

A Single Site Evaluation of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention Within a Secondary School Cognition and Learning Resource Base: Evaluating the Impact on Student Wellbeing

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Abstract

Over the past decade there has been an increased emphasis on the use of evidence-based educational interventions in schools and the need to evaluate programmes that have already been implemented (Nabors, Weist, and Reynolds, 2000; Tingle, DiSimone and Covington, 2003). The present political and sociocultural context has resulted in a greater focus on measurement of productivity, effectiveness, efficiency and quality of educational interventions (Brinkerhoff et al., 2013).

This paper presents a case study example of an evaluative research project undertaken by two Trainee Educational Psychologists. The evaluation project was conducted in a mainstream secondary school cognition and learning Resource Base, with the purpose of evaluating the impact of a mindfulness-based intervention on student wellbeing. A stakeholder model of evaluation was implemented and a SWOT analysis was reframed into an interview schedule for data collection through individual interviews with eight student participants.

The identified strengths and opportunities of the mindfulness-based intervention highlight how it contributes to the student's positive mental health: students felt that the intervention gave them protected time to relax, supported their attention and encouraged them to be in the moment. The identified weaknesses and threats offer next steps across a range of areas: the content of the sessions; extending the sessions to home and the wider school context; and, accommodating individual preferences. Other salient factors to consider when designing an evaluation are discussed in relation to the project.

Mndfulness

Wellbeing is defined by Public Health England (2018, p. 3) as: 'mental, social and emotional wellbeing including happiness, confidence and not feeling depressed, resilience to cope with difficulties, ability to have good relationships

with others, think clearly, participate in decision making and have optimism, sense of control and self-efficacy'. These are all important for staying healthy.

Globally, between ten and twenty percent of young people experience mental health difficulties, whilst fifty percent of adults with mental health issues first experienced them before 14 years of age (Weare, 2015; World Health Organization, 2019). Educational settings have an important role to play in promoting wellbeing and reducing the prevalence of mental health need amongst children and young people and it is important for them to put in place effective universal and targeted interventions to help fulfil this role (Weare, 2015).

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that mindfulness is an essential life skill for all young people (Shapiro et al., 2014). Mindfulness techniques help focus attention and have the potential to enhance student wellbeing (Albrecht, 2015). Mindfulness practices centre on awareness of the mind, body and emotions and hence the development of the whole person. Recent statistics from the United Kingdom indicate that nearly 50 percent of school-age children engage in some form of mindful activities (Stone, 2014). However, research on the impact of such mindfulness activities is in its infancy.

Mindfulness is mostly used to refer to a way of being, which has prescribed characteristics, activities and programs designed to cultivate this way of being, as well as ancient meditation techniques rooted in various religions (Albrecht, Albrecht, and Cohen, 2012). A definition proposed by Kabat-Zinn (2003) understands mindfulness to be –

“the awareness that emerges through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally to our moment by moment experience.”

(Kabat-Zinn, 2003)

Interest in understanding how mindfulness practice may produce significant, positive effects has resulted in the growing use of mindfulness-based interventions in health and care services. For example, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (Teasdale, 2000) has been recommended by NICE (2009) as a treatment for recurrent depression in adults and mindfulness-based stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). The reported benefits of mindfulness-based interventions from empirical research include increased working memory and executive functions, reduced stress, reduced rumination and fewer depressive symptoms (Hoffman, 2010; Davis, 2012).

This interest is further stretched to encompass the role of mindfulness in education settings, especially since the recent shift towards schools implementing whole-school approaches to mental health and wellbeing (Public Health England, 2015). Coupled with the statistics published by the Department for Education's which suggest that 75 percent of mental health problems develop before the age of 24, this highlights the need for schools to promote positive mental health, intervene early and mitigate potential long-term effects of poor mental health. Moreover, United Kingdom education policy and legislation reflects the need to promote emotional wellbeing in schools by securing mental wellbeing on the curriculum map by 2020 (DfE, 2018).

Recent research involving education settings which have used mindfulness-based interventions suggests such interventions can be adapted, with success, for use in mainstream schools as a universal, whole class intervention or prevention strategy to foster a positive focus on wellbeing (Crescentini et al., 2016). However, there is currently limited published research on the impact of mindfulness-based interventions in mainstream, United Kingdom schools. This implies not only a need for further research, but also a need to evaluate the impact, reception and feasibility of current mindfulness-based interventions in use in schools.

Approach to Evaluation

In education today, there is a significant focus upon ensuring that a strong evidence base exists for educational interventions before funding and practice decisions are made (Weare and Gray, 2003). Consequently, evaluation is seen as an important tool for determining the effectiveness of educational interventions in the United Kingdom. An evaluation provides an opportunity for stakeholders' perspectives to be heard and considered.

The literature on evaluation process and design offers several definitions of evaluation. Tyler (1950) suggests evaluation is a process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are being realised. Vedung (1997) adds to this in suggesting evaluation is a 'careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth and value of administration, output and outcome of government interventions which is intended to play a role in future, practical action situations' (Vedung, 1997 pg. 3). These definitions provide for two theoretical traditions: programme evaluation and organisational evaluation (Hansen, 2005). Brinkerhoff et al. (1983) suggest evaluation can serve one, or a combination of, three functions. In its formative function, evaluation is used for the improvement and development of an ongoing activity (or program, person, product) whilst a summative evaluation is used for accountability, certification, selection or continuation (Scriven, 1967). The third suggested function is less often addressed by evaluation literature but is nonetheless prevalent in the practice of evaluation studies; the evaluation process may have a psychological or socio-political function in that a major use may be to increase awareness of activities or motivate desired behaviours within an organisation or group.

Our role as Trainee Educational Psychologists was to work collaboratively with a secondary school, at an organisational level to evaluate the effectiveness of a mindfulness intervention upon student wellbeing and management of emotions.

The stakeholder model of evaluation was chosen for the single site evaluation as it aimed to generate understanding and explanation of the mindfulness intervention, to help to identify its' purpose. The following research questions below were generated in collaboration with a senior member of staff from the school:

1. What are the students' perspectives of the mindfulness sessions taught at school?

2. What do the students perceive to be the barriers to practising mindfulness?

The setting

School X is a mixed, larger than average-sized secondary school with sixth form, an above-average proportion of students have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The school has a funded Resource Base specialising in cognition and learning, which is accessed on a part-time basis by a group of young people across year seven to eleven. In 2013, the head of the Resource Base, Miss A, introduced a mindfulness intervention and activities to support students who struggle to manage anger and anxiety and maintain focus and self-control.

The sessions include meditations, positive thinking strategies and breathing techniques. All mindfulness sessions take place in the Resource Base. The most frequent meditations practised are:

- The Body Scan Love and Kindness
- Mindfulness of Breath
- Mindfulness of Sound

Mindful eating, mindful movement and muscle relaxation are also used during some sessions. Access to the fortnightly mindfulness activities is included as additional provision for each of the participants.

Methodology

Design and participants

The current study utilises a case study design which qualitatively evaluated participants' experiences of the mindfulness intervention. It was commissioned by the head of the Resource Base in School X. The study involved eight Year 10 male students from a mainstream secondary school in the West Midlands area. The participants all accessed the Resource Base on a part-time basis, and each had an Education, Health and Care Plan with a range of needs, including: receptive and expressive language skills, hearing impairment, poor motor skill development, literacy and numeracy skills, attention and concentration skills, speech, language and communication, anxiety, self-help skills and social interaction skills. Informed parental consent was obtained prior to participation.

Measures

A collaborative approach was taken to involve and empower the primary stakeholder, in all decisions made about the evaluation design and implementation. A stakeholder evaluation has an unambiguous value orientation and is designed

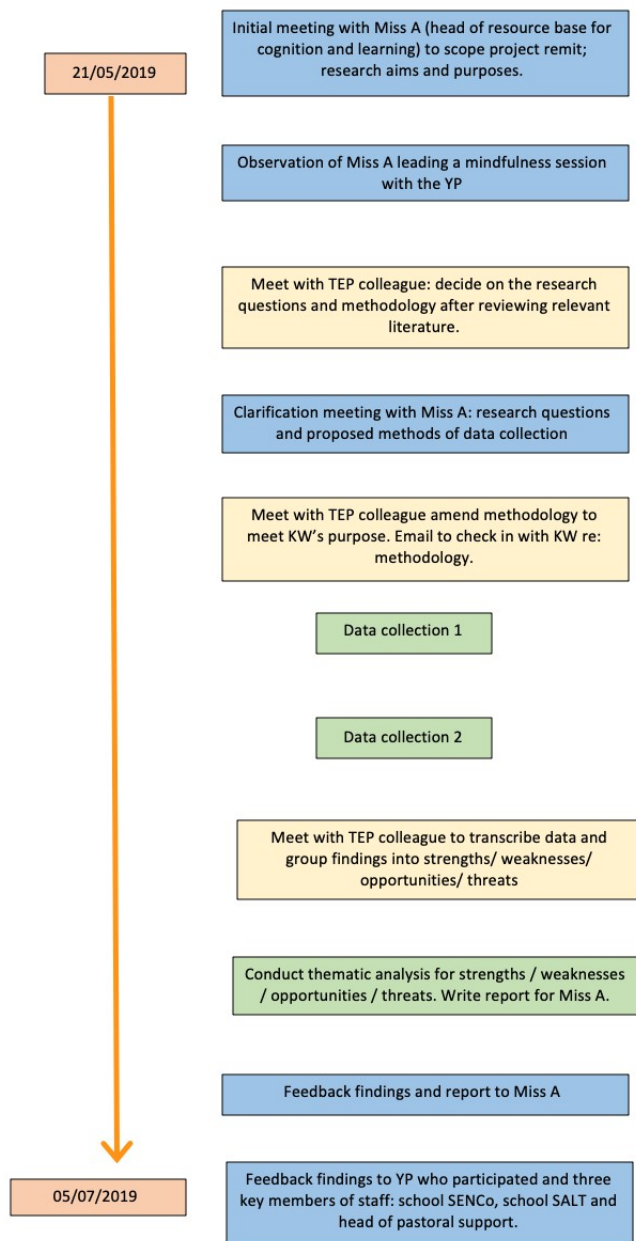


Figure 1: Overview of Evaluation Process

to help people help themselves and to improve their programmes using a form of self-evaluation and reflection. Participants of the programme, or intervention in the current case, conduct their own evaluations and an external evaluator serves as a coach or facilitator. The aim is to understand what is going on in a situation from the participant's own perspective and then proceed to improve it with meaningful strategies and goals. The model is collaborative involving the participants and stakeholders at every stage and is broken down into 3 key steps:

1. Establishing a mission or vision statement about the intervention
2. Taking stock: identifying and prioritising the most significant program activities
3. Planning for the future by establishing goals, specifying strategies and agreeing on credible evidence. Developing strategies and documenting progress are then under the responsibility of stakeholders and participants.

Fetterman, (2002)

To gather information and evidence towards the research questions, the following strategies were used:

- Initial information gathering session with the teacher of the Resource Base (Miss A). This session aimed to establish what the current mindfulness practice looked like and whether staff had received any training or support to plan, monitor and evaluate impact of the intervention.
- Following this information gathering session, the researchers observed one session of the mindfulness activities led by Miss A in the resource base to understand how the sessions are structured, implemented and received by the students.
- Individual interviews with each student who participates in the mindfulness-based intervention, to elicit their evaluations of the current sessions (Section 3.3 details the tools used for this). The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews using a flexible approach appropriate for qualitative research.

Particular consideration was also given to the difficulties of interviewing young people with SEND, such as:

- An understanding of each young person's specific needs shared with the researchers ahead of the interviews
- Time spent with the young people during the mindfulness sessions, to establish rapport before the interviews were conducted
- A visual scale of 1-5 was developed and used to support communication of likes and dislikes within the interview (please see Appendix 5)

- Each participant was given the option to say, write, draw or have their views scribed by the researchers.

Participant interviews took place over two sessions, in a private room at School X which was familiar to the young people. Each interview lasted for approximately 25 minutes. Figure 1 provides an overview of the evaluation process.

Tools

We adopted a ‘critical friend’ role within the interview process (Fetterman, 2002) to probe and ask questions about evaluation judgements or opinions given by participants. To guide the interview process, we used an analysis framework that would be accessible and understood by the participants: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT analysis, Learned et al., 1965). The SWOT framework is an analysis tool used widely by organisations, groups, project teams to provide the foundation for realisation of desired alignment of organisational variables or issues (Helms et al., 2010).

To structure the interviews, we adopted an interview schedule previously created by a doctoral student at the University of Birmingham to gather views on a school-based intervention (Kelechi – Anyika, 2015). The interview questions and probes were categorised into the SWOT grid (Appendix 2) and then each of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were grouped into an area on the participant views record sheet (see Appendix 3 and 4 for a completed example). We also created a scale of five different emotions to facilitate discussion with the participants. This resource also supported the speech, language and communication needs identified for each young person and provided a scaling option to explore their views non-verbally (Please see Appendix 5).

Data Analysis and discussion

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected from the interviews. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (‘themes’) within data; it allows the data to be organised and described in rich detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Table 1 shows the thematic process that was followed:

Thematic analysis works to reflect the reality of participant’s experiences and meanings, thus providing information in line with the evaluation design. Themes are identified by both researcher judgement and the prevalence of each theme, counted at the level of the data item. The themes that were identified were within the surface meanings of the data rather than looking beyond what the participants said during their interview.

Thematic analysis (TA) can sometimes be critiqued as being a simple data analysis method. Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, (2013) argue it can lack in substance to other data methods and it can be hard to ensure the reliability of

Phase	Description of Process
Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Generating Initial Codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Searching for Themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
Reviewing Themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
Defining and Naming Themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Producing the Report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

Table 1: Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis process

codes established. However, to overcome this, identified codes were checked by both researchers to increase their reliability. In addition to this we felt that TA allowed the reality of participant's experiences and meanings to be reflected, thus providing information in line with the evaluation design.

Key themes: Perceived strengths and opportunities to develop the intervention

Data captured with the participants was coded and grouped into key themes under each section of the SWOT analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The evaluation findings for research question one, (what are the students' perspectives of the mindfulness sessions taught at school?), were addressed through the strengths and opportunities of the SWOT Framework (Learned et al., 1965). The students' answers suggest they perceive participating in the mindfulness sessions as supportive to their positive mental health, for example: "it's a way of telling me that everything's going to be OK and it helps me understand the problems I have" and "meditation helps me to get rid of all the bad things and puts good things in my mind". They felt having allocated time and space within their school timetable allowed them to talk openly about their feelings, share their problems, distract their minds and ultimately relieve stress.

Some participants highlighted additional benefits gained from accessing the sessions. For example, the mindfulness activities allowed them to remain focused and they applied this to their learning in the wider school context. The concept of relaxation was discussed in most interviews, especially in relation to stress management, calming and being able to better take control of their body, for example: "mindfulness gives me time to relax and calm down" and "I know that it helps me with stress and time management: breathing in and out stops me from freaking out about coursework deadlines".

The level of self-awareness and self-reflection when discussing ideas in the interviews varied amongst participants. Whilst the participants did not explicitly comment on how mindfulness has supported their self-awareness, many comments were made about how they feel before and after meditation and how different meditations are helpful in different situations, depending on their mood, feelings, context and behaviour, such as: "the breathing technique with the hand... it helps to get rid of the stress on my mind. I do the same thing in class but under the table" and "letting things go and calming yourself down. A chance to refresh your brain".

Another key concept referred to in the evaluation was how the young people were more aware of their own attentional processes as well as others, and of the environment around them. Some participants commented on how, following mindfulness breathing exercises, they are more able to sustain their attention and manage distractions, showing they are more aware of the need to stay focussed, for example: "mindfulness-lessons help when I'm scared or anxious about the work" and "mindfulness of sound can be transferred to the classroom because it allows me to transfer my focus to the work". This demonstrates the

participants' metacognitive awareness and supports prior research which determines that being aware of self-regulation strategies is particularly important in the learning process (Kaunhoven and Dorjee, 2017).

Key themes: Perceived weaknesses and threats to continuing the intervention

Research question two, (What do the students perceive to be the barriers to practising mindfulness?), was addressed through the weaknesses and threats of the SWOT framework. Participants identified a range of factors which they considered to be barriers to their practise of mindfulness. For example, within the theme of external distractions: noise, lighting and the physical space available were all commented upon by participants.

Internal distractions were also identified by participants including, staying focused. The evaluation highlighted a distraction was the length of some mindfulness exercises as well as the length of the sessions themselves, such as: "sometimes the activity is too long, my mind wanders off" and "length of the session is too much: when something goes on for too long I get bored and start to day dream".

Another participant offered a suggestion of having short breaks between the meditations to allow the students to talk informally to their peers. This may also provide an informal opportunity for the students to develop their social interaction skills, in a safe space, facilitated by a trusted adult. Perceived stigma around mindfulness outside of the taught sessions was a common theme within the evaluation, highlighted by participants through comments such as: "I don't want people to see" and "I don't know how other people will react". Most participants commented on feeling awkward when completing mindfulness activities with people who are not included in the mindfulness intervention programme.

Additionally, not having an appropriate level of autonomy and choice within the intervention programme was recognised as a barrier to engagement. For example, being able to choose their own activities, trying new activities, being able to choose how they sit or lie during meditations and whether they needed to be still.

The final barrier identified by participants was the perceived lack of opportunity to engage with mindfulness in school, outside of the taught mindfulness sessions. Some participants commented "we only do it in that lesson because no one else does it with us" and "I find it hard to do when I only have it once every two weeks". This implies the need for a wider school acceptance and application of mindfulness strategies and for a more holistic approach to the practice of mindfulness for these young people. This observation by the participants could also be supportive of a whole school approach to support wider implementation, and intervention fidelity. Previously identified statistics around the onset of mental health problems indicates the need for schools to implement whole school approaches which promote positive mental health and wellbeing (DfE, 2018). This reflection also highlights the difficulty schools may face when

implementing an intervention without the support of senior leadership or whole staff commitment to the principles of an approach (Blyth, 2013).

Suggested next steps

Potential next steps to be considered by School X to develop the mindfulness intervention sessions were then generated in line with the key emergent themes. The ‘next steps’ fell into four areas, as outlined in Table 2.

Critical reflection

Evaluation design and implementation

The data gathered from the evaluation process is rich in detail and provides potential next steps to build on the current mindfulness sessions. For School X as an organisation, the data demonstrates how well received the sessions have been by students and how the sessions could be improved upon. For the Resource Base Manager, the data secured her understanding of how the students perceive mindfulness and their opinions of the sessions and also provides a range of suggestions for improvement and building upon what is already working well. For the participants themselves, the evaluation process allowed them the opportunity to share their views on the mindfulness sessions in a safe and supportive environment.

However, the decision to implement changes following the evaluation, such as training staff, investing in an intervention or broadening the mindfulness sessions to a whole school approach, rests with the management team at School X.. The leaders of organisations such as schools are in turn restricted in their decision making by financial budgets, education policy, expectations of the national curriculum and Ofsted criteria. This highlights the complexity of organisational change in practice: the ecology of a school environment is often hierarchical, with school improvement plans dealing with high priority changes and adaptations within the school, rather than small changes to a curriculum (Shen, 2008).

A primary strength of the evaluation process used here is the richness of data gathered. The individual interviews resulted in a lot of detailed, descriptive data which allowed the conclusions drawn to be based on the participants’ own ideas. The individual interviews also allowed the participants time and space to share their views, with varying levels of support and facilitation. We anticipated this need after consulting Miss A to gather information about the needs and interests of the participants and were therefore prepared with suitable concrete resources and accessible language. A further strength of the evaluation design is the use of a SWOT analysis (Learned et al. 1969). SWOT has been used by numerous practitioners and is a frequent and popular tool within business, marketing, strategy planning and research. Its simplicity perpetuates its usage to assess situations. The SWOT analysis applied here provided a usable framework for our data collection and was easily understood by the stakehold-

Wider school system	Current sessions
<p>Training input for wider staff base about the benefits, inclusion of mindfulness activities in their teaching practice and results of the current research project Consider how to promote wider acceptance of mindfulness activities. For example: whole school assemblies, tutor time activities, transition activities, mindfulness club at lunch or after school for both staff and students – students accessing the mindfulness sessions in the Resource Base could facilitate such clubs/workshops</p>	<p>Use the resources presented here as an evaluative framework over the next academic year: collect pupil views after one half term of mindfulness sessions and again at the end of the school year to compare the identified SWOTs and thereby evaluating the impact of the sessions, for the students Invest time in trialling new mindfulness exercises, especially those which focus on breathing and incorporate music or natural sounds. Consider building in breaks for the students to build and maintain friendships within their group and practise social interaction skills with the support of a key adult.</p>
Home support	Pupil support
<p>Consider sending home information about the benefits of mindfulness practice and the resources/time/space needed for the students to engage with the exercises at home Consider sharing the findings of this report with student’s families, identifying next steps for both school and home</p>	<p>Consider the use of rating scales or voting polls to identify popular exercises and use this to inform planning of the next session. Allow the students time to consider their feelings before a mindfulness exercise and compare to their feelings after – this will enable metacognitive self-reflection to develop. Consider allowing a student to lead a favourite, or requested, mindfulness exercise with their group – this may promote a sense of ownership over the sessions and a sense of belonging, with each student being offered this opportunity.</p>

Table 2: Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis process

ers. This meant feeding back the information gathered was both simpler and easier for all involved in the project due to our mutual understanding of the framework.

However, as noted by Helms and Nixon (2010), SWOT analyses lack a hierarchy between the elements of ‘S-W-O-T’. Whilst the framework does simplify complex internal and external factors into a short list of management issues, the process requires human judgment which undoubtedly varies and may not be comprehensive. This means that what may be perceived as an internal ‘strength’ of the intervention by one participant, may not be so by another, or by Miss A due to their individual understanding of ‘strengths’ in context. Furthermore, without ranking or weighting each of the SWOT variables, stakeholders might assume that each has equal influence and importance within the evaluation process. We attempted to keep each section of the SWOT equally weighted in our feedback, demonstrating that we valued the participants’ thoughts on strengths and weaknesses of the intervention.

It should also be acknowledged that thematic analysis was chosen as the data analysis method to allow key themes to emerge from the data collected under the themes of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. However, the analysis was only surface level and did not consider the potential meaning of participants reflections or consider their personal experiences before accessing the intervention. Should further research be conducted it may be helpful to explore participants’ own experiences through the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis or Narrative Analysis which would give us more of insight into how to how the intervention is experienced by participants.

Further to this, it is important to consider that the intervention itself did not follow a prescribed method of implementation. Maintaining fidelity may be countered by a consideration of ecological validity; matching the intervention to the context, students and resources available to provide the best results possible. When designing an evaluation of an educational intervention, there are undoubtedly other factors to consider within the school and general education and political climate. For example, the current context of austerity and how this translates to staff and resource cuts in mainstream schools or the accountability of schools to now actively promote mental health and wellbeing. These are just two examples of other factors which will have influenced the intervention’s fidelity and therefore accuracy in evaluation of impact. Cronbach (1980) raised the consideration that standards related to the conduct of the evaluation may not be as important as those related to its consequences. Perhaps the ‘best’ evaluation is that which has a positive effect on program improvement rather than that which adheres to a model of evaluation or standards of conduct.

Managing and evaluating the evaluation: Meta evaluation

The stakeholder evaluation model suggests the responsibility to develop strategies to accomplish intervention goals lies with the stake holders and participants, with the same dialogue-based approach taken to critically review possible strategies and come to a consensual agreement. These strategies, or ‘next steps’,

should then be routinely reviewed to determine their effectiveness and appropriateness. By doing this, with the evaluators as facilitators rather than leaders, the empowering process can continue, and the next steps identified should be aligned to the experiences of participants and stakeholders (Fetterman, 2002). However, the next steps identified and fed back to School X on this occasion were selected by us, the evaluators, even though we were essentially external agents with little influence on the changes to be prioritised and made.

Beyond this, the current research has some methodological limitations to be considered. For example, the evaluation approach was largely led by the head of the resource base and is limited to a small group of participants from one year group. This case study approach allowed for large quantities of rich data to be gathered which allowed conclusions drawn to be based on the participants' own views entirely. The individual semi-structured interview approach also allowed participants time and space to share their views with adapted support and facilitation from us as researchers.

As data analysis was conducted entirely by the two researchers, our interpretations are a factor to acknowledge when considering the validity and reliability of conclusions drawn. This impact was mitigated somewhat with the inclusion of a member check with participants following the data analysis, but could be further strengthened with the inclusion of a third, impartial researcher conducting a thematic analysis, or by completing the thematic analysis with the students in a participatory approach.

Implications for Educational Psychologists' role in evaluating educational interventions

It has become increasingly apparent that a strong and effective way of achieving change is for Educational Psychologists to work with the institution or organisation that includes the child. Educational Psychologists as well as other professionals are in a key position as outside agents to help to address organisational variables to support organisational change (Cameron, 2005). It is arguable that an organisational focus is the only way to ensure meaningful long-term change (Stoker, 1992).

Educational Psychologists have been trained in research methods, and have the expertise to successfully carry out or help design evaluations. However, workload and external pressures may prevent this, therefore, training and supervision of teachers to embed evaluations may be more worthwhile. Taylor (2017) reports Educational Psychologists can be described as change agents as they can utilise a systemic perspective to influence the organisational behaviour of schools. Thus, it could be argued Educational Psychologists are ideally placed to contribute to or carry out evaluations (Cane and Oland, 2015; Hughes and Cline, 2015; Stanbridge and Campbell, 2016). Evaluation of educational interventions allow Educational Psychologists, school staff and young people to work collaboratively to create evidence-based interventions and effective practises to

help to improve the outcomes for all children.

Conclusion

Evaluation of educational interventions is an important yet challenging task. In times of austerity, accountability in education is ever increasing, thereby creating additional pressure for educators to demonstrate the impact of interventions through appropriate evaluation. The evaluation conducted here offers an insight into the experiences of the students. The identified weaknesses and threats offer feasible next steps across a range of areas such as: the content of the sessions, extending the sessions to home and the wider school context and accommodating individual preferences and needs within the sessions.

However, the ‘opportunities’ identified by participants, which were fed back to staff within the Resource Base, were perhaps limited by the organisational structure of the setting; the ultimate decision to train staff, invest in an intervention or broaden the mindfulness sessions to a whole school approach, lie with senior leaders within the organisation. The leaders of organisations are therefore the change agents of the organisation and are in turn restricted in their decision making by financial budgets, education policy, expectations of the national curriculum and Ofsted criteria. Moving forwards, it feels important to include the change agents of the organisation in projects with a focus on implementation or evaluation of approaches used within the organisation. This evaluation project therefore offers a real-life example of the benefits and challenges faced by schools and external agencies when attempting to evaluate a programme within an educational setting.

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