

# The power of mindful learning in professional development course

*Kadek* Sonia Piscayanti

Ganesha University of Education

**Abstract.** Mindful Learning has been widely used in education nowadays, due to its significant and valuable impacts towards learning. Mindful learning is an effective tool to enhance students' awareness of learning, students' engagement with the context of learning and students' flexibility towards new ideas in learning. The three main characteristics of mindful learning above raise students' motivation and ownership of learning. It is shaping the students new perspective and leading them to powerful impact of learning. This is a descriptive qualitative research on the use of mindful learning in Professional Development Course in English Education Department Ganesha University of Education. The subjects are 73 students of sixth semester in academic year 2016/2017. Mindful Learning is used as a powerful strategy to enhance the students' achievement in learning. It is implemented through 16 meetings consisted of lectures, discussions, presentations and final projects. They are assessed by reflective journal, presentation notes, and final projects. At the end, the result showed that the power of mindful learning gives significant effect towards learning achievement. It showed that not only the mindful learning is effective for the learning but also productive in improving the students' creativity and critical thinking.

## 1 Introduction

Mindfulness is described as paying attention in the present moment, on purpose, and without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1992 [1]). Mindful learning is a learning strategy that is used to raise the awareness of learning, sensitivity of context and novelty, create new definitions and new categories from informations. Mindful learning is very effective to be used as a learning strategy because it drives the students to new perspective, open minded learning, contextual and aware of the self. "When we are mindful, we implicitly or explicitly (1) view a situation from several perspectives, (2) see information presented in the situation as novel, (3) attend to the context in which we perceive the information, and eventually (4) create new categories through which this information may be understood." (Langer, 2000, p.111 [2]). Teasdale et al. (1995[3]) described the nature of this state as "being fully present at the moment, without judging or evaluating it, without reflecting back on memories of the past, without looking ahead to anticipate the future ... and without trying to solve problems or otherwise prevent the unpleasant aspects of the current situation". Other research has been conducted by Tarracsh (2015[5]), in which the study suggests that mindfulness practices can be successfully introduced into traditional academic settings and integrated as part of preservice course curricula to enhance

professionals' personal mental health and their ability to transmit the benefits of meditation to their pupils.

Cooper and Boyd (1996[6]) discuss their thoughts about using mindfulness in teaching and learning. They consider teaching is a process of facilitating and uncovering skills. They state, "Mindfulness takes into account the student's inclination to search, to inquire. It considers the student's ability to be aware, to perceive and conceive" (p. 9). Mindfulness involves refining, thinking, formulating meaning and benefiting from learning. In an effective mindful class, the teacher helps his/her students build meaning, reflect on their learning, and make use of their learning. Other research shows that "Mindful writing helped students generate new thoughts and become aware of their thinking; mindfulness facilitated their learning process, cultivated creativity and intelligence; mindful cooperative learning provided students with an opportunity to discover their awareness, learn from others, reflect and think critically (Wang and Liu, 2016[7])."

The context of mindful learning in this research is the professional development course. Professional development course is a course in English Education Department which aims at preparing students to be professionally developed teachers from the professional perspective, pedagogical perspective, personal and interpersonal perspectives. The novelty of this research is that mindful learning applied in professional development course in the context of learning English as a second language in English education especially in university level.

## **2 Method**

Research method used in this study is the grounded theory research, in which the data is used to develop and elaborate the theory. The data is then analysed through the grounded theory research (Corbin and Strauss (1990[8]) in which the steps are notes writing, identification of concepts and development of concept definition or theory elaboration. Participants of this research are 72 students altogether. The treatment of mindful learning was done gradually in two steps. In total, students are given 16 meetings in which the first-half eight meetings are consisted of introduction, initiation and preparation of mindful learning, and the following eight meetings are fully facilitated with mindful learning. The activities in the classroom include lecturing, presentation, discussion, reflection and final projects. The method of data collection is using three kinds of instruments namely, reflective journal, presentation notes, and final projects scoring sheets. These are to measure whether there is a growth in student's awareness of learning, sensitivity to context and new ideas. In reflective journal, students are asked to write down freely on some points, first what they know already about a topic, what they want to know, what they have learned, and what they think about it. In presentation notes, they have to make a note on their presentation, to make a note about their friend's presentation and discussion. In final projects, they wrote their ideas in form of essay about a certain topic that has been given.

## **3 Results and discussion**

The results of research show as follow. The first half of semester with the introduction of professional development course and the initiation of mindful learning, the students are still in the conventional stage of learning in which they are passive, less creative and less initiative. In lectures section followed by discussion, the students are passive learners in which they listen more and speak less. Very often when they are invited to ask questions, they are silent. Even when they are motivated and supported. From the first two meetings in form of lectures and discussion about a history of national education in Indonesia, it was observed that the student's behaviour were passive. Next was presentation about professional teacher, inspiring and creative teachers. There are six presentations done in six meetings. The students seemed to be more active in speaking, yet they are still unmotivated

to raise questions and answer. Here mindful learning is introduced step by step. They are told to ask questions before they present, to reflect after they present and to involve context of their presentation. They were also asked to take notes on what they have presented, and what they have discussed as the part of reflection. Gradually they are used to mindful learning. In the eighth meeting until sixteenth meeting, the mindful learning is fully applied. First they were asked to do mindful meditation to raise their awareness about their own feeling, surrounding context, and open new flexible minds. The students were given a book to analyze, discuss and present. The title of the book is *Creativity: Theory, History, and Practice* by Rob Pope (2005[9]). The concept of presentation was different from previous presentation. In this phase they are given not only feedback but also criticism from their friends. If they could not present well, they should repeat the presentation until they get better feedbacks. Presentation was more active, challenging and dynamic.

From reflective journals, presentation notes and final projects scoring sheets, the data has been classified, based on grounded theory research procedures, and it can be shown that 93,05% of the students have the positive feedback on mindful learning, especially on 3 aspects of mindful learning as the data gained are as follows.

#### Mindful Learning Raises Self-Awareness of Learning

1. “Be honest and critical thinking. In this learning process, I gained a very basic knowledge for me as a human. We need to be honest, whether I understand or not. I need to be honest not to make friends believe me, but I need to be honest to make me believe myself. Meanwhile the other thing that I gained during this lesson is I know how to start the presentation. It is because I have a mistake while do the presentation then I get a suggestion. I can reflect it to myself, so I can make a development, I feel enjoy to learn this subject because I gained so many new knowledges too such as study about genetics and creativity. As we know we need to be creative as a teacher. So, this subject is useful and helpful for me.” (Putu Pramita Dewi)
2. “From what I’ve got in this course, I have learned about creativity and mindful learning, I tried my best in developing and adapting myself to follow the stream of this course and I have learned some new things, one aspect that I like the most in this course is mindful learning, in which it has some ways to learn peacefully, one of them is by having meditation before studying, it makes me feel better, and become more focused in leaning, mindful learning can also implemented with sharing session in which we can share what we have in mind and gain new things from others. Sharing session also help me in building the critical thinking”. (Krisna Sugiarta)

#### Mindful Learning Raises Contextual Awareness of Learning

1. “Mindful learning is important for education nowadays because it gave contextual learning, since it is about contextual, it will ease students to understand the material. In addition, mindful learning also tells the students why they need to learn the material. So the students will know the benefit of studying the material, and also mindful learning is conducted in a creative way” (Ratih Mas Absari)
2. I like the mindful learning, because the concept is simple and also mindful learning can create comfortable atmosphere for the learners, mindfulness can be practiced through some ways including meditation, KWL chart, writing, found poem, and technology project. Mindful learning in the classroom makes learner become more sensitive about themselves and the environment around them. Mindful learning also can make the students able to absorb the knowledge thoroughly. (Olivia Monty)

#### Mindful Learning Raises Flexibility to New Ideas

1. In this course, I learn new material and when I present the material I make the mistake. But, I have chance to repair my mistake. I try to make my best when I repair my mistake. But, in this course, I also feel sorry if I should be able to show the best in following this lesson. But, when I cannot show my best. We use our creativity to correct the mistakes we have made. So, we can fix our mistakes. We can be better than ever. (Mia Sapitri)
2. Professional Development is one of many courses that can help us to develop our skill to be professional in doing something especially in teaching as a teacher. From the Professional development courses, we can get many knowledges about how to be the professionalism as a teacher. In this course, we as a teacher must be innovative, creative, and always updating ourselves with knowledge. (Eddy Prayuda)

The results of this study is in line with the study by Flook and Goldberg (2013) that suggest a mindfulnessintervention adapted for educators boosts aspects of teachers' mindfulness and self-compassion, reduces psychologicalsymptoms and burnout, increases effective teaching behavior,and reduces attentional biases. This is also in line with the theory of Langer that says: "When we are mindful, we implicitly or explicitly (1) view a situation from several perspectives, (2) see information presented in the situation as novel, (3) attend to the context in which we perceive the information, and eventually (4) create new categories through which this information may be understood." (Langer,1997, p.111).

According to Yeganeh and Kolb (2009), mindfulness isn't judging, rather accepting the recent condition as a continual experience that is contantly changing. This paradigm is emphasizing the prejudice and overcome the illusion that could take over the mind. Langer (2000) stated that Mindful Learning is the opposite of Mindless Learning.

The strength of Mindful Learning has multi perspective is supported by Jerry E. Fluellen Jrin his article "Mindfulness Learning 2020". Jerry compared Langer's theory to Dewey' s education theory, Piaget's, and Howard Gardner's. In the previous education theories, Langer's has perspective. In Fluellen's article, stated that "From the perspective of Langer's mindfulness theory, students primarily "created new categories." Some students even "welcomed new information" and "held more than one perspective." This is different than any other education where learner made the category new "knowledge", accepting "new knowledge" and getting more than one "knowledge" in a new perspective. Therefore, it can be stated that Mindful Learning theory is appropriate for 21st century of characteristic learning which is craative, communicative, colaborative and critical.

Therefore it can be stated that the power of Mindful Learning is very significant towards the professional development course. It gives significant effect towards learning achievement. It showed that not only the mindful learning is effective for the learning but also productive in improving the students' creativity and critical thinking.

## References

1. Z. Kabat, J. Massion, A. O. Kristeller, J.Peterson, L. G, Fletcher, K. E., Pbert, L., et al. . *American Journal of Psychiatry* **149**, 936–943 (1992)
2. E.Langer, J, Mindful Learning. *Article in Current Directions in Psychological Science*(2000)
3. J.D. Teasdale, Z.V. Segal, J.M.G. Williams, Behavior Research and Therapy, How Does cognitive therapy prevent depressive relapse and why should attentional control (mindfulness) training help? **33**, 25-39 (1995)
4. T. Richard, Mindfulness Meditation Training for Graduate Students in Educational Counseling and Special Education: A Qualitative Analysis (2014)
5. Y. Wang, C. Liu, The IAFOR Journal of Education **4** (2016).

6. C. Cooper, J. Boyd, *Mindful learning (Global Learning Communities, Australi*,1996).
7. L. Flook, S. B. Goldberg, L Pinger, K. Bonus, R.J. Davidson, *Mind, Brain, and Education* **7**,182-197 (2013)
8. C. Juliet, S. Anslem, *Qualitative Sociology* **13**, 4-21 (1990)
9. P. Rob, *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice* (2005)