settled, alive, accepted and integrated" before they can move on. Marcel also acknowledges that the school offers the students a conducive environment to practice meditation. He mentioned having invited some teachers to observe their students meditating at the beginning of the year, and 95% had positive comments.

Some teachers admitted being interested in trying it out Mindfulness meditation in their class because they loved seeing how calm their students were after meditating. Because, according to him, teachers are overwhelmed, they do not have time to incorporate it in their classes. He reflected on how the introduction of yoga at a school in a disadvantaged neighbourhood he worked at some years ago helped. The school had a budget for activities that could enhance students learning and retention at school. Doing this activity with them at lunchtime helped the students to relax and enjoy school more.

Participants' Perceptions of Controversy

In this section, I explain teachers' perception of the controversy about meditation and their feelings about using meditation to solve social and political problems imposed by their jobs.

Fidelia does not see any negatives to meditation but says some of her parents do not like it. Her school being a Catholic school, parents say meditation is not religious. These parents possibly find it strange because they are not used to the practice or link it to other religions like Buddhism.

Jessica suggests that meditation has some hindrances. Some of her challenges include carving out the time to do it, putting herself in the mindset, and emptying her mind. To her, being able to focus is the most challenging. She finds that when she is meditating, her mind starts to race, and in that relaxed and quiet moment, ideas about everything she needs to do, things she needs to take care of, crop up. She expounds that "you need to take a moment and just push them out." Jessica also mentioned that finding a quiet space could be a challenge. Hence, she meditates early in the morning before anybody gets up or at night before sleeping. Jessica's experience with her mind wandering during meditation is a general problem with practitioners of meditation. That is why repeating God's name keeps the mind busy.

Cassandra noticed that in Western societies, yoga/meditation has sometimes become trendy and eclectic. After visiting India, she looked for a place to meditate in Montreal but came out with the impression that, "They are selling you well-being." She was convinced that "Well-being is a condition of life and it is a right. We are entitled to be healthy and to feel safe." Still today, Cassandra does not support how meditation is presented these days that it will bring you something; it will relax or calm you down. She suggests that one should meditate without expectations and allow things to happen of their own accord. Cassandra's observation about the commercialization of Mindfulness is what Hyland (2016) mentioned above as short-term commercialized Mindfulness strategies that are now used as a panacea for all problems.

Furthermore, Marcel suggests that the cons of meditation if there are any, is that it takes a little bit of one's time, but to him, it is not a waste. He speculates that some students probably resist meditation because when they meditate, they discover they are anxious. They do not want to see that aspect of themselves, so they would prefer to rush to do something else. Marcel's

impression about why some students do not relax during meditation is not unique; the mind resists being stopped.

Teachers' Use of Meditation for Social and Political Problem-Solving

My participants have varied opinions about using meditation to solve social and political problems imposed by their job. Jessica agrees that on a personal level, it is her responsibility to use meditation to solve any social problem set by her job but objects to taking up the additional burden of encouraging other teachers to meditate like her. She suggests that if a colleague is going through stress and is receptive, she could hint "you might want to try meditation" to them. I understand Jessica's stance because society demands that we tread carefully and mind our business.

Marcel argues that it sounded like telling him that it is not his responsibility to put out a fire he sees on the street because he is not a firefighter. According to him,

There is a responsibility of being in front of reality. I am not a specialist in it, but then, I will jump in to help, for sure. Therefore, with the reality of the situation, I feel like acting to the best of my ability.

According to him, teachers are the ones that take care of various situations in class. Marcel's assertion aligns with Flook et al. (2013) regarding teachers playing a central role in creating a classroom climate that nurtures students' learning and emotional development.

Fidelia explains that it is her responsibility because she noticed the difference when using meditation in her classroom. Before then, she elucidates, "[...]some kids had serious behavioral issues, but with meditation, they calmed down and became good students. So, meditation helps me and helps the students." This, to her, is positive.

Cassandra asserts that it is her responsibility to use meditation to solve social or political problems imposed by her job because meditation is a non-violent practice, and it is not imposed. Politically, she suggests that it leads to awareness. It encourages us to realize that there is a beginning and an end to this life and that life and death are on the same spectrum in a consumerist society. She elaborates that:

In a consumerist society, nobody speaks about death because once you are dead, you cannot purchase anything. But meditation, in a way, is a situation where you are still, numb, and it teaches you how to be as if you are dead. So, that takes you to another level of consciousness, you become a universal conscious soul, and you realize that there are so many conflicts for territory, land, food, and power. But if you accept that I am taking care of myself, the environment, and this planet. And that I have the opportunity to be here right now. It cannot all be quantified in financial gains and power.

Cassandra's philosophical analyses above have spiritual undertones. Mindfulness meditation has probably given her a different perception of the real purpose of life.

Discussion

In this final section, I will discuss my findings and the limitations I encountered during the study and suggest future directions for research on the field. My conclusion and recommendations will follow.

Findings

This study responded to the three research questions mentioned at the start. Regarding question one: the perceived role of Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations with teachers' well-being, my participant teachers infer that Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations are essential to their well-being and have transformed their lives. The second question confirmed that their meditation practices help them release stress and have more energy for their work. Finally, some teachers accept the narrative of using their meditative practices to solve social and political problems imposed by their job. However, Jessica would only intercede if faced with a receptive person. In addition, three of the teachers interviewed practice meditation with their students, enhancing their overall well-being. The bone of contention here is that my participants' use of meditation to address the challenges is individualistic. They are unable to put that energy into collective pushing back on the ever-increasing requirements of teachers. They are not part of a team.

The teachers I interviewed reflected on their personal lives and teaching situations and decided to embrace meditation, that is technologies of the self. First, they noticed the benefits of meditation to themselves. Fidelia started practicing meditation for her spiritual upliftment. Meditation makes her calm and relaxed. Jessica asserts that meditation has transformed her and made her more peaceful and tolerant of her students. For Cassandra, meditation is all about being alive, slowing down, and being in the present moment. And Marcel suggests that meditation brings him to a higher level of consciousness.

Also, the three teachers that practice meditation with their students noticed the telos: the ideal outcome of its practice. They suggest that it has positive effects on them. Fidelia comments that incorporating meditation in her class made her students calm. Her colleagues also started to embrace her positive energy; and her school has now included meditation in their program.

Cassandra enjoys the quiet and the moment of silence meditation offers her and her students. Marcel opines that it has transformed his teaching since he introduced it, and it helps his students be in the present moment. They become better observers of details that are outside as well as inside of their beings.

My participants did not show any indication that meditation was either encouraged or imposed by their school administration. Teachers informally introduced it in their classes. Marcel indicated having approached his school administration to suggest it. Marcel and Cassandra see meditation as an extension of the dramatic arts program to bring students to observe their environment. With meditation, they extend it to students watching inside of their beings. My impression is that my participants instinctively introduced meditation to their students because it helps them calm down.

Using the Foucauldian critique of positive education, I argue that in as much as meditation engenders transformative and therapeutic benefits, the onus should not be on individual teachers to use it to solve social and political problems imposed by their job. I admit everyone has a role to play to work on their well-being, but stress is a societal problem and, therefore, needs a concerted societal solution. A society with teachers and parents that are not stressed will transform into a more relaxed student population. The ultimate relief to teachers' stress will come from provincial governments and the ministries of education's efforts to solve the endemic problems teachers face. It is evident from my research that the school administrations of my participants are very supportive. They make available to teachers all resources given to them by the government and school boards. They also make a concerted effort to assist teachers in dealing with behavioral issues in their classes. In addition, school

administrations, in conjunction with professional staff, teachers, and parents, jointly write students' educational plans. Furthermore, Marcel's school administration accepted his proposal to practice meditation with his students. Fidelia and Cassandra's administrations were also aware they practiced meditation with their students and did not object. The problem does not seem to come from the school administrations but from the top: the government.

Limitation and Future Direction

I intended to carry out a Canada-wide study on this topic. Time was limited, and the lack of personal contact conditioned the interviews. Future research on this topic could address this shortfall by doing more in-depth and personal interviews with each participant and meeting them, and having them demonstrate their practices. Also, the study relies only on reports and the teachers' words, and there was no witnessing of what these practices looked like and if they did them. Moreover, there is no feedback from students to see how they perceive the impact of the meditation practices. A future study would look at how students react.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Teachers in Canada remain overworked and continue to have harsh working conditions that put their mental and emotional health at risk. As long as the ministries of education and the provincial governments do not address these fundamental issues in education, teachers will continue experiencing stress and burnout. Researchers like Purser (2019) agree that there are worthy dimensions to Mindfulness practice. The author posits that "Turning rumination does help reduce stress, as well as chronic anxiety and other maladies. Becoming more aware of automatic reactions can make people calmer and potentially kinder" (p. 8). However, the author criticizes Mindfulness, implying that "anything that offers success in our unjust society without

trying to change it is not revolutionary" (p. 7). It is the responsibility of the provincial governments in charge of education to solve the multifaceted problems in education today. It is time to ease these conditions for teachers and students.

Meanwhile, teachers like Jessica, Fidelia, Cassandra, and Marcel, who have discovered the benefits of meditation, will continue to practice it individually or with their students. Jessica suggests that:

In the future, education would probably have to look into meditation because there is much mental awareness with the students now. The pandemic, if anything, has brought to light the vulnerability many of us have. Maybe they will be forced to because self-care, self-help, well-being, self-preservation, all of that is vital.

I started this thesis before the coronavirus pandemic exploded and destabilized the whole world. However, the situation of teachers already existed. The pandemic only exacerbated it.

Futhermore, I advocate a critical pedagogy aimed at raising people's consciousness and geared towards social empowerment. In addition, I look back to the meaning of education which says that thinking and learning are synonymous with being human. Essentially, I suggest that knowledge should be made available to everyone, including teachers, to decide if they would like to try the self-help technologies offered by meditation. In the same vein, Marcel elucidates that meditation is fundamental and would love to have its practice in his class be more established. He suggests that not everybody want or will benefit from meditation. He uses the anology of offering food to people to explain this:

That is to say. I want to offer food to people. I put it on the table. Some will say, "I ate this morning. I do not need it". Certainly, there are some who have not eaten who will eat, but we do not know who will be nourished by it. Therefore, meditation is very beneficial to some and less for others. It does not mean much for some people, but there is nourishment, and some will benefit from it.

In addition, my participants suggest that school psychologists could help teachers that show symptoms of stress. Teachers also need to prioritize using time at their disposal, such as pedagogical days, to look for solutions for stress and burnout.

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Appendix

Key Terms

Meditation

Researchers proffer that meditation is the deliberate act of regulating attention through observing thoughts, emotions, and body states (Black et al., 2009; Zylowska et al., 2008). Its purpose, they intone is to assist a person in quieting the mind, to seek to calm one's center, and to come into a state of awareness of the present (Boorstein, 1996; McDonald, 1984; Hahn, 1976; Smith, 1998; Suzuki, 1970 in Gifford et al., 2014). The underlying premise of all these techniques involves

attending deliberately to internal and external phenomena with total concentration (Zylowska et al., 2008). Singh (2012) suggests that "Traditionally, meditation has been how people developed themselves spiritually." (p. 15). The author also opines that it is a way to eliminate the lack of balance caused by mental stresses and currently plays a role in preventative medicine (Singh, 2012). Popular meditation practices include Pranayama, Acem, Centering Prayer, Loving Kindness, Vipassana, Zen, Mindfulness, hatha-yoga, transcendental meditation - Jyoti (Waters et al., 2015, Hydes, 2013, Hepburn & McMahon, 2017). This research focuses on Mindfulness and Jyoti meditations.

Jyoti Meditation

Jyoti is a transcendental form of meditation that emphasizes concentration and a spiritual connection (Gutierrez et al., 2013). Duggal Stephens (2012) explains that:

Meditation is a process by which we withdraw our attention from the physical senses that connect us to the world around us. This includes withdrawing our sense of sight, touch, smell, and hearing, by sitting in silence as we focus on the spiritual connection present within each of ourselves, located in the third or single eye, between and behind the eyebrow. (p. 116)

Sant Rajinder Singh, the spiritual leader of Science of Spirituality and a meditation teacher, emphasizes that:

By gazing deeper into the middle of the light, we can tap into the spiritual treasures within and enjoy profound peace, bliss, and happiness unlike any we have found in this world. The beauty of meditation is that this joy remains with us even after we resume our daily activities. (2012, p.209)

This inner and outer peace experienced by Jyoti meditation practitioners helps them moderate the daily stress they might encounter in their environment.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 2001), observing one's physical, emotional, and mental experiences with deliberate, open, and curious attention (Smalley & Winston, 2010). This kind of attention supposedly nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality. Proponents of Jyoti and Mindfulness meditations agree that meditation can be a secular practice and does not require any change in belief systems or religious affiliations.

Stress

Stress is a condition that manifests as a result of mental or emotional strain due to excessively demanding circumstances. Stress is healthy when it presents itself at an average stress level

available to everyone. At this instance, the body releases cortisol and adrenaline - hormones responsible for the fight-or-flight response (Singh, 2012). This type of stress enables one to avoid danger or to meet a deadline.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a powerful, complex, economic, and cultural system that transfers market values into all aspects of life. It operates on the rationality that promotes privatization, deregulation, and austerity measures. Vassallo (2015) draws from Harvey's 2007 work in a bid to explain neoliberalism. Although laden with controversy, the author suggests that neoliberalism is an economic logic, government rationality, and ideology based on the idea that the best way to ensure prosperity and well-being for individuals is to organize all interactions to function in terms of free-market principles. (Vassallo, p. 149, 2015). Presently, neoliberalism has infiltrated education through various means.