

Improving Teacher-Student Relationships: Using Ruckshau Meditation Practice

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Rudolf Steiner College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

June 16, 2015

Unpublished Work

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July 9, 2015

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my whole family for supporting me through this whole process and for believing in me. I would also like to thank Bonnie Rivers and Thom Schaefer for giving me the wonderful meditation tools and knowledge that I needed to be able to do a project such as this. Also, thank you to Edmund Knighton for guiding me through this amazing process from beginning to end. Lastly, I would like to thank all of my dear fourth grade students and my colleagues for all of their love and inspiration.

Dedication

This page is dedicated to my wonderful, understanding family who put up with my holiday, weekend and late night writing and researching. I am grateful to my husband who kept the house clean and made dinner nightly so that I could focus on this project. I am also grateful to my two beautiful and loving children for being so accepting and patient with me through this long process. Not only do I dedicate this page to my family, but also to my sweet fourth grade students who teach me new things every day.

Abstract

As a fourth grade teacher, I struggled with a particular student and tried Ruckshau meditation to see if it could help build teacher-student relationships. This is the daily practice developed by Rudolf Steiner of reflecting backward through the day just before going to bed. No educational studies were found on this exercise. My objective was to show that this suggested daily practice for all Waldorf educators worldwide will help with classroom interactions and reduce stress and burnout. I compared and contrasted Rudolf Steiner's methods of Ruckshau with mindfulness practice from Ellen Langer and the reflective practices of John Dewey, who are guiding theorists in these areas. I extracted patterns out of my reactions and behaviors from everyday writing. I used a Likert scale to rate my feelings of burnout before and after using Ruckshau meditation to show positive developments. I provided examples of relationship improvements using excerpts from my journal. Ruckshau meditation improved my feelings of burnout as measured with the Likert scale and as a result I felt more connected to the students in my class. This practice may help create more peaceful, energetic instructors, thereby improving relationships in the classroom.

Keywords: Ruckshau, primary education, Waldorf Public Charter School, mindfulness meditation, reflection, introspection, visualization, teacher-student relationship, reflective journal, imaginative cognition, affect, behavior, stress, burn-out.

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Chapter 1: Nature of the Study

Background

Teachers working in Waldorf method charter schools are finding that the demand of teaching is overwhelming. Waldorf method charter school classrooms require a teacher to spend countless hours creating lesson plans that fit their particular student population. Also, teachers need to pay attention to temperaments, be intuitive in the moment to students' needs, know what is developmentally appropriate for the age group they are teaching and deal with the myriad behavior issues that crop up. There are also state standard requirements that a teacher is required to teach. Additionally, Waldorf teachers frequently follow a class for more than one year and are required to learn a new curriculum yearly. Because of these high demands in Waldorf method schools, many teachers burn out after teaching for only a few short years. Out of 26 occupations, teaching in a public school has been ranked as one of the highest stress-related consequences because of the involvement of teachers with their students emotionally (Split, Koomen & Thijs, 2011). The stress experienced by Waldorf educators is likely even higher than that of teachers in traditional school programs for the reasons stated above.

Ruckshau meditation could be a way to help teachers become more intuitive, imaginative and inspired, thus reducing teacher burnout and stress, increasing confidence and strengthening teacher-student relationships. Ruckshau or backward review was first brought to us from Rudolf Steiner, the father of Waldorf education. Ruckshau as defined by Rudolf Steiner means "reflection or contemplative review..." (Cowan, 2004, p. 91). According to Steiner, "A backwards review involves picturing events as if they proceeded in the opposite direction from that which they proceeded in our normal world." (Steiner, 1916, Lecture 8, para. 21) Steiner also says that when the sense processes or the life processes are reversed and run backwards,

spiritual consciousness opens and thus begins (Steiner, 1916). Lipson came across six meditation practices created by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), “the Austrian mystic and scientist who established Waldorf schools, biodynamic farming (an early organic method), and many other spiritually-based initiatives” (Lipson, 2002, pp. 12-13). “Anthroposophy” is what Steiner called his approach to the knowledge of the human being or the spiritual life and grounded his developments on what he called “spiritual-scientific research” (Lipson, 2012, p. 13). Steiner wrote in his book, *A Road to Self Knowledge*, “that by making meditations a habit, nay, a necessity of life, just as breathing is necessary for the life of the body, we shall concentrate the powers of the soul, and by concentrating strengthen them” (Rudolf Steiner, 1956, p. 34). As small children we have intense powers of complete absorption in play and in learning how to talk, and as we mature our mind gives way to many distractions, concerns and memories (Lipson, 2002). Lipson points out that we have an incredible ability; as humans, we can always pay some attention no matter what we are doing (Lipson, 2012).

As a Waldorf charter school teacher, I found myself to be increasingly burned out, I had low self-esteem and I was having issues with classroom management and dealing with difficult behaviors. I was taking everything that was happening in my classroom personally and, at times, I felt like quitting. I began using Ruckshau meditation practice as a recommendation by one of my mentors after having an extremely rough day with one of my students. After doing this practice nightly for about a week I began to notice that I was feeling less stressed and had more restful sleep at night. I began to feel more empathetic toward students in the classroom and more aware about their life situations. I also began to feel my heart open, and I was less critical and frustrated with my students when they were shouting out, etc. These behaviors in the classroom began to lessen or I began to feel less annoyed by them, and the children were

happier. When I meditated on a particular student and the feelings or problems I had surrounding that student, I felt more empathy. In a few cases, I had students that were struggling with a particular issue one day and then when I went home and did Ruckshau, the struggles seemed to dissipate the next day. In one particular case, I had a student in tears because she could not figure out a clapping movement. That night I did Ruckshau, and I meditated on my frustrations and my feelings surrounding her and what I could do differently to help her next time. In the morning that student came to me excitedly and said, “Look, I can do it!” I felt a connection to this child of compassion when I shook her hand as she came into the classroom that morning. Also, lesson planning became easier, and I began to feel like I could teach more in the moment.

Problem Statement

As a fourth grade teacher at a public Waldorf school I was struggling with behavior management issues, burnout and stress. I wanted to find information on how Rudolf Steiner’s Ruckshau meditation could help me as a teacher in a Waldorf public school classroom. I could not find any studies done on Ruckshau meditation. I decided to look into mindfulness meditation and reflection practices to see if I could find more information. I was able to find research articles on teachers using mindfulness and/or meditation as a way to reduce stress, burnout, increase confidence and build student-teacher relationships. I was also able to find information about the importance of reflection.

Purpose of the Study

It was the goal of this study to determine if Ruckshau meditation practices could reduce stress levels of a fourth grade classroom teacher as well as improve teacher-student relationships.

In addition, this study was used as a way to develop teacher presence and intuition, as well as confidence.

At the end of every teaching day, right before going to sleep, I practiced Ruckshau meditation. Before beginning Ruckshau each night, I rated myself on a Likert scale from 1-4 (see appendix) how burned out I was feeling: one being the least burned out and 4 being the most burned out. I sat on my bed in an upright position and reviewed my day from the time I shook the children's hands at the end of the school day until I shook their hands at the beginning of the day. I did this in a backwards sequence until I came across concerns or problems in the day that stood out. I stopped and watched the scene unfold in my mind as if I was a bystander watching. I then brought in what I was feeling at that moment or what feelings it evoked for me in that moment of reflection. Next, I thought about what I could do differently in the future, then I continued reflecting and looking inwardly for more problematic areas in my teaching day. This reflection practice took approximately 5-15 minutes every night after teaching all day. After reflecting, I rated myself again on how burned out I felt using a Likert scale. I wanted to see if Ruckshau could help me find my calm after a long day of teaching. Journaling was the next step and was a way for me to record the incidents, my feelings and how I would go about changing the situation if it ever came up again. After meditating and journaling for about six months I went back and reviewed everything that I had written to look for any patterns or changes in my behaviors.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research Question 1: What happens in classrooms when teachers use Ruckshau meditation practices?

H1: In my experience, using Ruckshau meditation on a nightly basis before going to sleep does change a teacher's perception of what is going on around them in the classroom and it makes them more mindfully aware.

From a personal point of view, this practice made me feel more confident as a teacher and more calm and open in any given situation. Looking back at my reflective journaling I noticed that at the beginning of my Ruckshau practice I was focused on what I perceived to be negative behaviors the children were exhibiting in the classroom. Within a few weeks, I began to notice my reactions and my behaviors in relation to various situations in the classroom. I stopped perceiving the children as having bad behaviors and realized that the children were feeding off of my behaviors and feelings towards them. Later, I was focused on the love I had for these students and how my openness could help the classroom setting.

I began having intuitions in the classroom as I was teaching. These intuitions began to guide me and my instruction in a way that was nourishing to the students. I also began to feel stronger with classroom management abilities and skills. The children, on their own, threw me a surprise birthday party, which to me was their way of noticing these changes and celebrating them. I found that I was less stressed at the end of the day, which I attributed to the meditation practice I was doing nightly. I felt happier and more open to the sense perceptions that were coming toward me while I was teaching. I became much lighter in the classroom and the issues I thought were big, became much smaller. I became less reactive and more mindful of the children and their needs. Lesson planning became easier and less daunting because I began listening to the children and using my gut instinct. I used to spend countless hours planning lessons that I never ended

up using and that were way above and beyond what the children needed. I found that I can be open to parent criticism and I am now able to listen without judgement and with an open heart. Lastly, and the most important, is that I have also learned how to forgive myself for making mistakes when I am not doing or feeling my best.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

In my literature review I discuss how meditation, mindfulness and reflection can help teachers in the classroom be less stressed, more intuitive and more present. I discuss the different types of meditation, mindfulness, visualizations and reflective practices that come from John Dewey, Ellen Langer and Rudolf Steiner. I compare and contrast the differences between different types of mindfulness and meditation practices to Ruckshau.

Scope of the Study

This study and research topic is specifically designed for all public school Waldorf teachers in kindergarten through 8th grade classrooms throughout the country. Some teachers may find that it is difficult to find time and energy after a long day in the classroom to do this meditation practice. There may be some teachers that do not believe in meditation or its benefits. A professional scientific approach to research requires openness to new experiences on the part of the teacher. As such, belief plays no part in the rigorous path of self-observation. Positivity and openness are two of Steiner's six basic exercises. Many people want scientific proof that meditation works before they begin the practice. Those individuals are recommended to the large body of evidence on mindfulness research over the last thirty years. In my research on meditation, I found a few articles synthesizing research results from many studies on meditation. These meta-analysis studies have shown that meditation practices reduce stress and blood pressure, improve attention control and mindfulness while decreasing unwanted personality traits

(Orme-Johnson & Dillbeck, 2014). Other studies have found that meditation brings a calming and relaxation benefit as well as mental balance (Sedlmeier, Eberth, Schwarz, et.al 2012). If more connections through research and self-exploration can be made to show how helpful practices of mindfulness are, more teachers might join in and use this practice (Kelly, 1993). With the hustle and bustle of regular daily life, there is a lack of commitment to want to take the time to practice meditation (Kelly, 1993).

Ruckshau meditation is only a five minute practice that one could easily do right before falling asleep at night. It is an incredibly calming and centering practice, and I find falling asleep is much easier after doing this simple daily exercise. Meditation, mindfulness practice or Ruckshau practice should be built into all teacher training programs. When prospective teachers are developing their teaching skills, one of the ways that universities could help create authentic educators would be to train them to focus on their own being, which would increase their own internal capacities (Mutch, 2013). Elements that impact teachers' authenticity are self-awareness and self-exploration, mindfulness of others, connections with students, consciousness of cultural, social, and educational backgrounds and their influence on practice and critical self-reflection on teaching (Mutch, 2013). Some individuals are worried that the practice of mindfulness is not authentic enough because these processes are self-report measures whereby individuals might tend to inflate data (Turino, 2014). Self-report measures are an essential piece of measuring mindfulness since only the individual can give understanding and an explanation of this information based on the person's own internal experience (Turino, 2014). Nevertheless, even in qualitative research, robustness is strengthened when patterns are explicated.

Definition of Key Terms

Meditation: Meditation is the means to supersensible knowledge through contemplative reflection (Steiner, 2012).

Mindfulness: Mindfulness is about being aware of inner thoughts as they occur, without judgement (Mapel, 2012).

Reflection: Reflection is the act of exploring details about an event which brings confusion, doubt or uncertainty to light (Satanovsky, 2005).

Reflection on teaching: Reflection on teaching is a way for teachers to gain understanding of their teaching or happenings in the classroom (Kelly, 1993).

Ruckshau: Ruckshau is a contemplative review and a method to increase objective awareness & visualization ability (Cowan, 2004).

Significance of the Study

Reflecting and meditating on our own teaching practice is important because it keeps us grounded and open in a demanding and stressful job. There are not many aspects of teaching that one has control over as far as curriculum, standardized assessments or school policies are concerned and teachers have been standardized without being given any help (Turino, 2014). As teachers, we do have control over how we choose to connect with our students and how we bring lesson content to them. “Steiner believed that through contemplation and a heartfelt compassion to be open to other’s ideas, greater imagination (from thinking), inspiration (from feeling), and intuition (from willing) were achieved” (Bernay, 2012, p. 31). If we are to teach using our creative and soul capacities we need to learn mindfulness techniques and meditation as a means to reflect or center ourselves. Turino states in her dissertation, that “if teachers can have an awareness of experience, then possibly they might have insight into what creates effective teaching and learning in their classroom” (Turino, 2014, p.5). In order to achieve better

relationships with our students and bring meaningful content to our classrooms, it is imperative that we bring reflective and mindfulness practices through meditation.

There have been many studies done on mindfulness, reflection and meditation for teachers and adults. One study showed that mindfulness and meditation could help teachers adapt, cope with stressful situations and become more effective as teachers (Turino, 2014). Two different studies pointed out that when teachers are fully attentive and observant in the moment, they are better at teaching (Mapel, 2012, Bernay, 2014). In a Mindfulness study conducted by Ross Bernay, he concluded that the teachers had new insights (Bernay, 2014). For example, body awareness of tension began to be noticed during stressful times, awareness of children's needs became apparent whereby the teacher was able to respond appropriately and "greater efficiency" in use of time was noticed (Bernay, 2014, p. 7). He also found that the teachers felt like they were "becoming more creative" with their lessons, that students were responding in a positive way to the lessons being taught, and misbehavior dropped in frequency (Bernay, 2014, p. 7). When this study was concluded all of the participants planned on setting aside time for reflection and meditation because they all saw the benefits of this practice (Bernay, 2014). Bernay summarized one of the participant's words in this way:

I dedicate (mindfulness) practice to certain children in my class. My body and mind are much more relaxed and ready to take on whatever happens next. I can reflect on it as I go. So if I find I am getting negative or worried about something, then I can actually go to 'why' right away and look at my perceptions. Usually I can work it out, take perspective, and try to sort it out from there. Definitely reflecting at the end of the day about what happened in the day and what you have to do (Bernay, 2014, p. 64).

Overall, these studies show a very small percentage of what mindfulness, reflection and meditation can do for the overall wellbeing of teachers and their students. It is important that all teachers practice some type of meditation or mindfulness so that they can enjoy the students and feel less stressed in the classroom.

“Meaningful relationships with students is overlooked in our education system and this is the caveat to the feelings of well-being for a teacher” (Split, Koomen, Thijs, 2011, p. 458). If teacher-student relationships are suffering in the classroom then the teacher can feel helpless, burned-out, less creative, and more judgemental towards the students (Split, Koomen, Thijs, 2011). When this happens, some students may have conflict with the teacher and peers whereby distrust may overtake them, which may have detrimental effects on learning (Split, Koomen, Thijs, 2011). Feelings of well-being seem to “influence the ability to form personal relationships with children” (Split, Koomen, Thijs, 2011, p. 459). In the year 2000, an in depth interview was conducted with 60 teachers and the result was that teachers valued relationships with their students far above anything else (Split, Koomen, Thijs, 2011). According to another study, the use of mindfulness aided the managing of interpersonal relationship success (Mapel, 2012). It is my feeling that good teacher-student relationships can make a teacher successful and that reflection, meditation and mindfulness are a stepping stone in helping teachers achieve these important relationships with their students.

It is my intuition that when a teacher is fully centered and open to her students a myriad of benefits will come into fruition. Meditation, mindfulness and reflection have been shown to be helpful for classroom teachers as well as students. It is my intention to show Waldorf charter school teachers throughout the country how these practices are important if a teacher values and loves herself and the children she is placed in front of.

Summary

In Chapter 1 the focus was on what Ruckshau meditation is and why it is important for teachers to use this meditation in their daily lives to relieve stress and build teacher-student relationships. It was also determined that there are no studies on Ruckshau meditation for teachers, but that mindfulness, meditative and reflective practices have been studied deeply for the last thirty years by John Dewey, Ellen Langer and Michael Lipson. In this chapter, I described my nightly Ruckshau practice and presented the research question, “What happens in classrooms when teachers use Ruckshau meditation practices?” I hypothesized what would happen in my classroom based on my practice. The next section was based on how this practice is difficult for some people to begin, but it is an easy, relaxing practice that helps one sleep better. Key terms such as Ruckshau, reflection, mindfulness and meditation were defined and then in the last section research studies were presented on how meditation and mindfulness reflections help reduce stress and build teacher-student relationships.

Chapter 2 begins with the struggles of teachers in present day classrooms and how the conditions in the classrooms lead to teacher burnout. Next, I present how meditation and mindfulness can help reduce teacher burnout and stress. I discuss reflective practices and how they can be helpful in the classroom. Mindfulness in the classroom is looked at by Ellen Langer. Rudolf Steiner and his beliefs on meditation, mindfulness and Ruckshau will be studied. Lastly, I will compare and contrast all three practices including Ruckshau meditation, mindfulness and reflection.

Research and design will be discussed in Chapter 3. I will discuss the type of study that is being presented and the procedures I used in conducting the study. Validity of this study will be brought to light, and how the outcome of this study was measured. Assumptions were made

about what the results were going to be, and there were also many limitations because the study was conducted on and by one person. Ethics were then discussed.

Findings of the study are discussed in Chapter 4 along with where and how the study took place. Qualitative and quantitative research strategies are discussed with the results. Journal entries are shown and discussed as well as two graphs showing results from the rubrics.

Chapter Five discusses the interpretation of my findings and also looks at what Ruckshau did for me. This chapter also discusses recommendations for future teachers to reduce stress and improve relationships. The implications of this study are then discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In the beginning of the literature review, the focus will show the state of our classrooms and why attrition rates are so high. An idea is proposed about pre-service teachers having mindfulness, reflection or meditation training before teaching in their own classrooms. Next, meditation practices for teachers such as mindfulness and meditation is presented. Mindfulness and reflection are then shown to create a teacher who is more present in her teaching and the children's needs. These practices also show how they impact teaching and how a teacher plans the curriculum through intuition. Teachers become less critical, more confident, more resilient and tend to look for what is going right instead of what is going wrong in the classroom, which makes classroom management much easier. Temperament matures where teachers feel more empathy for students and teacher-student relationships improve. Lastly, there will be a comparison and contrast between the leading theorists.

Research Strategy

During my research I could not find any articles about Ruckshau and its benefits for teachers. I used the Educational Research Information Clearinghouse [ERIC], where I came across meditation journals from Australia. I also used Ebscohost, Rsarchive and Google Scholar. The key terms used for my research were Ruckshau, primary education, Waldorf Public Charter School, mindfulness meditation, reflection, introspection, visualization, teacher-student relationship, reflective journal, imaginative cognition, affect, behavior, stress and burn out. There were a few articles and books written about reflection, meditation and mindfulness practices for teachers, which were also used. I decided to begin my research

looking there to find the benefits of these practices for teachers.

Preventing Teacher Burnout

When teachers go into teacher training many are not aware of how stressful the job of teaching is and they are not given any tools to help deal with the stress. If mindfulness, reflection or a type of meditation practice were taught to teachers upon their entry into the field of teaching, burnout and attrition might be reduced significantly. Results from a mindfulness study indicated that “before intervention most teachers were suffering from significant emotional distress and depression with teachers reporting: a lack of self-confidence and self-efficacy; having too many things to do and not enough time to do them in; feeling pressured to teach in a way that went against children’s best interests; having difficulty planning and problem solving and lacking time to relax” (Albrecht, 2012, p. 9). Nurses have been the focus in some mindfulness studies where the use of this practice helped stress levels decline, anxiety and depression reduce and spiritual experiences and empathy improve (Mapel, 2012). Dewey brings up that with the problems that teachers face, there are no easy answers and because of this, reflection should be considered as an important facet to teaching (Satanovsky, August 2005). Within the last two decades professionals have been using reflective practices as a way to decipher what is actually happening in the workplace as opposed to what is supposedly happening (Varley, 2003). “In teaching, reflective practice is defined as the examination of teachers’ practices in an effort to improve their teaching: they also know that teaching necessarily involves individual values, beliefs, and assumptions” (Varley, 2003, p. 17). With

these practices of reflection it would be logical that teachers could regain a sense of wellness and feel better about teaching.

Teachers can very easily become disheartened and frazzled in the classroom. A student, in anger dumps his desk over in response to a teacher's request and injures another child, and then the teacher snaps furiously. As a result the teacher feels horrible for many days and wonders if they are really meant to teach (Zakrzewski, Oct. 2013). If scenes like the one above happen often, teachers become burned out (Zakrzewski, Oct. 2013). Educators become ineffective when they deal with this sort of stress, especially if they are lacking the social-emotional skills that are needed to deal with it (Zakrzewski, Oct. 2013). "Ellen Langer had a message for the world's elite in Davos: get "mindful", and you will be more successful in your job, live longer, be more attractive and even get on better with your dog" (Langer, 2008, 20:57h). In one lecture Ellen Langer gave she stated that mindfulness could "improve the reaction of others to you, whether they be customers, colleagues, potential partners, children or even animals" (Langer, 2008, 20:57h). Ellen Langer researched mindfulness and its effect on a myriad of people for thirty years (Langer, 2008). Her discoveries revealed that being "mindful" regularly can increase creativity and attention spans and can decrease stress and burnout (Langer, 2008). Amy Turino (Aug. 2014) recognized that teaching in today's age is very stressful and that the use of mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress (Turino, 2014). She also found that mindfulness helped teachers adapt and cope with challenging situations better (Turino, 2014). In addition, "mindfulness practices have been shown to help teachers not only reduce their stress levels, but assist with behavior management strategies and improve self-esteem" (Albrecht, 2012, p. 12). With this being said, more teachers should use this practice in their classrooms to reduce stress and burnout whereby increasing self-esteem and creativity.

Teachers should be taught mindfulness, reflection or meditation techniques before beginning the practice of teaching. In a 2013 article by Vicki Zakrzewski, she suggests that “training teachers in mindfulness not only reduces burnout but also improves their performance in the classroom and on teaching” (Zakrzewski, 2013, p. 1). There has been a decade’s worth of documented research done on the benefits of mindfulness, but the majority of studies were done on students not on teachers (Zakrzewski, 2013). Because there were very few documented studies for teachers, “The Center for Investigating Healthy Minds [CIHM] conducted a pilot study to test the impact of an eight-week mindfulness course adapted specifically for teachers. The study found that those who completed the training enjoyed a myriad of personal benefits, including elevated levels of self-compassion and a decrease in psychological ills such as anxiety, depression, and burnout” (Zakrzewski, 2013, p. 3). In a study that was conducted at “Naropa University in Colorado, they noted that in a mindfulness meditation study it was shown that there was significant improvement in attention and focus, self-compassion, and psychological symptoms and reductions in burnout as compared to a control group” (Bernay, Vol 39, 7, 2014). According to Ross Bernay (July 2014), “Since 2004, research in education began to focus on mindfulness for general wellbeing for all which has also been a recent focus for health related studies. Benefits included reduced anxiety and emotion regulation noted in reductions in stress-cortisol and a thickening of the prefrontal cortex which is associated with emotion regulation” (Bernay, Vol 39, 7, 2014). Based on the research, If teachers began their teaching careers with a study in mindfulness they would be better equipped to deal with situations that arise in the classroom.

Teaching Practices

Reflection has a significant impact on teaching practices in the classroom as far as teaching the curriculum goes. According to Stanovsky, “Dewey (1938/1974) makes a case for philosophical reflection in education by making two salient points. First, he notes that educational reflection that attends to basic philosophical questions serves to prevent blinding, mechanized thinking from prevailing and consuming educators. Reflection “prevents the hardening of all educational processes—it keeps them from going stale” (Stanovsky, 2005, p. 14). In another article, Varley (Jan. 2003) conveys that reflective practice helps educators develop meaningful curriculum as it also supports the development of assessment strategies for their own daily practice in teaching (Varley, 2003). Instructors gain inspiring insights into their methods of teaching and are then able to make improvements. (Varley, 2003). “Reflective practice is an effective tool for teachers when it is critically grounded” (Varley 2003, p.15). One of the most vital roles of a teacher, according to Dewey, is to be an investigator into their own academic difficulties through daily review (Varley, 2003). He also saw teachers “as the most important inquirers into the successes or failures of the school—he did not see how viable educational research could be produced in any other way” (Varley, 2003, p. 11). According to a study of “teachers in training, a strong relationship was found between levels of reflective practice and teacher quality score from edTPA instrument” (Saylor, 2014, p. 93). Therefore, it is very important to think of “teaching as being grounded in the education of the self and reflective practice encourages the individual to be critical of personal practice, and use deepened insights to move forward” (Varley, 2003, p. 22). Reflection is a vital concern for all teachers.

Just as reflective practices are critical for teachers’ success, so is mindfulness. According to some, “mindfulness aids in enhancing creativity, interpersonal skills, empathy and self-compassion” (Mapel, 2012, pp. 19-32). In one study done on mindfulness, a teacher who was

having problems with difficult students in the classroom found that when she began using mindfulness, misbehavior diminished (Bernay, 2014). The reason for this change was that the teacher used mindfulness practices on her students and on her teaching practices, which helped her become more creative and, therefore, the students became more involved in the lessons instead of misbehaving (Bernay, 2014). Not only was this one teacher in this study on mindfulness able to be more creative, but the majority of the teachers also noticed that they were less stressed and that they were able to use mindfulness practices in their daily teaching (Bernay, 2014). According to Bernay, we will never be able to stop a student from doing something offensive but we can learn to control our reactions to the student (Bernay, 2014). Research suggests, that by being mindful, teachers can build a powerful foundation to build social-emotional skills that are needed to deal with this kind of stress (Bernay, 2014). This study indicated that mindfulness helped teachers become more effective in the classroom, which prevented them from feeling the effects of stressful experiences as they were happening in the moment (Bernay, 2014). If we as educators remain aware of what is going on cognitively and physically in our own bodies during times of utter chaos we can prevent our angry outbursts to a situation and instead remain composed and offer a more compassionate response towards our students (Bernay, 2014). Further benefits included greater efficiency in the use of time, improvements in decision making for “effective classroom pedagogy” (Bernay, 2014, p. 235). It would be important to note that Bernay believes that all of these various benefits mentioned would be useful for all teachers. In a study done ten years earlier, Thomas Kelly (1993) found that “reflective practice positively impacted teacher’s self-image, they had greater control over teaching/learning environment and there was an increased impact they perceived that they had on learners” (Kelly, 1993, p. VII). Additionally, Albrecht (2012) found that teachers who were

overwhelmed by all of the learning outcomes they were expected to teach gained a holistic insight into key concepts and felt better about teaching after using reflection practices (Albrecht, 2012). Both reflection and mindfulness are key factors for a teacher to feel good and to teach effectively.

Teachers should practice mindfulness daily for the numerous benefits awarded to them. Mutch (2013) used author, Kabat-Zinn to describe mindfulness in this way:

According to Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness is not technique but what arises when you pay attention purposely, in the present moment. Non Judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, openness, and acceptance are seven attributes that help in development of mindfulness. Mindfulness teaches us to stabilize and calibrate the mind so that it can do the work of seeing into a reality of the observed. In addition to helping us see clearly to what is happening around us, paying attention also helps us become better at reflecting. Mindfulness encourages adopting a new relationship with self, one recognizing our own moments and thoughts (Mutch, 2013, p. 47).

In other words, mindfulness is a “present-centered” way of paying close attention to everything cognitively and physically as it unfolds in the moment (Mapel, 2012, p. 19-32). This type of practice is a gentle way to focus on our direct experience of life that supports us in “self-inquiry and understanding” (Mapel, 2012, pp. 19-32). This practice is based on the Buddhist philosophy about attitudinal factors, which are important to educators (Turino, Aug. 2014). For educators, it is important to remember to leave judgement behind and to trust the outcome of the experience (Turino, 2014). If one is able to follow these key factors then there will be a feeling of peace and openness (Turino, 2014). Moreover, “CIHM researchers defined mindfulness specifically for their study as, “Paying attention in the present moment, on purpose, and without judgment”

(Zakrzewski, 2013, p. 2). Because of all of the stressors teachers face in the classroom all at once, it is challenging to pay attention in the present moment (Zakrzewski, Oct. 2013). There are some basic practices that a teacher can use in a moment of chaos. One practice involves sitting or standing quietly while “bringing awareness to emotions, thoughts and bodily sensations” (Zakrzewski, 2013, p. 2). Another practice involves staring at an object for a few moments and fully attending to it, whereby focusing one's attention (Zakrzewski, Oct. 2013). It has been found through neuroscience and emotion research that these types of practice “heighten the activity in the regions of our brain that regulate our attention, which then carries over into our everyday lives” (Zakrzewski, 2013, p. 2). According to Kelly (1993), teachers need to learn how to control their reactions to student behaviors and “they need to keep practicing to enjoy the benefits” (Kelly, 1993, pp. 1-5).

Teacher Presence

We all know what it is like to feel present and in the moment. This presence happens when we throw ourselves into a new learning experience like crocheting, painting or knitting (Langer, 2008). That feeling of full engagement is the way we should feel all of the time but many people think that that is unusual (Langer, 2008). We need to let go of our minds involvement with our thoughts and feelings and dive, mind and body into the center of learning and teaching to become mindful educators (Mutch, 2013). In a 2012 training, teachers reported that they were better able to focus on present moments and they were able to get a handle on their negative emotions and thoughts instead of worrying about the past or the future (Janson, March, 2012). If teachers can get a handle on their emotions through mindfulness, in the present moment, they might be more equipped to deal with stressful situations as they arise in the classroom.

Interestingly, an experienced teacher that had been using mindfulness for a long period of time taught herself how to deal with stressful situations and hostile students (Albrecht, 2012). “When dealing with a hostile student, this teacher learned how to watch her emotions such as anger, fear, or irritation as they arose, view them with calmness and respond with openness rather than defensiveness. This enabled the teacher to appreciate the student’s comments and use them as a springboard to engineer lively whole class discussions” (Albrecht, 2012, p. 9). In a mindfulness study, teachers found that they were responding rather than reacting in an emotional way to students during stressful situations (Bernay, 2014). These teachers in this study found that they were less stressed and they could focus their full attention on lesson planning and on their students (Bernay, 2014). Additionally, they felt more genuine in their teaching practices and felt more resilient because of the mindfulness they were practicing (Bernay, 2014). One teacher developed an awareness of her body language during classroom management issues (Bernay, 2014). “Improvements, in both relationships and in reflective capacities, result from this new ability to transform consciousness into present moment awareness” (Mutch, 2013, p. iv). In the study at Naropa University in Colorado, participants began to notice that they were aware and “observant in the moment”, and one participant noticed that she was able to “notice children’s needs and able to respond” (Bernay, 2014, p. 63). Participants were able to concentrate more fully and gain intuitions in their lives which helped them make more meaningful decisions (Bernay, 2014). “Mindfulness assists in building awareness, clarity, calm and resilience in order to live life more fully and cope with the challenges and difficulties that life presents” (Mapel, 2012, pp. 19-32).

Teachers that impact their students the most are often the ones that are present in mind and body. Presence in teaching is more important than the teaching strategies or the philosophies

underlying a teaching approach in a classroom (Mutch, 2013). Think back to teachers that had an impact on us when we were children, “it is often not their teaching techniques that we remember but their ‘presence’ that somehow touched us” (Mutch, 2013, p. 23). In one example, a teacher from New York discovered that she developed better teaching habits in her students through mindfulness that enabled them to trust their own intuition when dealing with school work (Felver, Doerner, Jones, Kaye, Merrell, 2013).

Mindfulness not only helps teachers but it can also help students as well. In one preschool, teachers discovered that students had an easier time with focus and attention. (Mapel, 2012). In a study of two primary schools, it was specified that this practice was instrumental in helping students cope with their feelings and behaviors better. It was also determined that this practice of mindfulness helped students connect with their environment while growing a state of calmness, improving sleep and decreasing test apprehension. (Mapel, 2012, pp. 19-32). It is important to note that being mindful is about being present to both your inner and outer experience and this includes other people (Mapel, 2012). Teachers teach better when they are fully present and students learn better when they are fully present (Mapel, 2012). Dewey (1922) says that “education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (Turino, 2014, p. 18). It is very important to look for teachers that live in the present moment in mind and body (Turino, 2014). If the teacher conveys authenticity in her teaching it will be felt by the students and they will be engaged in the learning process (Turino, 2014).

Leading Theorists

There are many theories on meditation, visualization, reflection and mindfulness practices for teachers. Many leading theorists suggest that teachers use some of these practices daily as a way to better understand their students’ needs and to deal with the stressors of teaching in

today's classrooms. Some of the leading theorists in the practices mentioned above are John Dewey, Ellen Langer and Rudolf Steiner.

John Dewey believed that after someone has had an experience it only becomes an experience after it is reflected upon and conscious thought has been brought to the experience later (Gardner, 2007). According to some, this practice needs to be done alone with one's own thoughts (Balsys, 2011). Dewey also states that one must "dive into" the experience, "We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to take it in" (Gardner, 2007, p. 29). Dewey concluded that reflection can be painful at times and we must "suspend judgement" but that one can become more confident and "self-aware" through reflection (Gardner, 2007, p. 69). In addition, this reflective practice helps to connect what one already knows with the new learning they experienced (Gardner, 2007). One author even concludes that, "Reflection is key to the process of transformation" (Scheideman, 2004, p. 74). Teachers need to be thoughtful, and they need to study and learn from their own experiences through a reflective practice (Scheideman, 2004). According to Dewey, teachers need to be able to have awareness into their own ideas and practices to be effective teachers. (Scheideman, 2004). These are very important skills for a teacher to have in order to better serve the students in the classroom.

Ellen Langer's alternative studies brought about the idea of mindful learning and teaching in the classroom. Mindfulness can be brought about without meditation. Mindfulness roots itself as a Buddhist tradition where one pays attention to one's breath and the person becomes conscious of and accepts the current moment. "Eastern philosophies stress the importance of the mind/body connection in mindfulness" (Bernay, 2012, p. 19). According to Langer (Dec. 2000), "Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context" (Langer, 2000, p. 220). In the classroom, teachers need to

become aware of the feelings and emotions that well up inside during crazy moments (Zakrzewski, 2013). This awareness needs to encompass the cognitive emotions that surface as well as bodily sensations (Zakrzewski, 2013). Becoming aware of these emotions and feelings helps us to break away from angry quick tempered emotions that we feel before we do something we later regret (Zakrzewski, Oct. 2013). If we can stop and refocus angry emotions during stressful situations, we are more likely to find compassion and kindness within ourselves (Zakrzewski, Oct. 2013). According to Langer (Dec. 2000), when we are “In a state of mindlessness we act like automatons who have been programmed to act according to the sense our behavior made in the past, rather than the present” (Langer, 2000, p. 220). When we become mindful, our behaviors are not typically guided by rules but by intuitions and feelings (Langer, 2000). In opposition, if we are mindless then our behaviors are guided by rules and routines (Langer, 2000). Because of this mindful way of dealing with behaviors and craziness, “There is an increase in competence; a decrease in accidents; an increase in memory, creativity, and positive affect; a decrease in stress; an increase in health longevity; and an increase in empathy and compassion” (Langer, 2000, p. 220). Mindfulness can bring health and well being to teachers in the classroom.

Rudolf Steiner, the father of Waldorf education, brought to us his six basic exercises, which are forms of improving our attention through focus and meditation. He also brought about Ruckshau meditation, a way of reviewing our day backwards. Rudolf Steiner called his ideas to the spiritual life “Anthroposophy,” which means “the wisdom of the human being” (Lipson, 2002, p. 13). In his book, *Stairway of Surprise*, Michael Lipson describes each of these six basic exercises in full detail. He says that “the six powers, and the exercises that promote them, simply represent intensifications of inner functions that we all know we need to develop”

(Lipson, 2002, p. 13). For the first exercise, he states that “We all could benefit from thinking with less distraction, more concentration, more invention” (Lipson, 2002, p. 11). For the second exercise, he states that “we all have difficulty in carrying out our intentions (doing)” (Lipson, 2002, p. 11). These first two exercises are a way for us to deeply develop thinking and doing before we begin the other four exercises which are feeling, loving, opening and thanking, “which will eventually bring us enlightenment just as in the Buddhist idea of the six paramitas” (Lipson, 2002, p. 13). According to Lipson, these six basic exercises, which are a form of meditation will help us be present in the moment (Lipson, 2002).

It is important to compare John Dewey’s ideas of reflection with Rudolf Steiner’s ideas of backwards reflection. What makes their ideas similar? Like John Dewey, Rudolf Steiner believed that teachers should reflect daily. Steiner’s reflective practices are a backwards type of reflection meditation that a teacher should do at the end of everyday before going to sleep. In his book, *Strengthening the Will, The Review Exercises*, Steiner says that “each day one should review one’s daily experiences” (Steiner, 2012, p. 1). According to Steiner, you can do this “by picturing yourself and the most important things you experienced during the day and the way you behaved in relation to them” (Steiner, 2012, p. 1). Steiner believed that one should not harbor apprehension or feel guilt for what was done, instead transform feelings into the intention to do things better in the future (Steiner, 2012). Similarly, John Dewey stated in 1904 that teachers should reflect on their teaching and that they should be students of teaching (Troyer, 1988). He believed that teachers should continually reflect to become better teachers (Troyer, 1988). In the same way, Steiner believed that we should read our days like a book and learn from them (Steiner, 2012). Dewey believed that the key to transformation was through the process reflection (Scheideman, 2004). Steiner suggests that you “should evaluate and judge

yourself while doing the backwards review as if you were someone else” (Steiner, 2012, para. 3). He also says that “One should cast his/her gaze back to how he/she lived during the day, using pictures, letting the important events come before one’s soul without judgement” (Steiner, 2012, para. 4). Likewise, Dewey’s reflective practice involves suspending judgement (Gardner, 2007). By undertaking this engaged practice of backwards review, according to Steiner, it “strengthens our thinking and imaginative capacity” (Steiner, 2012, para. 5). Along similar lines, Dewey goes a bit further to say that imagination is waiting to be discovered and experienced when one is engaged in the present (Gardner, Nov., 2007). Later, review can be used as a way to better improve one’s skills in teaching for the future (Monk, 2013). Very much the same, but with feelings and souls in mind, the intention of Ruckshau is to help us do better as teachers in the future (Steiner, 2012). According to both Steiner and Dewey, art is a way for students and teachers to become present in the moment and understand a concept deeply through the head, heart and hands (Steiner, 2000, Gardner, Nov. 2007). According to Dewey and Steiner, reflective practices can suspend judgement, strengthen cognitive capacities, transform teachers to do better in the future and strengthen imagination.

In contrast, Rudolf Steiner’s backwards reflection is a meditative practice, whereas John Dewey’s reflective practice is done with the use of guided writing prompts, journals, dialog and sharing with the community. This practice is a way to analyze what was learned (Roberts, 1938). Ruckshau is a much deeper soul exercise where one meditates alone, at the end of the day, going backwards in the mind's eye from the end of the day to the beginning of the day (Steiner, 2012). Reflecting in the method John Dewey speaks about is to gain insight into the meaning of what was just learned (Gardner, Nov., 2007). The purpose behind Ruckshau meditation is to be open to life (Steiner, 2012). According to Rudolf Steiner, this meditation practice is a way to learn

“how you could have experienced things differently, and what you could have done better”

(Steiner, 2012, para. 16). This review is done in the form of pictures coursing through the mind without criticism or bad feelings and it is a strengthening of the soul life (Steiner, 1921). Another difference between these two methods is that Dewey’s focus was on students and their reflective learning practice, whereas Steiner’s focus was on teachers in the classroom and their reflective practices at night (Steiner, 2012). John Dewey and Rudolf Steiner’s ideas on reflection were very different but with some similarities.

Ellen Langer’s mindfulness and Rudolf Steiner’s Ruckshau have similarities in practice. Both Ruckshau and mindfulness are meant to be done without judgement towards oneself and the behaviors that were exhibited (Steiner, 2012, Langer 2012). Ruckshau helps to gain clarity about a stressful moment that happened during the day (Steiner, 2012). By conjuring up this stressful image again and wrapping feelings around it with thoughts about how it might be solved differently next time, clarity presents itself (Steiner, 2012). Mindfulness also brings about clarity, but in this case, clarity comes the moment the teacher brings awareness to her own bodily sensations and feelings in the here and now (Jennings, 2015). Both mindfulness and Ruckshau bring about an increase in memory and inner strength, more sensitivity, more creativity and a decrease in stress and worry (Langer, Dec. 2000; Steiner, 2012; Steiner, Jan. 1912). Both of these practices require attention and focus in the present and they must be done for many weeks before one notices a change in behavior and well-being (Steiner, 2012; Jennings 2015). The similarities in these two practices are few however both practices are meant to bring attention and clarity to one’s teaching.

The main difference between mindfulness and Ruckshau is how and when they are practiced. Mindfulness involves being aware of the here and now in the moment (Jennings,

2015, Langer, Dec. 2000). When the mind wanders off to the past or the future that is not being mindful, but if awareness is brought back into the present that is being mindful (Jennings, 2015, Langer, Dec. 2000). Automatic behavior is mindless or a way of not thinking (Langer, 1997). When we feel the sensations in our bodies and mind, in that moment, noticing distraction and then coming back to full awareness, that is mindfulness (Jennings, 2015). In contrast, Ruckshau meditation is not done in the here and now or during a stressful situation. Ruckshau requires a backwards meditation in the evening, as a review of the day, which is different than the mindfulness mentioned above. Ruckshau creates an openness of acceptance, bringing intuitions and inspirations, which usually present themselves the next day after a good night of sleep (Steiner, 2012). When Ruckshau meditation is used regularly, one can become more insightful during the day (Steiner, 2012). Ruckshau meditation is a way for us to connect with the souls of the children we are teaching (Steiner, 2012). Insightful practices that are gained from Ruckshau are mindful.

Summary and Transition

Because there have been no studies done on Ruckshau meditation with teachers in a Waldorf classroom there was no literature to look at in those regards. There have been many studies done on the importance of reflection in teaching, and there have been many studies done on mindfulness in the classroom-- hence, the reason there is a lot of reference to reflection and mindfulness in the literature review.

This literature review was based off of the information I found on mindfulness and reflection in a classroom and in other settings. There were a few studies that concluded that if teachers in training studied mindfulness or reflective practices before entering the classroom attrition rates would drop drastically. Teachers should be taught mindfulness and reflective

practices to reduce burnout and stress. Reflection keeps teachers in the mindset of always trying to improve their teaching practices. If teachers do not reflect then their teaching practices they might become dull, boring and mechanized, which may result in classroom behavior problems. Mindfulness practices can help with creativity in the classroom. If a teacher is open and fully aware of what is going on with the students around her, she would be able to change the lessons to suit the children in any given moment based on their needs. This state of being present and aware in the moment is how we as educators should be all of the time. We also need to be aware of our emotions so that we can learn how to watch them come and go and then respond to the students calmly and more mindfully. Teachers that have the largest impact on their students are the ones that are present in mind and body (Mutch, 2013).

John Dewey, Ellen Langer and Rudolf Steiner are the leading theorists on meditation, reflection and mindfulness practices for teachers. John Dewey brought the idea of a written reflection on teaching practices with one's own thoughts. Ellen Langer brought mindfulness to teachers with the idea of a mind-body connection and being engaged in the present moment. Rudolf Steiner brought teachers Ruckshau meditation as a way to reflect backwards through the day. These theorists have brought some very powerful ideas for teachers to use daily as part of their classroom practices. If every Waldorf teacher chose to use just one of these practices, I believe that there would be a significant change in attitude, creativity and presence. Ruckshau creates mindfulness and is a reflective practice that can be used daily.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

Chapter Overview

It is the objective of this research to explore the lived experience and conclude whether Ruckshau meditation practices can lower stress levels of a classroom teacher in a Waldorf fourth grade classroom. This reflective research was also used as a way to determine if Ruckshau meditation could improve teacher-student relationships and develop teacher presence, intuition and confidence. In this chapter there will be a look at quantitative and qualitative practices used in this study. The design of the research will show how this practice was created and recorded nightly. Next, the validity of the study will be looked at as well as the instruments used to record the data. How and when the data was collected will then be viewed and then assumptions made by the author about the study before it began will be discussed. There were many limitations in this study because the author is the only test subject and because of this, ethical assurances are brought to the forefront.

Research Questions and/or Hypotheses and their Rationales

What is the lived experience of Ruckshau meditation with a fourth grade Waldorf teacher?

When I began this study I was very frustrated and tired of dealing with classroom behaviors. I was at a place where I needed help dealing with some of the situations that kept coming up between me and a few of my students. I wanted to find out what would happen to the relationships between the students and me if I were to use ruckshau meditation practice on a nightly basis. I also wanted to find out if it could help me deal with the stressors of working with fourth graders. At night I was having trouble sleeping because I was trying to process what

happened during the day. I was hopeful that this meditation process would help me sleep better and I would feel less stressed.

Research Design

This research design is called an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This type of approach “aims to capture and explore the meanings that participants assign to their experiences” (Reid, Flowers, Larkin, 2005, p. 20). After practicing Ruckshau, at the end of the day, I wrote in a journal as a qualitative action I used for my research. It was very important for me to journal nightly after the Ruckshau meditation practice so that I could track my feelings, intuitions and my cognitive processes. If I had these things written down I could come back later and determine patterns in my own thinking processes and behaviors. This type of data collection helped me reflect and make sense of my experiences and the world (Reid, Flowers, Larkin, Jan. 2005).

IPA is usually done with an analyst and a participant, but in this case I was the analyst and participant (Reid, Flowers, Larkin, 2005). These “lived experiences” are combined with a reflective process whereby the text is closely examined for insights into experiences and perspective (Smith, 2004, p. 40). The researcher looks for themes or recurring patterns of behavior which will convey some kind of meaning (Smith, 2004). It is suggested that the emotional experience that we all feel as humans is a result of our societal interactions with other people, our bodily environment as well as our mental evaluation method (Eatough, Smith, 2006). In order to make sense of our surroundings and our emotions we need to reflect or talk about the particular events happening in our lives (Eatough, Smith, 2006). When we attach personal significance to our lived experiences we become emotionally attached to these experiences, which can then unfold over time helping us to understand ourselves and our reactions (Eatough,

Smith, 2006). Through reflection practices we can then impose meaning to our lived experiences (Eatough, Smith, 2006).

Individuals do argue, justify, and excuse when they narrate personal events, but they also imbue these events with meaning so that they come to form part of their past, present, and future lived experiences. The events in one's life are important because they have personal relevance and an ongoing significance for the individual concerned (Eatough, Smith, 2006, p. 118).

These reflective stories “are about life and a part of life which gives a person the cognitive power to transform” (Eatough, Smith, 2006, p. 118).

Procedures

In the evening, I rated myself on a Likert scale [see Appendix] to determine my burnout rate for the day. Right before going to sleep, I sat on my bed and closed my eyes and took five to ten minutes to go backwards through my school day. The events that took place throughout my day that were significant were the ones I stopped at and spent a few moments watching. These are the moments that I had a significant feeling or struggle that I thought would lead to better relationships with my students. Next, I took five minutes to write down the children's behaviors, my behaviors and what happened. Last, I wrote about my feelings about the event and then what change needed to happen through me and how I could do better next time. Finally, I rated myself again on the Likert scale to see how I felt after the meditation practice.

In the first step of my writing I jotted down what came to me through Ruckschau and what I did with my behaviors and actions attached. In this step I needed to state what I did and what the children did as fact. This was a running picture of the particular incident or event. The second step of my writing was to state my feelings around the incident or event. How did it

make me feel? Third, I was to write about my resolve. What changes need to happen through me? How could I change my behavior to help my students and my relationship?

By means of writing down my behaviors, my feelings and my resolve after the Ruckschau for the last couple of months, I was able to look over my writing for patterns in my feelings, thinking and behavior. This practice helped me enter deeper into relationship with my students and it helped me get out of and see the cycles of fear and frustration that run my life. Doing all of this, helped me become aware of the triggers that upset me in the classroom and helped me to stop them.

Validity

The validity of this study is in question for some individuals because it is hard to study things we cannot see. What makes my method valid is that many teachers have similar circumstances and go through similar situations. We, as teachers, are attracted to the case studies of individuals and programs in classroom situations like our own (Stake, 1995). These studies are very similar and dissimilar to other teachers and we want to understand them and learn about them (Stake, 1995). We are attracted to these studies because they are unique and very similar to our own situations in the classroom and dealing with students, which intrigue us to want to learn more (Stake, 1995). Sometimes we have doubts in believing some of the things we hear because they are ideas that we cannot see or understand completely (Stake, 1995). Because we are so interested, we read or listen and want to learn how they do these things in their regular daily settings (Stake, 1995). While we are researching in these areas of study we must be open to new ideas (Stake, 1995). What makes this type of study valid is that the methods can be repeated by others and there are rubrics and processes involved. Case studies bring new avenues for research where greater study is needed.

Instrumentation

I used a Likert scale to measure the outcome of my study. This rubric helped me to determine burnout levels. I used it before Ruckshau meditation and after Ruckshau meditation. The rating scale was as follows: 1 - Feeling energized and cheerful at the end of the day. 2 - Feeling good but a little frazzled. 3 - Feeling strained but managing. 4 - Feeling burned out and unhappy. I used check marks to determine my rating by putting an X in the appropriate box depending on the day of the week and the way I was feeling for the rating. I felt like this was a fairly reliable way to determine how I was feeling. However, it is very subjective in nature because the author is the test subject and researcher. It is hard to rate one's self because there may be a tendency is to over or under exaggerate. Our thoughts and perception about ourselves as well as about the topic and outcome of study could influence how we rate ourselves. I rated myself with integrity in mind.

My reflective journaling was qualitative in nature and was an account of my experiences. Some of my feelings were kept in check while I was writing because I did not know who was going to be reading my journals, and I did not want them to get a bad impression of me. When writing in my reflective journals I only relayed the factual details about the situations, my feelings and what I could do to remedy the situation or do differently next time. Again, this was subjective because the author was the sole test subject as well as the researcher conducting the study.

Data Processing

I collected data on a rubric daily, which rated how I was feeling before and after Ruckshau meditation. I looked at the number of days this rubric was used and then I looked at the days where I felt worse, felt the same or felt better. I counted the days where I felt worse, I

felt the same or I felt better and then I made a fraction for each category, whereby I was able to find the percentage of days I felt worse, I felt the same or I felt better. I then counted the days under each rubric to determine what level I felt the most and the least before and after meditation. I then graphed my results.

Assumptions

Before beginning this study, I assumed that I was going to feel more energetic and less burned out right away. I also thought that I would have instant results with my relationships with my students and my teaching that would continue on. I had no idea that I would make strides forward and then backwards. This is a process of learning, catching yourself and changing in the moment. My assumptions were wrong in thinking that this would be a quick fix. I have now realized that this is a very long process of changing my way of thinking and reacting to my students. This type of study could take many years and is more of a process than an end result. In this study there were many things that were not discoverable right away. I assume that over a longer period of time I would learn more about myself, have better relationships with my students and would be less stressed.

Limitations

A limitation in this study was that I was the only subject. It would be valuable to be able to draw firm conclusions about the usefulness of the practice to teachers as a group; this study really only allows me to conclude what was helpful to me that might benefit others. Based on the one sample, it is subjective and my results are limited. I also have uncontrolled biases which make this study not objective. I am the test subject so I have biases with my students and want things to go a certain way. If I had many test subjects, I could check on their results and make a stronger conclusion about the usefulness of this technique for teachers in general based on many

results. In addition, more test subjects with a control group and double-blind procedure would also help with the validity of this study.

I could not control the time frame of this study. I only had a very short window to try out these processes and record them. This study should have been done for a few years but was limited to only six months. I would have had more results and I would be able to say more about the long term effects of this practice on my teaching and job satisfaction.

One of the limitations of this research was that

Ethical Assurances

To assure that I maintained ethical integrity, I read over my journal entries to make sure there was no embellishing. I recorded the daily experiences as they were and as they happened in my mind. I did make some assumptions and interpretations based on my feelings and what was happening, but I did not exaggerate or embellish. I always wrote down everything that I looked at during the backwards meditation and I did not leave anything out to the best of my knowledge. Sometimes it was hard to describe exactly what happened and how I felt. There were times when I was feeling antipathy for a student and did not write it down because I did not want Dr. Knighton to think of me as a horrible person. In the future, when I do not have anyone looking at my journal entries, I think I will be more honest with myself about these antipathetic feelings I have toward some people. I need to get into the depths of my soul to figure out why I feel this way instead of trying to make the feeling or thought disappear. I did have a hard time writing these bad feelings because I believe that negative feelings can have a bad effect in a transpersonal way. Instead I held it inside and tried to work on feelings of love for that person instead of hate or dislike. I now know that writing these feelings and insights down is extremely important. This type of reflection on my reflecting helps me find my true, higher self.

I was the sole subject in this study; however, the students that were listed in my reflective journaling are protected because I used fake initials for their names to make them anonymous and I will not be sharing their names with anyone.

Summary

This research is based on a phenomenological case study which include unexplained experiences that connect us to a spiritual world. By reviewing my day backwards, I was able to write down incidents and events and track my feelings and patterns of behavior that run my life. Some people may question the validity of this type of study, but if others find similar results to this study, it suggests that the study results have relevance for a larger group of the population. In this type of study we must let ourselves be open to new things that we hear or read. I used a daily rubric to rate my burnout levels before and after meditation. I kept a reflective journal as a way to track my experiences, feelings and my cognitive mind set. Assumptions were made about the results of this study. I thought this practice would be a quick fix for some of the behavior problems I was having in the classroom. That was not the reality of what happened. I made some progress and then fell back on my old habits of being. I was then able to make larger strides in my behavior and then again fell back on those old ingrained habits. Over time, I believe I would be able to recognize these habits and stop them if this study were longer in length. The largest limitation of this study was that I was the only subject and therefore my results were limited. Ethics also played a large part in this study. I made sure not to exaggerate or embellish as I was writing in my journal. I wrote the facts as they were.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

It is the objective of this research to conclude whether Ruckshau meditation practices can lower stress levels of a classroom teacher in a Waldorf fourth grade classroom. The reflective research was used as a way to determine if Ruckshau meditation could improve teacher-student relationships, develop teacher presence, intuition and confidence. The design of the research will show how this practice was created and recorded nightly and it will also show the effects it had on the author and her teaching. There will be a look at quantitative and qualitative practices used in this study and then the instruments used to record the data.

Setting

This practice of Ruckshau meditation took place nightly while I was sitting on my bed at home with the lights turned off. First, I got into a comfortable position sitting upright and I closed my eyes. Most nights I was exhausted but I knew that this practice would help me sleep. At the beginning of my practice I would focus on someone that needed extra support or help. I then watched myself internally as if I was watching a story unfold. I began with the handshake at the end of the day and watched myself move backwards with the children, in the classroom through the whole day until the handshake in the morning. When I watched myself, I would pause when I came to a stressful situation where I felt suffering or frustration inside of myself or when I would watch one of the children suffer. I sat and let the images unfold before me as they had during the day. I could then let feelings come back into my body relating to the situation. After the feelings came through me, I was able to think about what I could do differently next time to resolve the problem. Most times I asked myself the question, “What could I do better next time?” Sometimes, new insights came to me right away, and other times nothing came to

me until the morning. When I finished reviewing my whole day in this backwards fashion I opened my eyes, turned on the flashlight and began to journal. Journaling was done after this practice, based on what I just reflected on, felt and came to a resolve on. When I was done journaling on these three aspects of each situation that I reflected on, I closed my journal and went to sleep. Most nights, I felt more calm and at peace with myself after Ruckshau. I found that I slept peacefully and did not wake up thinking about various frustrations that arose in the classroom the previous day like they had in the past. My sleep became more productive and I felt less tired in the morning.

There were some nights where I dozed off while practicing Ruckshau and as soon as I woke up I resumed where I left off. I felt as though my mind kept going and was still helping me process the situation even though I had dozed off.

Demographics

I am a very melancholic thinker who can be very choleric in my working habits. I “over plan” and when I don’t end up doing what was planned, I get upset with myself. I am not religious, but I am very spiritual and believe that there is something out there greater than ourselves. I come from a lower middle class socio-economic group. I live in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains with my husband and two children. My class is made up of primarily phlegmatics and sanguines with a few choleric and melancholics. I have an equal number of boys and girls and the majority of them live in the central valley where they go to school.

Results

I found that through my practice and reflecting that I take a lot of things personally and when I do, I lose my patience and find myself more frustrated by little things in the classroom. Through the journaling, I have found that I am very critical of myself and that I have a fear of

criticism by others and a fear of following through. I found myself avoiding calling on children when I sensed they might criticize me. When children shout out, interrupt or want to argue with me, I am triggered and I feel frazzled. I then perceive that I have had a horrible day even when it was really not that bad.

After I had been doing Ruckshau meditation and journaling for about a month and a half I began to notice huge changes in how I felt about myself and others. I became more mindful of how I interacted with the children in the classroom. I also felt more creative, intuitive and spontaneous while I was teaching. I was more open to perceiving and using new ideas and thoughts that were coming to me. I was also open to loving and listening to my students and helping them to love and take care of each other. I discovered that when I am happy the students are happy and vice versa. I noticed that when I fall back into old habits of behaving, the students respond to me in a way that keeps perpetuating the situation. I feel like when I make a small stride forward I then take two strides back and fall back into my old ways. This journaling process was a really good way for me to watch this process. As I continue this practice I hope to gain more clarity and stop old behaviors of habit. I chose to highly focus on the qualitative tradition so that I could delve deeply into my processes and how I deal with situations. As a part of this practice I used a Likert scale to quantitatively rate myself before and after Ruckshau meditation. This data collection was done using my own Likert scales. No one else was used in this study.

Qualitative

Looking back through my nightly journals I was able to pinpoint times where I felt less stress after having done this practice for a few weeks. I began journaling on November 12th

when I was incredibly burned out, unclear and I was feeling resentment towards a particular student. I gained clarity on how to journal on November 18th.

Journal entry:

Tuesday, November 18th

LM would not go to Spanish today and I did not know what to do. I went up to the office and asked them for advice. They told me to give him a referral and tell him that it is not a choice to go to Spanish. When I told him that his choice was to go to Spanish or get a referral to the office, he immediately got up and went to class.

I was very relieved that I was able to give him firmer boundaries and then he made the right choice.

From now on I will give him a referral if he refuses to go to Spanish.

Within about a month I began to notice a shift in my consciousness. I became more calm, intuitive during instruction and less resentful.

Journal entry:

Friday, December 5th

In circle today, LM did not want to participate. We were doing an activity with rhythm sticks and he told me that it was stupid. At that moment, I decided that he needed to do the activity with me. During the activity, his attitude disappeared. At the end of circle, in front of the class, I gave my gratitude to LM for sticking with it and for participating.

I was feeling grateful for my insight and that I followed through with it. I am also happy that I remembered to give him gratitude for doing it even though he was

uncomfortable. I will do this again if he acts this way in circle. It was really helpful. I need to work one on one with him more often.

Within about a week and a half of this shift, I reverted back to my old ways of thinking which included taking things personally, feeling guilty and not following through with problem behaviors.

Journal entry:

Tuesday, December 16

I realized today why I do not like calling on LM. I feel like he is going to say that I am wrong again. I do not feel like I am very smart and I feel like he confirms it, especially when he tells me that I am wrong.

I feel insecure, stupid and like I don't know what I am doing. I feel like I spiral out of control from there.

In the future I need to acknowledge these voices and let them go. This is something I have been working on for years. I just realized today why I react the way I do to this child.

As I continued doing Ruckshau and journaling, I noticed another shift in consciousness a month and a half later. Around the middle of January, I felt more empathetic, intuitive, spontaneous, confident and less stressed. I also felt more open and love for the students and I became more aware of the students' needs in situations as they arose. I was more present in each moment and I used old mindless habits less.

Journal entry:

Wednesday, January 21st

In the morning during strings, RL was having difficulty with some boys and the strings teacher. She left the classroom very mad. We walked back into our classroom together and she began to yell at me and then cry. In that moment I felt like I could get defensive but instead I chose to listen. I empathized with her and I asked her clarifying questions. I then let her know that she could come to me when she is having difficulty. When she calmed down, we had a wonderful conversation and worked on a plan for the future and how I could help her.

I felt calm, empathy and love for this child.

I plan on listening with an empathetic ear and with my full attention in the future.

This was an amazing shift that happened between us and our relationship.

Journal entry:

Thursday, February 19th

Today, I had an amazing idea! During recitation I had the children stand on their desks. I broke them into two groups and while one group was standing on their chairs the other group was on their desks. When each group spoke they climbed up onto their desks. This worked great!

Another time today, I was getting ready to tell a story when a child asked me to tell them a story about what happened when I went on my daughter's field trip yesterday. I told them about the elephant seals we saw and they loved it!

I felt very spontaneous today and the students responded with enthusiasm. I felt confident and happy.

I am going to be more spontaneous more often.

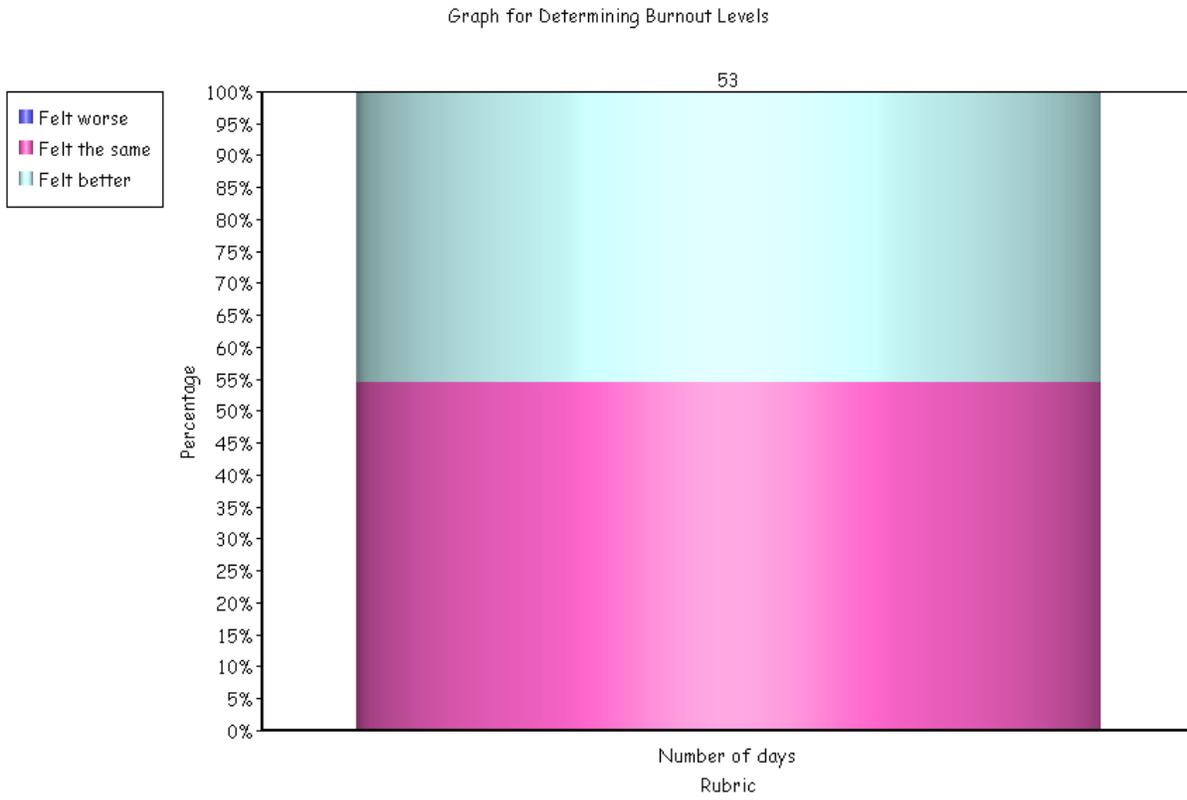
I continued to feel incredibly empowered by all of these changes until the middle of March. During this time I began to take things personally again. I realized that the reason I reverted back to old ways of consciousness was because of some big changes in the classroom with the children and in my own personal life.

Quantitative

Looking at the results of the Likert scale I used to determine my burnout levels, Ruckshau or a type of meditation after a long day of teaching can reduce stress levels. Each day for fifty three days I rated myself on a Likert scale from 1-4 before and after Ruckshau practice to determine burnout levels. There were two ratings for each day: (a) 1 indicated that I was feeling energized and cheerful at the end of the day; (b) 2 it meant that I was feeling good but a little fatigued; (c) 3 strained but managing; (d) 4 burned out and unhappy. 29:53 days remained the same and I was unchanged by the meditation practice, meaning 55% of the time it was no different. 45% of the time I felt better after doing Ruckshau meditation. Notably, I never felt worse after this practice. During two days I felt energized and cheerful at the end of the day before and after Ruckshau meditation practice in column one. I also wanted to know how I was feeling the majority of days before and after I started the practice. 30 out of 53 days, I was feeling strained but managing before meditation (column 3). 31 days out of 53 days, I felt good but a little fatigued after meditating (column 2). There were only 2 days out of 53 where I was feeling energized and cheerful at the end of the day before and after Ruckshau meditation. There were 7 days where I felt burned out and unhappy before meditation and after meditation there were 6 of those days where I felt better. Only 1 day stayed the same.

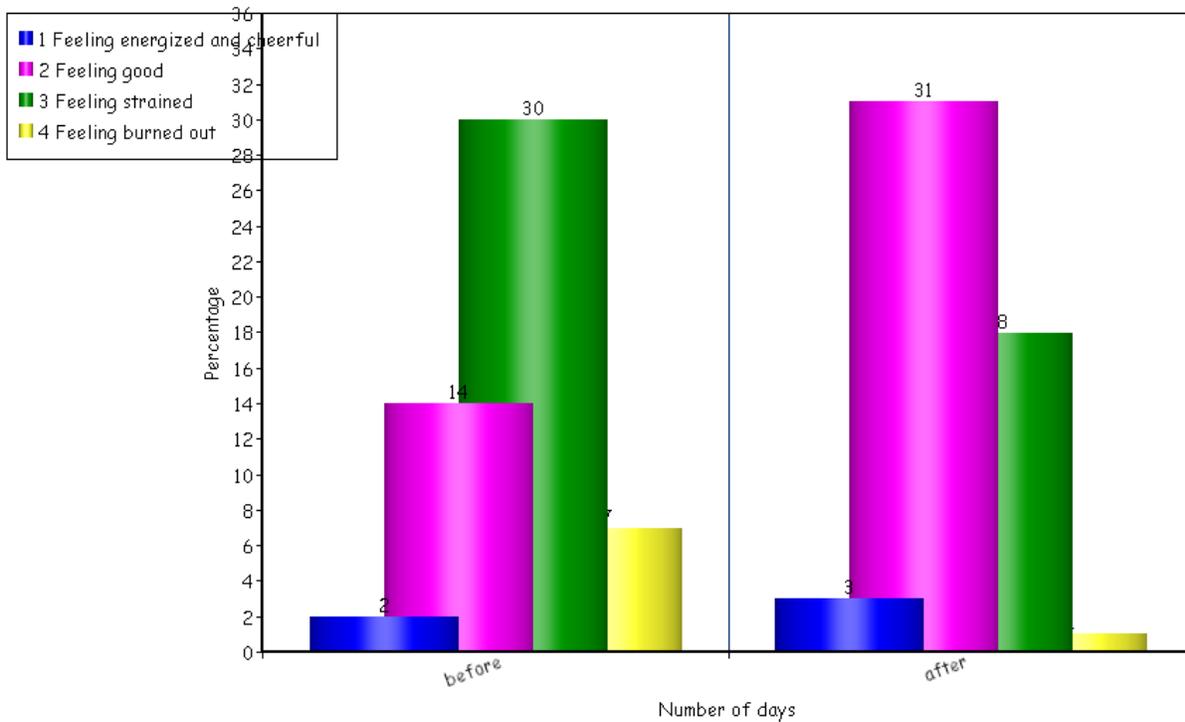
Table 1

Graph for Determining Burnout levels



Graph Showing Before and After Meditation

Graph for Determining Burnout Levels



Chapter Summary

This process of Ruckshau meditation with reflection journaling reduced stress and increased mindfulness, and could be a way to help teachers become more mindful and less stressed. Through journaling, I was able to monitor my cognitive processes and find my trouble areas. The setting for Ruckshau is very important. This process is done at night before falling asleep so that insights can come, following the process or first thing in the morning upon awakening. If this meditation is done before falling asleep we become more intuitive and more insightful upon awakening. When we put our thoughts to rest we can process our thoughts from

backwards meditation more readily. Ruckshau meditation lowered my stress levels before falling asleep and helped me engage in a more productive sleep.

Chapter 5:

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

This study was helpful for me because when I began practicing Ruckshau I was burned out and very stressed from dealing with student behaviors and from laborious lesson that I stewed over instead of letting it come to me, made the planning more difficult than required. Before beginning Ruckshau meditation my view of myself was that I was mean and that I was not a good teacher because I could not control the children and their behaviors in the classroom. I was taking things personally that the children were doing in the classroom and I was blaming them for having bad behaviors. My perception was that I had no connection to their behaviors. I felt as though I was not very smart and did not have very much faith in myself or making it through the grades with this group of children. When children told me I did something wrong I became defensive and mad and did not know why. I was frustrated with my abilities to teach because I did not feel like the children were learning what I was teaching. When I gave them assessments and they did poorly, I thought I was to blame. I over planned everything I was going to teach and wanted to make sure I always got through the lesson, even if getting through the lesson was to the detriment of the children. I was beginning to wonder why I had chosen teaching for a career.

Interpretation of Findings

During this study I went through many life changing processes of cognitive and spiritual development. I found that through this process I learned how to focus my attention more readily and really listen to what the students were saying out loud and with their physical actions. I noticed my own feelings, mentally and physically without getting angry or stressed. I no longer

engaged and reacted to this type of situation in a negative way. I became more attuned with my overall reactions feelings and I was more open, patient and empathetic to the students behaviors and problems. Because of this attention and focus in the moment, my relationship with my students grew and I felt more successful as their teacher. Through this process I found that I did strengthen my relationships with my students and I felt more connected to them.

At the beginning of this practice I had a difficult time setting firm, clear boundaries with my students. I felt bad and sometimes did not feel like I could follow through because of my own guilt and not wanting to deal with their reactions. I found that I could stand firm on my boundaries and still feel good. In the past, I would have felt guilty and then second guessed myself and the decisions I made. After doing Ruckshau for many months, it was much easier for me to say, "No!" and follow through without engaging in an argument or discussion. Ruckshau meditation with reflection journaling has helped me find those boundaries and my absolute, "No!" I became more centered, focused and knew what I wanted. I became okay with the reactions of the children. I didn't own their reactions anymore. I was able to track my behaviors through journaling and reflecting and I made a conscious decision to change my thoughts and reactions based on those reflections. Now that my boundaries became clear and the students knew what to expect there was more respect and stronger relationships.

I felt more confidence in my teaching at the end of the study than I did before I began. I felt better about the decisions I made and the lessons I planned. I stopped second guessing myself and wondering if I was doing it right. When a lesson did not go the way I planned, I stopped letting it stress me out. I learned to let things go and to forgive myself.

After a long day of teaching there were nights when I was extremely tired. On these nights my process was slightly different. I adapted my procedure by doing Ruckshau meditation

and then I went straight to sleep. When I woke up in the morning, I did the reflective journaling. I almost felt like this would have been a better way to do this study because I could have slept after doing Ruckshau and let nighttime interpretations come to me from the spiritual world. In the morning I might have had more insights to write about instead of facts like I did the night before. The few times I did it this way, I had ideas come flying to me right after I woke up in the morning.

Shortly after beginning Ruckshau meditation I began to feel intuitively what the children needed at any given moment. Behaviors began to change because I knew what they needed. My perceptions opened up and my intuition began. I could now see that my behavior was causing the children to behave poorly because I was not listening intuitively to what they needed. I was pushing them beyond what they were capable of instead of discerning what they needed. I began to be able to watch myself in any given situation and focus my attention instead of reacting. I felt lighter and happier and so did the children. I used my intuition during lessons and when an idea came to me to help a particular child I was able to follow my gut instinct and help a child appropriately. One day I scrapped a whole lesson I had carefully planned out and followed my intuition, and it was the best lesson I ever taught. I changed my mindset about controlling everything and I began to listen to the children and their needs.

Before doing the practice I used a Likert scale and rated my burnout level on a scale from 1-4. I would also rate myself afterwards to see if I was less stressed. I found that every evening after doing this practice I felt less stressed and less burned out. I began to notice that I was sleeping better on school nights, and I was not waking up anymore thinking about situations that occurred during the day. On the weekends when I was not doing this meditation practice I would

wake up and have hard time going back to sleep. I decided to try Ruckshau during the weekends as well with the focus of my family interactions and I found that I slept better.

I spontaneously shifted the weekend practice to focus on children with a challenge and visualized light around that person.

At the beginning of my Ruckshau meditation practice, I was focused on what the children were doing wrong and then as time went on I was more focused on what my reactions were to the students. I became aware of what I was doing or not doing and less on what they were doing that was irritating me. I noticed a shift in the way I was feeling about teaching around January after having done Ruckshau for about two months. I was happier and I began looking for the greatness in the children. I began to have more fun teaching and being with the students. I became more present, compassionate and was able to hear them better when issues did arise. In an ironic twist, when I had to write up this paper, the benefits of Ruckshau disappeared and my relationship with students reverted to past unsuccessful habits. I found that the students were happier in the classroom and were wanting to sit with me at my desk and talk. They threw me a surprise birthday party that was amazing to show their gratitude for this change.

Some of my patterns of behavior in the classroom became recognizable through time and I became conscious of them in the moment and began working on correcting them. I found that I used to get incredibly stressed when a student wanted to argue with me. Now I can just walk away without feeling guilty. Some patterns were not obvious to me until I began reading my journal. In my journal, I noticed that I have a hard time setting clear boundaries and following through based on my feelings of guilt. I am now aware of those feelings and when these feelings start to come up in a situation I am able to set them aside and follow through better. Another pattern that I noticed was that whenever I felt like a child was going to criticize me or argue with

me, I would not call on them. I started to really look at my reactions to the children and figure out why I do certain things. I can now acknowledge those feelings and let them go. Also, when I am really tired I have a short fuse and I raise my voice, and then I feel guilty. I am trying to be kind to myself in those instances and not dwell on my reactions like I used to. I am more able to let the feelings go and apologize to the students. Another pattern I noticed is that sometimes I keep doing the same thing over and over and it has never worked but I still do it anyway. For example, I find myself frustrated so often at the end of the day when the children do not get ready to go when they hear the signal. I found that I wrote about that happening over five times. That is a pattern that I am now aware of that I need to be willing to change. I need to change the way I get the students' attention at the end of the day or I need to realize that is is always going to be a challenge for the children to meet my expectations. Maybe my expectations need to be lowered.

In the future, I will continue Ruckshau, reflection meditation with journaling but in a shorter time frame. In some cases, I spent thirty minutes or more meditating nightly and it should have only been a five minute process. I found this to exacerbate my exhaustion in some instances. For further studies, I wonder what would happen if the researcher did journaling the next morning instead of the same night that Ruckshau was practiced. I wonder what the journal entries would look like and if they would be more intuitive and insightful. Also, instead of reflecting on the teacher's and children's behaviors for relationship building, I wonder what the results would be like to reflect on lessons and how they were taught and what could be done better in the future. I am interested to find out if teachers could become more creative in their teaching practices if this process of Ruckshau and reflective journaling were followed. I am also curious if this practice could build memory capacities for memorizing stories, verses and songs

as Steiner indicates. Since this I conducted this study on myself, I am interested in finding out if someone would do a similar study with more participants so that my results can be compared.

During this process, I had many eye opening moments. As I was doing the process of Ruckshau, journaling and researching about Ellen Langer, John Dewey and Rudolf Steiner and their theories, I realized that all three of these practices simultaneously create mindfulness. After meditating every night using Rudolf Steiner's Ruckshau and John Dewey's process of reflecting, I became more mindfully aware, open and less judgmental in the classroom. As a result of these nightly practices I came to the realization that Ellen Langer's mindfulness is exactly what Ruckshau and reflection were creating. It also became apparent to me that the students in my class were there to teach me. Through this process, I found out that the problems they are bringing to me are in some ways things that I need to work through. It has been a process of opening my mind and being open to what comes.

Recommendations

Waldorf school teachers may be able to benefit by practicing Ruckshau meditation with quantitative reflective journaling. This was beneficial for teachers to help reduce stress before sleep. Through these practices a teacher may be able to be more open and mindfully aware of reactions that cause disruption in the classroom. If Teachers become aware of patterns in their behaviors teacher-student relationships may improve. If all Waldorf teachers did some type of meditation at the end of the day they may sleep better and their burnout rates may lessen. Ruckshau meditation only takes five minutes every night and could be a huge benefit to many people. This study could possibly benefit other service people in other service type jobs like nurses.

Before beginning this practice, I wish I would have studied mindfulness and the benefits of mindfulness practice for classroom teachers. In combination with Ruckshau and qualitative reflective journaling, I think mindfulness is the next step that is needed for this type of study. Ruckshau naturally brings mindfulness and being aware of what mindfulness looks like before beginning this practice might help further benefits toward the teacher and students.

In the future it would be beneficial to use quantitative mindfulness scales with Ruckshau instead of a Likert scale.

Implications

This was a good beginning study on Ruckshau meditation with qualitative reflective journaling. It is my hope that more studies in this realm are repeated. I have experienced the process of Ruckshau meditation with reflective journaling and some of the benefits which include: stress reduction, relationship building, more self-confidence, teacher presence, cognitive benefits, increase in creativity, and an increase in intuition. My research study answered many of these questions but there are still many more unanswered questions about these practices. This study was only done for approximately six months and to see more results, I believe this study would need to be longitudinal.

Conclusion

When I began this study I was burned out and very frustrated with one of my students. My mentor suggested that I begin to practice Ruckshau meditation for my Capstone. Because I was at my wits end, I was up for trying anything that might help me cope with stress better. Based on his suggestions, I practiced Ruckshau meditation for many months. Every night before bed I rated myself on a rubric to track my burnout levels I then sat on my bed, closed my eyes and reflected backwards from the time I shook the children's hands at the end of the day to the

time I shook their hands at the beginning of the day. I looked for any trouble areas and then watched the scene unfold. I thought about the feelings that came up for me during this time and how I could have handled the situation better. After Ruckshau meditation, I took out my reflective journal and wrote about the trouble areas, how I felt and what I could do differently next time. I then rated myself on the burnout rubric again to see how I was feeling. Shortly after beginning Ruckshau, I found that I was sleeping better at night and I found empathy and more love for my students. Lesson planning became easier because I stopped deliberating over lessons for hours and hours before implementing them.

When I reviewed my journal a few months into this study, I found that my behaviors and reactions began to change and I began to become aware of them in the moment. I began to have stronger classroom management skills, I began to listen to the children without judgement and in the moment, I was happier and less stressed at the end of the day. The children, at this time, threw me a surprise birthday party.

When I began writing this study, I asked myself, “What happens in classrooms when teachers use Ruckshau meditation practice?” I decided to look into Ruckshau, mindfulness and reflection practices and I found many articles and studies written for teachers on mindfulness and reflection. I found no studies written for teachers about Ruckshau. The main purpose of this study was for me to determine if Ruckshau meditation practice could reduce stress levels, improve teacher student relationships, and build my confidence as a teacher. Because there was nothing on Ruckshau, I began looking at studies on mindfulness and reflection and found that there were many studies and a myriad of benefits for teachers using these practices daily. There have been many meta-analysis studies that prove that meditation reduces stress and has many other benefits.

To begin my literature review in Chapter 2, I did research on the state of classrooms in this country, and I found that teachers were stressed out and burned out and they don't have enough time to get things done. Many teachers don't have the social emotional skills to deal with many of the behavior problems presented in the classroom. Some believe that teachers should be taught mindfulness meditation or reflection practices before they graduate from teacher training. Through mindfulness and reflection practices, teachers learn how to control their reactions so that they are less stressed. In my research, I found many studies showing how mindfulness can reduce stress. Next, I talked about how reflection and mindfulness are crucial for a teacher's success in helping develop meaningful curriculum. I found studies that show, when a teacher reflects on teaching, the lessons become more creative. I also found some studies on mindfulness and teacher presence. Teachers who are present in the moment with their students are aware of their own thoughts and feelings. These teachers can impact their students the most when they are present in mind and body. I then did research on leading theorists.

During my literature review, in Chapter 2, I found information on John Dewey, Ellen Langer and Rudolf Steiner. I found that John Dewey believed that teachers need to reflect on their teaching so that the experience can be taken in. Next, I found that Ellen Langer believes that mindfulness needs to be practiced in the classroom as a way for teachers to be fully aware of feelings and emotions to keep us from being quick tempered when a situations arise. Lastly, I learned that Rudolf Steiner, the father of Waldorf education, came up with Ruckshau meditation for teachers as a way to strengthen the ability to pay attention, in the moment. After studying these theorists, I decided to compare and contrast their ideas. John Dewey and Rudolf Steiner both believed that teachers need to reflect daily. In contrast, John Dewey's reflection experience is a written experience whereas Rudolf Steiner's reflective experience is a meditative experience.

Ellen Langer and Rudolf Steiner's theories suggest that Ruckshau and mindfulness are meant to be done without judgement. Both theories also claim to present clarity of mind. In contrast, mindfulness involves being fully aware in the moment, whereas Ruckshau is a backwards daily review done in the evening before sleep. Based on my own experience, Ruckshau creates mindfulness during the day.

In Chapter 3, I talked about the research and design of my study then presented the research question, "What is the lived experience of Ruckshau meditation with a fourth grade Waldorf teacher?" I wanted to find out if Ruckshau meditation practice could help reduce stress in the classroom and build teacher-student relationships. This type of research that was done was called an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In other words, there was an attempt to attach meaning to experiences because there was a qualitative reflection journal used and written in daily. Every evening I rated myself on a rubric, practiced Ruckshau meditation, and then rated myself again before writing in my qualitative reflective journal. Next, the validity of the study was reviewed. A Likert scale to determine my burnout levels and a qualitative reflective journal to record my experiences and feelings were used as the instruments. When the data was processed, numbers and percentages were attached. Results of the study were then graphed. Assumptions about the study were made. The limitations of this study were that I was the only test subject and therefore my results were subjective. I made sure to maintain ethical integrity throughout this study. I recorded my experiences as they were, and I protected the students that I wrote about in my reflective journal because I did not use their names.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the findings of my study. I began Chapter 4 by looking at the setting of where and how this reflective meditation took place. I then talked about my demographics which included who I am and where I lived followed by a brief description of my

classroom make up. The results of my study were then presented. I noticed that through meditation, I found out who I am in a cognitive sense. I became more mindfully aware of my reactions and where they come from. I became more open to learning about myself and I became more spontaneous and creative with my students. Through my qualitative reflective journaling I was able to watch my cognitive processes and my patterns of cognition. Through this process I was able to make some positive changes in my attitude towards my students and my feelings towards them. Because I used a rubric nightly, I was able to determine my burnout levels. It was determined that my burnout levels shifted, and I felt better 45 percent of the time. The other 55 percent of the time, I felt the same after meditation. I can conclude from this evidence that Ruckshau meditation was beneficial to me and reduced stress.

In Chapter 5, I discussed what my perception of myself was like before beginning this process of Ruckshau meditation and reflective journaling. I then discussed what Ruckshau did for me and how I have changed behaviorally, cognitively, emotionally and spiritually. Through the interpretations of my findings, I found that I have learned how to focus my attention and listen to what the students and the people around me are saying. I have stopped my internal dialog and can give my full attention when someone needs my attention. I have found that I notice my own feelings and reactions and can focus my attention to not react in a negative way during stressful situations. I have begun to set clear boundaries and feel good about it. I feel more confident and I am able to forgive myself when things don't go as planned.

I recommend that all Waldorf school teachers practice Ruckshau meditation and qualitative reflective journal writing daily as a way to become more mindfully aware. I invite teachers to become more mindfully aware of patterns in their behaviors so that teacher-student relationships can improve and so teachers feel less stress and more love in their classrooms.

Through this new awareness of self, one can become more centered and open to the perceptions and intuitions that come. When we open ourselves up to these perceptions, our classrooms may become a healing place for teachers and students alike.

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