

# DEVELOPING THE COMMUNITY OF CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION

## STRATEGY

24.01.19

### CONTEXT AND AIMS

Part of the core mission of MLE is an educative one, and it has also long been engaged in specific work on education, both through meetings such as ESRI where the work of educators is frequently showcased, and through other initiatives around education. Meanwhile for the last 10 years, activity and research on mindfulness in schools and universities has been growing, and a smaller body of work has developed on contemplative pedagogy in higher education. In 2012 His Holiness the Dalai Lama identified what he called 'education of the heart' as a key priority for his mission and for the work of M&L <https://www.dalailama.com/videos/ethics-educating-the-mind-and-heart> .

Work began in September 2017 to explore the feasibility of MLE attempting to catalyze and coordinate a 'Community of Contemplative Education'. This would not attempt to create a new educational programme but aim to uncover and build on existing work on contemplative and mindfulness based education in Europe, in schools and universities from a range of approaches and traditions.

The precise outcomes of this initiative are being arrived at through an iterative process with those engaged in CE in Europe. Currently the broad intentions are to:

- Create a **sustainable and vibrant community of the leading pioneers and experts** to enhance collective learning and implementation around contemplative education in Europe.
- Through working in cooperative partnerships which respect the distinctive expertise and cultural diversity of Europe, **for the CCE to become an authoritative guide and resource for educational leaders and professionals** to help them develop and advocate for effective contemplative and mindfulness-based education in schools, universities and surrounding families and communities.
- The role of MLE would be to provide strategic leadership from a small core team which will catalyze activities, work in partnerships including in seeking funding, build community, co-ordinate activities across the community, and ensure alignment with the mission, goals and values of MLE.

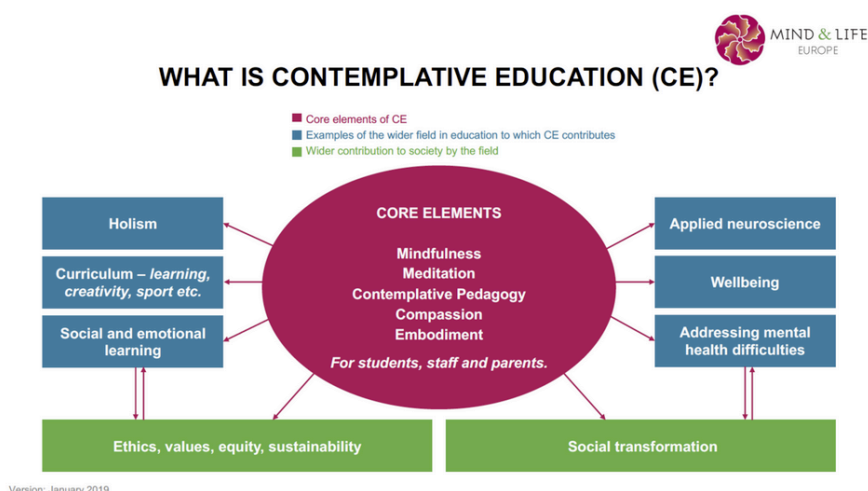
## WORK SO FAR

Between October 2017 and July 2018 an **online and skype consultation** of 133 education experts helped to set direction for the CCE. The responses and reflections were summarized in a **report** which covered the following:

- Why we need CE – its role in meeting current challenges - in education, in society and in mental health and wellbeing.
- What CE means in practice - the concept, terminology/language, core elements, what it contributes to education, how it interfaces with adjacent areas such as social and emotional education, neuroscience, compassion, equity and sustainability, and the values it embodies.
- What is happening in CE across Europe- a sketch of the state of development within countries, identifying current expertise, networks, programmes and approaches.
- The role of MLE within this picture, and its potential role in helping to build a community of contemplative education.

The report was presented and discussed at a **meeting in Rotterdam** in September 2018 attended by over 45 experts. The meeting endorsed the report as a broadly accurate picture of the field, and the attitudes, terminology, expertise, programmes, and challenges to be found across Europe. The meeting considered a draft of a model of CE and suggested some practical steps for realizing the vision for the CCE.

The following strategy is based on the consultation, the report, the current working model of ‘what is contemplative education?’ (below) and on the work of the groups and priorities identified during the meeting. As a working document, it is the subject of ongoing discussion and revision with those at the Rotterdam meeting and the wider community of those who have expressed an interest in working with this. Funding is being sought to support both the continuation of a small team within MLE and the various intended activities and outputs that are emerging and which are outlined here.



## INTENDED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

There is considerable overlap between these tasks outlined below. Each area currently has a group associated with it after the Rotterdam meeting, and others are suggesting themselves as the community expands. The intention is to keep the groups in close contact so they can interchange information and outputs, to build on not duplicate work that other groups are doing.

### 1) LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION, CAPACITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

The consultation showed that CE in Europe is a rich landscape with a range of existing programmes, research, experts and networks, but it is fragmented and scattered and divided by language. There is a need for the CCE to provide leadership and guidance, working together as a community to bring people together to learn from one another and develop the field.

#### 1 a) Community building, communication and networking

Finding ways to help this community come together, share information and ideas, learn from one another and communicate e.g.

- **To continue to map, expand and capture the field of current CE activity** e.g. the levels of development within countries, experts/centres of expertise, programmes and approaches, active networks, examples of good practice, and key research, publications and resources.
- **Help people network, search for and access information**, ensuring information is accessible and easily searched
- **Help people to communicate effectively** across the community, including meeting face to face and virtually.

Intended outputs:

- To continue to identify activity, through a slightly revised **online survey** to ascertain what is happening across Europe around CE.
- Building on this and the original survey to **create a searchable map, a database or a register.**
- To continue to identify and develop **links and partnerships with existing activity** e.g. networks, programmes, universities to avoid duplication.
- To **develop the MLE website as the core resource**, supported by google docs, and social media.
- **Meetings-** on line and face to face as appropriate..

#### 1 b) Clarifying and generating the concept and value of CE

There is a need to further clarify the vision and concept of CE which emerged from the consultation and was captured in the report and summarized in the model above. **Some core beliefs** are that education is at the heart of human development and

social change. CE refers to an educational approach that comes from the inside out, 'getting to know yourself', cultivating your whole self, including your skills and attitudes through both meditative practice and how you live and relate to others. It balances the traditional emphasis in western education on working from the outside in and is the neglected heart of education. CE is a human activity, appropriate for any cultural/religious context, and is about social as well as personal transformation.

Based on the basic concept and model agreed at the Rotterdam meeting the aim is **to develop further and 'road test' a robust and workable model of CE** that can encompass this diverse community and communicate effectively with those outside, which can underpin development and research, and which recognizes the range of needs, approaches, and cultures across Europe. This will include making further progress on

- **Clarifying why CE is needed** – what educational, social challenges and human challenges can it help us meet?
- **Defining CE in practice** – scope, aims, elements, theory, language and terminology, principles, values etc
- **The evidence base for CE** (to be clarified and developed with 4) the research group.)
- **Clarifying how CE interfaces with and adds to other areas** within education e.g. social and emotional learning, pedagogy, and its role catalyzing educational and social change.

Intended outputs:

- **Short position paper on the nature and scope of CE and its contribution to education and society**, capturing the elements outlined above. This can underpin the rest of the initiative. It will draw on the work of the Rotterdam report, and on resources produced by and suggested by the community including a recent bibliography of the field published by members of the CCE.

#### **1 c) Communication with the outside world and advocacy**

- **Identify key change makers** and gate keepers as the target for advocacy and local, national and international levels.
- **Develop appropriate and common core messages and language**, drawing on the clear concept being developed under 1b), to speak effectively to different audiences and in different cultural, social and linguistic contexts. Audiences include those within the CCE, policy makers, the general public, children and young people, teachers, parents etc. Emphasizing that CE is a secular activity, based on human needs, founded on science and evidence, shaped and inspired by deep wisdom traditions.
- **Building capacity: identify and cultivate leaders** for this movement, with the evidence/science base at their fingertips who are confident speakers and advocates for CE.

Intended outputs:

- **Meetings and training for CE leaders.**
- **A set of easy to use resources:** guidance, tools and materials that can be used right across the community, by leaders and others, e.g. short publications, leaflets, booklets, powerpoints etc for various audiences expressed in appropriate style and language, setting out the value of CE, what it means, the emerging research evidence, and clarity on its roots in wisdom traditions, outlining clear, attractive and realistic messages.
- **The ability to provide advocacy for CE** at local, national and international levels, including international forums, governments, CEOs, policy makers, school leaders, and the public.

## 2) HOLISTIC APPROACHES

The following activities have been identified to help realize this vision.

**Clarification of the vision, concept and principles** involved in taking a holistic approach (building on the work on clarifying of the concept of CE by group 1).

- **What do we mean by ‘a holistic approach’?** (Vision so far - synergy/whole bigger than the sum of the parts, cultivating human-ness, CE as at the heart of a joined up ‘settings’ approach (whole school, university, community) in which whole people (child, principal, teacher, parents) pull together as a team, and flourish and thrive in all their human aspects (cognitive, spiritual, physical, emotional and social).
- **What is the specific role and contribution of CE** and mindfulness within a holistic approach? Why does it need to start with self-understanding?
- **What does it mean to ‘start with ourselves as teachers’?** (Vision so far: nurturing and self-care, cultivating self-insight into the self, habits and personality, embodiment, to help authentic communication with students, understanding of ‘difficult’ behaviour, grasping the link between happiness/wellbeing and learning. (Overlaps with 3) the teacher education group).
- **How does holism help young people flourish and thrive?** What is the evidence and mechanisms? (Overlap with research group 4).
- **What kind of holistic settings/ecology/environments/ classrooms, conditions do we need?** (So far: open, communicative, healing, transformative, happy, educative, coherent, joined up). (Overlap with research group 4)

Intended outputs

- **Guidance document on what is meant by holism**, its evidence base, and how to achieve the holistic approach within schools and universities. (Links with work of the 3) educational group).

- **Case studies of good practice** of joined up ‘whole school/whole university’ approaches with CE at the heart. Including holistic models of pedagogy and learning, cultivating social and emotional skills including resilience, preparing students for the future world and their role as engaged citizens. A case study has been offered by the Dharma school, UK.
- **Guidance on engaging in whole system research and evaluation-** creating ways to share knowledge and learn from each other across a wide range of disciplines/fields (links with work of the 4) research group).
- **Identifying and linking with policy approaches in Europe that support a holistic approach** e.g. WHO’s concept of Healthy/Health Promoting Schools, Iceland’s Positive Schools. (Links with mapping activity under 1b).

### 3) EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES – STARTING WITH TEACHER EDUCATION

**Clarification of the vision, concept and principles of CE in practice in schools, universities and classrooms (overlap with work of 1b) so far:**

- **CE starts with the adults**, the cornerstone of CE is the ‘teacher’s’ own mindfulness and their personal practice, empowerment, presence, compassion, embodiment and self-care.
- **From this base we can move on to teach others** (mnemonics include “*be mindful, teach mindfully, teach mindfulness*”).

Intended outputs

- **Create a map, register or database of existing sound and evidence based educational strategies, guidance, and programmes** which include CE, are in line with the mission and values of MLE and can be publicized and supported. (Identified so far Mindfulness in Schools Project, MindUp, Wake Up Schools, Youth Mindfulness, SEE, CARE).
- **Guidance and criteria for evaluating** existing and new high quality programmes, (cf criteria used by CASEL in the US on social and emotional learning <https://casel.org/guide/criteria/> .)
- Where there is an identified gap, **guidance on developing new inputs** e.g. courses, materials and resources (including video, apps, toolboxes), using mixed/blended methods e.g. on line and face to face, aimed at range of audiences. Include inputs on student/teacher self-compassion and self-care.
- **Suggest educational standards for educating teachers in CE** – explore what the UK Mindfulness Network is offering. <https://www.ukmindfulnessnetwork.co.uk/>
- Explore possible EU funding through universities to fund project partnerships in this area.

- **Awareness raising events and materials for leaders and policy makers** e.g. Departments of Education, Headteachers/ Directors/Principles. (Overlap with 1c advocacy above).
- **Inservice education on CE** for teachers, lecturers, staff, and parents, for their own wellbeing first, before they teach others. Many of the existing programmes listed above provide this – so disseminate and publicize, especially in areas with no teacher education at present e.g. Italy.
- **Preservice education**, in colleges and universities for trainee teachers and related professions e.g. educational psychology, special needs, counsellors.
- **CE for school and university students**- sound existing programmes listed above can be disseminated and built on before suggesting developing new materials and curricula.

#### 4) RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND ENQUIRY

The vision, concept and principles and activities – *so far*

- **The evidence base is vital** for leadership and advocacy, a door opener and a way to bring in educational leaders and practitioners. We need to capture, develop, disseminate and advocate for the evidence base for CE.
- **The science is a base for credibility and scalability**, so take care not to overstate/ hype and to consider adverse effects.
- **Research, enquiry and evaluation need to underpin the work of the CCE** so this group needs to work closely with the other groups.
- There is a need to **work with independent researchers/ evaluators** to subject what is being created across the rest of the network to proper scientific scrutiny, not just evaluate ourselves.
- **We need to draw on and publicize many types of systematically collected evidence**- most familiar is the quantitative evaluations of mindfulness based interventions, and neuroscience, but qualitative work, psychology, social and educational science including implementation and dissemination science are also needed to, support all aspects of the work of the CCE.

Intended outputs

- **Bring together reviews of the empirical quantitative evidence base** for mindfulness/CE/compassion in schools and universities (including reviews by members of the CCE).
- **Guidance on critical review** of such evidence.
- Short paper on **the evidence for the neuroscience of contemplative activity**.
- Bring together the supporting **evidence from qualitative research** on contemplation and CE.

- **Guidance on how to undertake evaluation** including methods and the selection of measures.
- **Guidance on how to implement mindfulness/CE in an evidence based way**, building on implementation science. (Overlap with group 3 on education).
- **Building research and evaluation into CCE activities.**
- **Work with partners to develop research proposals for funded projects** that fit within this initiative and are of strategic importance.