

# **Higher Education Professionals' Experiences of Mindful Learning as a Contemplative Pedagogy: A Systematic Literature Review.**

Mary Strevens

*Northumbria University 1, Newcastle, United Kingdom*

**Purpose:** The purpose of the present review was to synthesise the current range of literature on how mindfulness supports the development of contemplative pedagogies and related practices in higher education using a systematic review methodology.

**Background:** The review was conducted in order to outline current theoretical and practical knowledge and to identify future research and applied directions. The past thirty years have seen rapid advances in the field of mindfulness and application of mindfulness by practitioners and therapists across disciplines, from psychology, to medicine, to neuroscience and to education in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings.

**Method:** A comprehensive search of 4 electronic databases and a further manual search of 6 academic journals was conducted in January 2018. Studies published between 1980 and 2017 were considered and keyword combinations that addressed mindful learning as a pedagogy within higher education were used to identify relevant empirical studies for inclusion. To satisfy a paper for inclusion a sifting process was conducted in three stages: papers were first reviewed by title, then by abstract and finally by full text excluding those papers at each step that did not satisfy the inclusion criteria.

**Conclusions:** From the papers initially identified in the searches, those that met the inclusion criteria for this review illustrated distinctly the opportunities for future research directions across this domain of mindfulness. Additionally, the included papers highlighted many benefits and consequences as a result of academics' engaging with mindfulness as a contemplative pedagogy including transformative learning, authentic teaching, experiential and embodied experiences and development of teaching and learning communities. Studies identified were predominantly cross sectional and focused on a limited number of faculty staff and their perceptions and impact on student learning outcomes. There appears to be a lack of research that has focused on how mindfulness supports growth and self-discovery for higher education academics and how this influences the design, development and evaluation of their teaching practice over time. With this in mind, the findings from the systematic review offer opportunity to progress new and distinctive lines of research to develop and enhance teaching approaches and curriculum development.