mindfulness, there was an "intentional ignoring and glossing over of potentially important historical, philosophical, and cultural nuances" (p290) and that various foundational elements, such as the definition and operationalisation of the term mindfulness itself, "could be worked out later by scholars and researchers" (*ibid*). Whilst I understood the urgency to bring the benefits of mindfulness to a wider audience and to demonstrate its clinical rigour, I also acknowledge the concern that was being expressed by colleagues.

Upon reflection, I felt that the 'work it out later' approach of mindfulness was a natural part of the evolution of a developing field (as a form of pre-paradigmatic angst) and that those working within the field (particularly teachers of mindfulness) were best placed to examine and shape it going forward. To do this effectively, I felt that an approach that attempted to bridge the various discourses would be necessary. Such an approach needed to recognise the uniqueness of each teacher, individual learner, learner group and learning context in MBPs. It needed to acknowledge the importance of contributing to the outcome evidence-base of mindfulness whilst also valuing the lived-out experiences of those involved. Further, it needed to investigate the causal mechanisms at play in the course that led to the emergence of outcomes and experiences. Thus, it was from a critical realist framework that I set out to analyse the outcome effectiveness, experiences *and* pedagogical components of an established and popular adult mindfulness course that I had taught for many years.

1.2 The journey of modern mindfulness

Whilst I often use the word 'journey' in my teaching of mindfulness, and indeed here in relation to my own experiences, I also recognise that the field of mindfulness itself has an interesting and developing history. Since Jon Kabat-Zinn's pioneering work at the University of Massachusetts in the late 1970's and early 1980's, mindfulness itself has been on a transformative journey.

Kabat-Zinn's work initiated the development of a more modern, secular and scientific mindfulness that provided more universal concepts and practices to the Western world (Shapiro et al., 2006). These concepts and practices of modern mindfulness are of course based upon Buddhist, Chinese and Hindu philosophies and traditions (see McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010 chapter 2 for an excellent summary of the history of mindfulness and/or Sujato, 2012 and De Silva, 2014 for a consideration of mindfulness from a Buddhist perspective). Of these, mindfulness is mostly associated with Buddhism (although this itself is contested – see Sharf, 2014) and it is often claimed that mindfulness is the heart of the teachings of Buddha (Grossman and Van Dam, 2011). Certainly, mindfulness is often translated from the Pali term 'Sati', meaning to remember or to bring to mind and has a focus upon present-moment and moment-to-moment awareness accompanied by gentle positive qualities (*ibid*).

The meditative practices of mindfulness are themselves based upon the practices of 'Samatha', in which the mind is calmed and unified, and 'Vipassanā', in which insight and understandings are engendered (Grossman and Van Dam, 2011). The purpose of Samatha is to alleviate desire and the purpose of Vipassanā is to eliminate ignorance (Nyanaponika, 1962). Both desire and ignorance serve to bring about and reinforce dharma (suffering). It is in the universality of human suffering that modern mindfulness is presented as a "universal dharma framework" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p296) decoupled from any "religious or dogmatic content" (MAPPG, 2015, p14).

It is in the roots of mindfulness that I identify the basis of many issues, debates and tensions in the field. For example, despite the decoupling of mindfulness from its religious roots, Kabat-Zinn (2011) links mindfulness to Soto and Rinzai approaches of Zen Buddhism. He states that his foundational and most influential Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme (MBSR) is based upon the concepts of and growth towards non-dual awareness, non-doing, non-striving, not-knowing, non-attachment and an investigation of the internal structures and process that may prevent a person from achieving experiences with such qualities. Although these concepts are rooted in Buddhism, they remain present in a secular manner in the attitudinal qualities of mindfulness (Cullen and Brito Pons, 2015).

Despite sharing concerns about the field, I also recognise the impressive nature of its development. Since 1979 it has been subject to a distinct growth in research and application. This is evident in the increasing number of mindfulness courses available (Davis and Hayes, 2012) and empirical studies undertook (Black, 2018; 2013) in the past two decades. Most of these courses and studies have focussed upon Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) courses, which themselves follow the model of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR programme but are tailored towards specific clinical or other contexts (Cullen, 2011). According to Kabat-Zinn, MBIs such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP), and Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) are "continually expanding contributions to the alleviation of suffering" (p284). Recent developments in the field have seen a distinction between first-generation (FG) and second-generation (SG) MBIs. In the former the secular nature of modern mindfulness is explicitly upheld whereas in the latter the moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of mindfulness are explicitly explored, usually from a Buddhist perspective (Shonin et al, 2015, Crane et al., 2015). Even with this distinction, the development of mindfulness has centred on the MBSR programme model with specific variants being developed and taught by a variety of teachers, myself included. Such variants now sit within the wider family of MBPs (Crane, 2016).

1.3 Growing pains

As the field developed in the past two decades, a number of important issues and debates have arisen. As the dominant model in modern mindfulness, the MBSR and its derivative programmes have been subject to a range of criticisms from differing perspectives within the field. Some claim that the decoupling of it from its spiritual and ethical roots has diluted its transformative potential (e.g. Gethin, 2013; O'Donnell, 2015; Hyland, 2015). Others, such as Ellen Langer, argue for a more secular and psychologised mindfulness and have developed programmes along these lines (Langer, 1989; 1997). Thus, it appears that there exists a spectrum of mindfulness that spans secular and

spiritual approaches (Ie, Ngnoumen and Langer, 2014). The MBSR sits somewhat mid-way between a secular, Western position and a traditional, Eastern position (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In doing so it "appeals to the universality of mindfulness notions whilst at the same time paying homage to what might be considered its natural home" (Hyland, 2015, p178).

One of the most challenging aspects of the teaching of mindfulness is to position and shape the course in response to each unique group of learners (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010). On occasions, in my own teaching, this has led to more time and activities being devoted to the philosophical and ethical components of mindfulness. On others it has led to a greater focus upon psychological, biological and scientific components. Whilst the MBSR programme model has a somewhat rigid curriculum structure (and attempts to standardise it further will be discussed in chapter 3), it does have a certain degree of flexibility. In doing so, provides the opportunity for practitioners to implement pedagogic changes and to study the effects of such changes. It is here that the teacher of mindfulness has the opportunity to contribute to the development of the pedagogy of mindfulness. However, how to proceed within a landscape fraught with the tensions alluded to here (and to be developed throughout this thesis) is a path that has been acknowledged to be difficult to tread (Crane et al., 2015). To aid in this process, I found it particularly useful to base the research within the critical realist framework and borrow from the concept of discourses in mindfulness proposed by Donald McCown and colleagues (*ibid*).

1.4 Discourses in mindfulness

Many commentators in the field have discussed the two perspectives of East and West in relation to the spectrum of mindfulness. In essence, Eastern approaches tend to be based upon a journey (within a variety of belief systems) in which meditation is the primary vehicle. In contrast, Western approaches tend to be based upon psychological mechanisms that are influenced by present-centred awareness (Djikic, 2014). Hyland

(2014) adds another useful distinction in that Eastern mindfulness is more concerned with contemplation and Western mindfulness more with reflection. These perspectives manifest themselves as two distinct discourses that, despite the MBSR being presented as a mid-way approach (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, Djikic, 2014), often conflict with each other.

A discourse, as proposed by Foucault (1981), is a body of knowledge from which expressions emerge that not only describe the knowledge but also serve to reinforce it through categorisation and sense-making (Hardy and Philips, 2004, cited in Armstrong, 2013). Through this process, a discourse governs what can be discussed, the manner in which it can be discussed, who can discuss it, where it can be discussed and what the boundaries of the discussion are (Hall, 1997). Therefore, it carries a large degree of power and when this is exerted by the authorities and gatekeepers of the discourse, it can lead to coercion and surveillance in relation to its prescribed norms (Armstrong, 2013). In relation to mindfulness, the different discourses contain differing norms and these are expressed in its practices and methods (both in terms of teaching and research) as is predicted by the concept of discourses (Lazaroiu, 2013).

In applying this concept to mindfulness further, McCown (2014) suggests that there are two other distinct discourses in the field – the Scientific and the Pedagogic. The Scientific has dominated the development of the field and is concerned with quantitative methodology, outcome-effectiveness, the mechanisms of mindfulness and defining mindfulness by exclusion. It is from this discourse that the drive for fidelity emerges in which a standardised method of teaching mindfulness is essential for the control, replication and generalisation of research findings. Such findings are crucial for the demonstration of the rigour of mindfulness and played a significant role in the growth of mindfulness in the clinical arena (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). This discourse is also the focus of much of the criticism within the field, which has resulted in a number of contemporary tensions, issues and debates that have been alluded to. Many of these criticisms have themselves emerged from the Pedagogic discourse, which is concerned with the authentic expression of the philosophy and practices of mindfulness through its pedagogy. In doing this, it is concerned with integrity to the fundamental elements of mindfulness and seeks richness and responsiveness through inclusion. Whilst these

discourses exist on different planes, they are intrinsically linked in mindfulness teaching and research (McCown, Reibel and Micozzi, 2010; McCown, 2014). This in itself is due to the evidence-based nature of mindfulness that is integral to the Scientific discourse.

Whilst the drive for increased scientific fidelity has played a major role in the increased acceptability and popularity of mindfulness in the West, I share concerns that this has been at the expense of pedagogic integrity and authenticity (O'Donnell, 2015; Hyland, 2015). Each MBP exists within the discourses and they are shaped by them. MBIs tend to sit more within the Scientific discourse, but FG-MBI and SG-MBI courses would lean further towards the Western and Eastern discourses respectively. Other MBPs embody different aspects of the discourses accordingly. This is the case for the course being studied in this research.

1.5 An Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme approach

For this research, I classify the course being studied as an Academic-Oriented Mindfulness-Based Programme (AO-MBP). The concept of an AO-MBP and the specific features of the course being studied will be detailed further in chapter 3. To introduce the concept here, it is an open-access, accredited and assessed MBSR-based course offered to staff, students and adult members of the local community at a leading higher education institution. It's academic-orientation involves having the dual aims of teaching the standard mindfulness approach, practices and techniques whilst also considering the theoretical, empirical and field-related aspects of mindfulness to a deeper degree than the standard MBSR model and many clinical MBIs.

In selecting the AO-MBP term I was particularly concerned with expressing the dual aim nature of such courses whilst also remaining faithful to the established conventions and trends in the naming of MBPs in the field. Despite being more concise, I decided that