Mindfulness-based professional practice and teacher competency in the UK – past present and future

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Outline

- **Past 10 years**
  - Expansion of interest
  - Concern from within the field about potential threat to integrity

- **Present**
  - Professional practice – general and specific issues
  - UK developments and approach
    - Stance on accreditation/qualifications
    - UK Teacher Trainers Network
    - Competency assessments

- **Future**
  - The next 10 years?
Developmental markers - the last 10 years

- 2000 first MBCT trial published
- 2001 Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice founded
- 2002 NICE + Breath works founded
- 2004 – Oxford and Exeter Universities Master’s programmes founded
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010 MHF campaign

CFM teachers

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

The Mindful Way through Depression

Oxford and Exeter Universities

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression

University of Bangor

University of Oxford

University of Exeter

MINDFULNESS...
Cross cultural marriage!
I want to become qualified as an MBSR or MBCT teacher....

- I’ve been teaching mindfulness in a Buddhist context for X years and I now want to teach in a secular context

- I’m a clinical psychologist working in the NHS and I’m impressed by the research results for MB interventions
Concern’s expressed from within the field…

Will there be dilution of integrity?

- Mindfulness is not just a good idea that once we have been told about it we can put it into action
- Positive research results drives professional interest and enthusiasm – positivist intentionality – (driving desirable change, fixing what is broken)

(Kabat-Zinn 2003)
The drive to train more MBSR professionals runs the risk of easily and inadvertently undermining the integrity, exactness and long-term commitment required for the formation and ongoing development of competent, well trained MBSR teachers

(Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare and Society, 2011, Conference Brochure)
Honouring the dimensions/paradigms which are the parents of mindfulness-based approaches

‘Personhood’ of the teacher

- How the teacher ‘holds’ themselves as a human
- Bringing all you are to the moment
- Authenticity (what you know)
- Authority (what you have learned)
- Friendship (offering all that you are)
- Teaching out of a mature personal practice
  (see McCown et al., 2010)

Contextual training

- Generic psychotherapeutic knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Theoretical underpinnings – (relating to mindfulness, and models of stress, depression, pain etc)
- Working within an evidence based practice framework
- Identity as a professional
Inherent (creative) tensions - offering mindfulness within agenda driven culture...

**Being mode of mind**
- intimacy with mind states
- holding the tension of the counter intuitive
- allowing the outcome to take care of itself
- allowing the unsatisfactory
- the ‘good enough’ teacher – competency is a dualistic concept

**Doing mode of mind**
- the desire to bring about an effect
- agenda driven aims
- accounting for outcomes
- positivist stance
- endeavour to ‘address’ the unsatisfactory/unwanted
- competency framework for teachers
Integrating doing and being

- Mindfulness teachers and their managers are just as vulnerable to becoming caught in the mind states that are the focus of investigation in MB classes.
- Mindfulness teachers working in mainstream settings require adeptness in accessing a being mode of mind paradigm while working within a strongly doing mode context.
Growing into ‘good enough teachers’….

Competency framework – how can it include the subtleties?

- Knowing and not knowing
- Giving it our all and allowing it to be no effort
- Having an agenda and no agenda
- Letting the outcome take care of itself – and being fully committed to the process
- Dualism of concept of ‘competence’ - (mindfulness asks us to embrace ourselves as we are)
The present
Professional Practice (generic) – articulation of ethics, standards, conduct, values and principles

Code of practice = framework within which practitioner operates

- Standards for conduct and competence
- Sets benchmarks for expected levels of competence
- Lays out how professional responsibilities should be used in the interests of the general public
- Maintains public confidence + ensures that professionals working with integrity are not undermined by those who don’t
- When held by a professional body - standards and codes of ethics are legally binding
Professional practice for mindfulness-based teaching – the challenges

- Pioneering the integration of two very different paradigms – professional practice has to honour each
- Mindfulness-based teaching competence – how do we conceptualise it?
- Mindfulness-based teachers (in the UK) do not all have a professional body within which to practice
- Diversity of backgrounds of mindfulness practitioners
- Personal dimension to engagement in mindfulness
Current UK developments and approaches

- **Stance on accreditation/qualifications**
- **UK Teacher Trainers Network**
- **Developing methods for assessing competency**
Is there a qualification?

Learning pathway with benchmarks for progression/graduation…

• If done properly an overarching regulatory body needed
• We haven’t done the ground work on competence - build understanding about competence and ways of assessing
• It implies an end point/completion
• It can act to keep out skilled practitioners
• Current focus on:
  • developing UK coherency on good practice standards for practice for teachers and trainers
  • Supporting good governance on implementation of MBCT within the NHS
UK Teacher Trainer Network

- 2006 – 8 participants
- 2011 – 45 participants

- Inclusive – no standards of practice in order to participate
- Becomes in the interest of UK training organisations to work to UK standards of practice for teachers and trainers
Intentions

→ How can we all contribute to developments on a UK level
→ influence and align members towards common agreements on good practice
→ keeping the interests of the general public at the centre of our minds
→ building connection and collaboration between training organisations – common intentions
Good practice for MB teachers
A mindfulness-based teacher would *normally* have the following:

1. A professional qualification
2. Knowledge and experience of the populations working with
3. A professional mental health training (if delivering MBCT)
4. Familiarity with the curriculum
5. Completion of an in-depth, rigorous mindfulness-based teacher training programme
6. Ongoing adherence to appropriate ethical framework
7. Engagement in a regular supervision process
8. Participation in residential teacher-led mindfulness meditation retreats.
9. Ongoing commitment to a personal mindfulness practice
10. Ongoing contacts with mindfulness-based colleagues
11. Ongoing engagement in further training
Making assessments of teaching competence

The Bangor, Oxford and Exeter Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria

the team . . . .

Rebecca Crane, Judith Soulsby, Willem Kuyken, Mark Williams, Catrin Eames

Plus the teaching teams at Bangor, Exeter and Oxford
How to assess mindfulness-based teaching competence?

Defining the construct of competence; Measuring competence; Scientifically driven

Is there a middle way which honours integrity; honours what we know now; + offers a structure within which assessments can be made?

Continuing as we are… Individual training groups developing local strategies; Lack of UK coherence; Lack of transparency for trainees.

External demands mean we have to find ways to work with this issue!

What options do we have?
Development of an assessment tool which is designed to have several functions:

- Training programmes and supervision (developmental/feedback tool)
- Research programmes and module assessments (consistent assessment of competence level required)
- Three university MBSR/CT Master’s programmes using the same criteria - national benchmarking
- Establishing a ‘fit for practice’ level
Key point:

Is it possible to develop a process and structure within which the direct experience of the teaching can be consistently assessed?

MBI:TAC – are assessment criteria – not a ‘measure’ of competence

Developing a system within which experienced teachers can use their faculties of discrimination and intuition
Starting premises

- The assessor cannot know the inside experience of the teacher – relies on observations
  - (what is seen [behaviour, NV communication]; what is felt [visceral]; what is heard [language])
  - assessing from perspective of direct experiential participation in the teaching

- The assessor has to:
  - be an experienced MB teacher
  - have training in the use of the criteria
Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria

**How did we develop them?**

Series of developmental stages informed by:

- Pilot research
- Consultation with expert panel (experienced teachers from Bangor/Exeter/Oxford teams)

**How are we developing them?**

Pilot research in Bangor, Exeter and Oxford investigating:

- Inter-rater reliability and individual assessor reliability
- Factors relating to competence

(led by Catrin Eames)
Developing \textit{(mindfulness-based teaching)} competency…

The power of human intuition and expertise in the era of the computer

\textit{‘The heart has its reasons that reason does not know’}

\hspace{1cm} (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986)

\begin{itemize}
  \item A lifelong endeavour
  \item Subtle shifts occur throughout development
  \item Key to this is the developing role of intuition
\end{itemize}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence Stages</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incompetent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-adherence to model; safety of participants compromised</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Beginner</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Follows learned rules</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced Beginner</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Follows rules in a more sophisticated way; teaching is deliberative</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competent</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement away from rules towards embodied engagement in the moment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Proficient</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intuitive ability to use learned patterns without decomposing them into component features – increased responsiveness/flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong></td>
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<td>Teaching skill is part of the person - fluidity/immersion in process</td>
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*Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1986); Sharpless & Barber (2008)*
Elements within the teaching process (domains)

- All are crucial
- Some are more multi-faceted
- At any one moment several domains will be in action
- In our development process we started out with 14 domains and now have 6
Domains within the mindfulness-based teaching process:

- Coverage, pacing and organisation of session curriculum
- Relational skills
- Guiding mindfulness practices
- Embodiment of mindfulness
- Conveying course themes through interactive inquiry and didactic teaching
- Management of group learning environment
The future
Developmental markers - the next 10 years

2011
Mindfulness Now conference in Bangor!

2012
Staying Well After Depression research trial results published

April 2013
Jon Kabat-Zinn teaching in Bangor

2014
PREVENT research trial results published

Increasing numbers of graduates from UK mindfulness training programmes

Increasing implementation of MBCT within the NHS

2021
???
Aspirations for professional practice development in the UK context

- Professional practice concerns and issues held at a national level
- Building on current research and development processes on teaching competency
- Attuned to international professional practice developments
- Develop framework for equivalence to core professional training
- Develop and disseminate standards for trainers, supervisors and commissioners
- Honour different programmes (MBSR, MBCT, Breath works etc.)
This work has captured the mood of the moment…

- Working together in a coherent way - collective endeavour has greater impact than individual initiative
- And - we do need to focus on teacher formation/governance – the individual is the vehicle for this work in the world
- All need to be responsible for holding the standards (personhood and contextual dimensions)
- Encouraging the community speaks on what is in and what is out - cannot be held by training organisation or individuals
- Acknowledging that our self constructed ego is in the mix when we are working with these issues!
Thank you!

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www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness