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General Conclusions¹

The Munich Model “Mindfulness and Meditation in a University Context” has grown continuously since its inception in the 2010 summer semester. Each semester, a total of 150 students take part in its courses. The high number of applicants shows that there is even more interest than can currently be accommodated. For the “Stress Management and Meditation” course through the “General and Interdisciplinary Studies” Faculty (Munich University of Applied Sciences) more than 700 students apply each semester for the 15 available spaces! Other courses in the Munich model are likewise overbooked with often two to three times as many applicants as available spaces.

My personal observations as a lecturer thus far – and after having read about 2000 meditation journals, each 25-40 pages long – confirm that after about 4 months of participation in the courses, the students are better able to cope with everyday challenges, the general pressure to perform and the occasional high stress of their studies. The courses help the students to deal more effectively with stress situations and to handle them in a more neutral and objective manner.

Minor disagreements that can lead to greater disputes and conflicts, for example those arising from road traffic or family quarrels, can now be approached more constructively. Through mindfulness and meditation exercises, the students learn not to impulsively react, but to briefly pause, using this pause to approach the situation differently, and more deliberately. In this way, one is able to “side step” the emotions.

Some students also report a diminished urge to consume – for example, they feel less inclined to shop, and quite a few are better able to fall asleep at night. I have also noticed that they are generally more relaxed in class and that they display an increase in mutual trust. This also proves important because their experiences are shared within the group.

Testimonies and feedback discussions in class also indicate that the “Loving Kindness” exercises and the compassion meditations lead to a better understanding of others and to more emotional serenity. The students find it easier to take on a meta-level, which is also helpful for dealing with scientific questions.

To implement a program such as the Munich Model at other universities, a fair amount of persuasion may at first be required, as the value of mindfulness and meditation in such a context is not evident to some decision makers. Profound knowledge of the results of general research, and also that which specifically relates to a university context, can provide convincing support in presenting such a project (see “Research”, p. 41 ff.).

An important criterion is didactic mediation. Because mindfulness and especially meditation have such a significant effect on mental hygiene, teachers carry a great responsibility. One needs a long and well-founded experience of meditation to be able to teach meditation techniques, especially those related to a deep inner immersion. A familiarity with different meditation approaches is also important so that students are presented with a variety of options. Conversely, general mindfulness practices are easier to teach, for example as part of the curriculum, or as auxiliary classes or built into courses such as math or computer science. This is particularly evident in the case of lecturers who have themselves begun to introduce brief mindfulness and meditation exercises in class (see p. 18 ff., 32 f., 87 sowie 122 f.). Our partnership with the Center of Teaching and Learning (DiZ) in Bavaria is providing further expertise in this area, as is the exchange

with our cooperative partners in Jena and Osnabrück, who already run training programs developed by the Thüringer Model for university teachers.

After completing their studies, some students have themselves become lecturers for the Munich Model. Regular meetings are coordinated with these students so that they're supported in terms of teaching content, didactic mediation and performance record assessment. Although they're expected to adhere to the guidelines when teaching the course content, they're also expected to find their own teaching methods, as authenticity is an essential prerequisite for teaching (see "About Teaching", p. 81).

Additionally, an appropriate infrastructure has to be set up to implement mindfulness and meditation programs at universities. The standard classroom with tables and chairs is not entirely suitable. A quiet room in which students can practice undisturbed is important for practical exercises. This can be equipped with cushions, blankets and mats. In addition, it's useful that there be storage cabinets for these materials, as well as a lending library with expert literature and films. Moreover, certain areas of the university could be designated as "mindfulness and meditation" areas: for example, an area could be reserved in the cafeteria for those who would like to eat in silence.

Another question is whether the mindfulness and meditation courses are offered on a voluntary basis in addition to the curriculum or should be firmly anchored in the curricula as for-credit courses. In the latter case, the courses must be designed accordingly: with learning objectives, assessment criteria, possible grades and ECTS. The Munich model demonstrates the feasibility of this option.

In order to ensure the high-quality, sustainable implementation of a mindfulness and meditation program it's also important that someone take responsibility to supervise and coordinate all the various aspects of it.. This could be a teacher who incorporates these topics into their own field of study, for example. Or an anchoring in the area of "Health Promoting University". Or, as in the case of Osnabrück University, an office can be established to implement and coordinate the program.

In the context of degree programs, there is also the question of specialization and certification. In the near future it's planned that students who take part in all the mindfulness and meditation courses offered through the Social Work degree program will receive an additional certificate with their Bachelor's degree. This demonstrates that they've examined the topic in depth, achieving a supplemental qualification in this area. Such a specification could also be offered for other degree programs, for example Pedagogy.

In the final reflections of the meditation journals the possibilities of practical application to students' later professional fields are explored. Through this it becomes evident that the implementation of mindfulness and meditation approaches in the various professional fields has enormous potential. This could be realized through university certificate training programs for professionals, for example those working early childhood education, or in youth work or the care sector.

Should the field of "Mindfulness and Meditation" become more widespread in society, it's also conceivable that professional specialization takes the form of a master's degree. This has already been achieved at the KPH Vienna in the form of a master's degree program called "Mindfulness in Education, Counselling and Health Care".

Training opportunities for teaching staff have already been noted. For example, it's possible to offer short workshops and seminars as well as extensive certificate training. The universities in Jena and Osnabrück have already implemented this idea (see p. 65 f.).

Meanwhile, more than 2000 students have taken part in the courses of the Munich Model. It's become apparent that many participants wish to continue meditating after

the courses end, but find it difficult or impossible to do so without a dedicated group. Some of these students continue independently, attending meditation schools in order to further their education in meditation techniques. But so far this number is relatively small. The current participants would like to see a new follow-up course on “Mindfulness and Meditation” offered every semester, as well as additional voluntary meditation courses offered at the university. Research conducted by Coburg University (see p. 65) indicates that Munich Model participants find these meditation programs meaningful and would like to see further programs of this kind.

Many of the current and former participants exhibit a great desire for exchange with their classmates. This is especially the case among students who are carrying out mindfulness and meditation projects on their own, as part of their final theses, or who implement these projects in their professional field after completing their studies, such as through their work in kindergartens and schools. Against this background, it seems desirable to create a place within the university where students can continue meditating together and exchange ideas. In Munich, this would be a center for mindfulness and meditation that would belong to the city’s universities. I am convinced that such a place would be an enormous benefit for the students. As mindfulness and meditation are meeting with more and more interest and acceptance in society, such a center would also serve as a great asset for the universities.

SOURCES

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de Bruin, Andreas (2017). “Möglichkeiten der Geistesschulung: Meditation im universitären Kontext? – Das Münchener-Modell”, in: *Zeitschrift für Bewusstseinswissenschaften. Transpersonale Psychologie und Psychotherapie*, 23. Jahrgang 2. Petersberg: Verlag Via Nova, p. 68-84.

¹ Sections of the text are in part taken from: de Bruin 2017 as well as de Bruin 2019a.

Meditations- tagebuch



1.4.19
Ich habe bereits letztes Sommersemester Ihre Lehrveranstaltung Meditation besucht. Auch nach dem Semester habe ich noch einige Monate täglich meditiert, es aber dann nach und nach leider vernachlässigt. Aus diesem Grund bin ich sehr froh darüber erneut an einer Meditationsvorlesung teilzunehmen, da ich in der Zeit während ich regelmäßig meditiert habe deutlich entspannter und gelassener war als zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt!

Meditation! Was erhoffe ich & Achtsamkeit
Wir von diesem Kurs?

- * möglicherweise wertvolleren Stress im Alltag zu gewinnen
- * Migräne (kurzeit 20 Tage im Monat) besser in den Griff zu bekommen
- * Ruhe, Stille
- * Zeit für mich
- * Bewusstes wahrnehmen (Körper, Umwelt, Mitmenschen → Was tut mir gut?)
- * Abschalten → Gedanken mal kurz „ausschalten“
- * Meditations- und Achtsamkeitsübungen/-formen wertvolleren die mich im präventiven Alltag unterstützen + die ich möglicherweise mit Klientengruppen anwenden kann