

Vipassanā Meditation and Teacher Decision-making

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ABSTRACT

A grounded theory study about the process and effect Vipassana Meditation has on teacher stress and decision-making. The emerging concepts included equanimity, awareness, observation, detachment, flexibility, and engagement supporting the theory of the anicca perspective on the decision-making process. The impact can affect relationships, pedagogy, and classroom management.

PROBLEM

There is a problem with how educators react and deal with work stress and demands within the school day in relation to decision-making (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010). Despite educator preparation programs, resources, and leadership training, some educators still have difficulties responding to daily tasks (Chang, 2009). This problem has negatively impacted educators' longevity in the profession (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), in relationships in the work place (Otero, Bolano, Santiago, & Pol, 2010), and within the community because the knowledge and skills learned are not enough to function effectively (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to build a theory about the process and function teachers construct around the effect Vipassana Meditation has on stress, teaching, and specifically decision-making. The result and contribution to education includes a technique that can be used to reduce stress.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

The conceptual framework starts with teacher stress and burnout as the backdrop topic and problem. Solutions and approaches offered have drawn on **cognitive dissonance theory, choice theory, mindfulness theory**, and the perspective of **Vipassana Meditation** philosophy that sheds a new light on the problem of how teachers react to stress.

Some main concepts at that overlapping point include: awareness, observation, context, detachment, nonjudgment, flexibility, the present, emotions, relationships, choice, and action. The main contributing authors include:

Carson, & Langer, (2006)
Chang, (2009)
Davidson, (2009)
Falkenstrom, (2010)
Maslach, (1996)
Festinger, (1962)
Glasser, (1985, 2010)
Goenka, (2000, 2002, 2005)
Langer, (1994, 1989, 2000, 2004, 2010)
Vipassana Research Institute. (2010)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. How does Vipassana Meditation influence a teacher's daily routine in the classroom?

RQ2. How, and under what daily school situations or stress, do teachers use the concepts practiced in Vipassana Meditation?

RQ3. How does the practice of meditation influence classroom decision-making, classroom management, and procedures?

PROCEDURES

The data collection was done in two stages and included triangulation through two interviews, participant reflective journals, and a questionnaire from all nine participants. The snowball sample technique was used for recruiting participants. Stage 1 data was semi-structured interviews and participant journals, while Stage 2 data was semi-structured interviews with new questions, journals, and open-ended questionnaire. Researcher field notes and a reflective journal were also used throughout.

DATA ANALYSIS

Overall analysis included a hybrid model of inductive, deductive, and interpretive analysis with constant comparing.

- Open / Initial or Logic / Themed coding - deductive and theoretical
- Axial / focused coding (connection, categories) - inductive perspective
- Selective / Theoretical coding - inductive perspective
- Throughout Epoche, bracketing, and memos were used.
- The HyperResearch qualitative research program was used to code and connect themes.

FINDINGS

Revealing: Anicca perspective decision-making, as supporting a perspective of change, having no attachment, aversion, or connection to self while going through the decision-making process.

Three Phases

- 1) Situation using emotional and cognitive skills
- 2) Present Moment – Concentration and Mindfulness
- 3) Equanimity, Balance, Compassion

LIMITATIONS

My 3 years of Vipassana Meditation and 15 years of teaching experience.

Addressing this potential bias through the use of epoche, bracketing field notes, memos, a personal journal, and member checking.

The sample size, recruitment technique and specific type of participant--a teacher who practices Vipassana Meditation.

Some concepts could be connected to spiritual practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Anicca Perspective Decision-making Grounded Theory PAUSE Technique:

- P – **Pause** - Slow down, Think
- A – **Awareness** – Anicca (Impermanence) Self, Surroundings, Situation, and People
- U – **Understanding** – Balancing Detachment, and Non-judgment
- S – **Sensations** - Breath and Body Sensations
- E – **Empathic Engagement** - Reminder to connect and help other people

SOCIAL CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

Contributes to changing the teaching and learning process through bringing a deeper awareness of self, others, and surrounding situation by addressing teacher stress and burnout.

Promotes increased calmness and acceptance, which supports responsive decision-making and allows a teacher to be more connected to the students.

Creates an equanimous, detached, but compassionate and empathetic teacher that is therefore more effective in the classroom.

When put into educator preparation programs, resources, in-service training, professional conferences or seminars it will create positive social change within an individual, a school, and community by increasing a teachers' ability to handle stress and burnout though enhancing their effectiveness and prolonging their careers.