

# CEN Virtual Workshop Report -

## “Co-Creating the Path Forward: Next Steps for the Contemplative Education Network”

27 June 2025

### 1. Framing the Field of Contemplative Education

The workshop opened with a reflection on the evolving definition of Contemplative Education (CE). The third draft of the CEN description was shared, aimed at representing a wide range of perspectives while avoiding restrictive terminology.

*“Contemplative Education” is a new branch in the field of Education that considers the philosophies and applies the practices included in the emerging field of Contemplative Studies and in the various wisdom traditions.*

*The approach of Contemplative Education, along with its related research, leads to the integration of a range of contemplative, creative, and embodied practices (such as focused meditation, yoga, taiji, etc.) in different educational settings. These practices, both conceptual and non-conceptual, aim to enhance individual awareness and support collective learning.*

*Contemplative Education can also be regarded as a field of application within the broader domain of Contemplative Studies, exploring how contemplative practices and their associated ways of knowing can be studied, examined, and transmitted within interdisciplinary spaces of knowledge exchange and cultivation, such as schools, universities, and research institutions.*

*Contemplative Education aims to foster transformative personal and interpersonal growth by cultivating attentional focus, sustained inquiry and reflection, and a broader perspective on the various contexts in which one is embedded, including family, schools, one’s work environment, communities, society, and nature.*

*Studies suggest that these approaches encourage an increased curiosity for learning and foster other-regarding virtues, including humaneness, compassion, and kindness.*

Key themes and feedback included:

- **Inclusivity vs Terminology:** Although the term “holistic” resonates with many, it was intentionally omitted to avoid exclusionary language. Instead, related concepts are embedded throughout the description.

- **Compassion and Interdependence:** Participants emphasized the need to explicitly integrate compassion and interdependence into the core definition, alongside mindfulness.
- **Historical and Pedagogical Context:** It was noted that CE must be positioned within educational lineages and not presented as an isolated innovation. Some called for acknowledgement of roots in humanistic and secular spiritual traditions.
- **Relation to Mindfulness Education:** CE was distinguished from Mindful Education by its broader scope, incorporating a diversity of contemplative practices beyond mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) or cognitive therapy (MBCT).
- **Clarity for External Audiences:** Participants stressed the importance of language that avoids spiritual jargon while remaining authentic and meaningful to diverse stakeholders.

## 2. Reports from the Working Groups

### WG 1 – Further Developing the Network

Facilitated by Chiara, this working group focused on strategies to expand and strengthen the CEN as a "network of networks." Main priorities identified by the WG and presented during the workshop:

- **Clarifying CEN's Identity and Structure:** Emphasis on an efficient, collaborative, bottom-up approach - rather than centralised governance.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** Proposed tools include a member directory, discussion forum, newsletter, and a platform for sharing news and updates.
- **In-Person Engagements:** The idea of co-locating CEN meetings at existing events or organizing dedicated gatherings was endorsed.
- **Governance and Sustainability:** Early discussions on designing models for long-term organisational resilience.
- **Synergies with Other Initiatives:** The group acknowledged overlaps with other working groups and stressed the importance of coordination.

#### Post-report comments:

- A decentralized governance model was suggested as a reference.
- Participants were invited to share technical expertise in building forums and databases.
- The need to coordinate with other related initiatives (e.g. MLI's toolkit) was raised.
- The group reaffirmed the intention to collaborate broadly while maintaining CEN's independent and bottom-up structure.

### WG 2 – Curriculum Development and Resource Sharing

Josipa presented this group's early reflections on how to aggregate and curate educational resources within the CE community.

Main priorities identified by the WG and further discussed during the workshop:

- **Comprehensive Resource Mapping:** There is a need to catalogue existing CE materials in a culturally sensitive, structured, and evidence-based manner.
- **Platform Development:** Suggestions included creating a dual-function platform that supports both communication and resource sharing.
- **Coordination with Other Groups:** This group intends to collaborate closely with WG1 to avoid duplication and streamline efforts.
- **Future Directions:** While building a curriculum was acknowledged as a long-term goal, the immediate focus remains on collecting and organising existing resources.
- **Research Emphasis:** Several participants advocated for forming a distinct research-focused subgroup to examine educational outcomes and assessment challenges unique to CE.

**Post-report comments:**

- The overlap with WG1 was acknowledged and will be addressed through coordination.
- Reviewing existing repositories in adjacent fields was recommended as inspiration.
- Volunteers are needed to help build infrastructure and curate content.
- There was discussion about whether to collect only members' resources or broader content.
- A proposal emerged to separate technical/database tasks from curriculum and research.
- The challenge of measuring CE outcomes was highlighted, cautioning against oversimplification.
- Involving librarians or learning centers for support in organizing resources was suggested.
- Emphasis was placed on pedagogy and educational theory as a foundational element.

## **WG 3 – Mentoring and Support Systems**

Led by Hal, this WG aims to design mechanisms for mutual support and mentorship among CE practitioners and scholars.

Main priorities identified by the WG and further discussed during the workshop:

- **Mentorship Survey:** A Google Form was developed to collect information on mentoring offers and needs from network members.
- **Scope and Inclusivity:** Discussions addressed whether to limit mentoring to formal education or also include informal educators, parents, and professionals.
- **Diverse Mentorship Models:** Emphasis was placed on collective mentorship and peer-accountability networks rather than traditional hierarchical models.
- **Training and Safety:** Participants raised concerns about the appropriate training of educators delivering contemplative practices, calling for quality assurance mechanisms.

**Post-report comments:**

- It was suggested to assess interest and capacity for mentoring from both mentors and mentees.
- Questions were raised about whether mentoring should include non-formal educators (e.g. parents, business leaders).
- Concerns emerged around teachers lacking background in contemplative practice and the potential risks.
- A proposal was made to establish minimum competency criteria for educators.
- Smaller focus groups or thematic subgroups were encouraged to provide more personalized and confidential support.
- A multi-mentor model was recommended, where mentees connect with different individuals for different needs.
- Pairing mentors and mentees based on professional stages (e.g. junior vs tenured) was considered valuable.

## WG 4 – Advocacy and Awareness

This group, guided by Gábor, focused on articulating CE's relevance to broader audiences and stakeholders.

Main priorities identified by the WG and further discussed during the workshop:

- **Strategic Messaging:** Advocacy efforts must uphold contemplative integrity while being culturally sensitive and context-specific.
- **Target Audiences:** Schools, universities, policymakers, funders, and parents were identified as key targets for outreach.
- **Narratives over Data:** There was strong support for highlighting lived experience, storytelling, and real-world case studies over purely data-driven approaches.
- **Contemplative Manifesto:** A potential output of this WG is a shared position paper articulating the values and societal importance of CE.
- **Language Considerations:** Terms like “mindfulness” may be more accessible than “contemplative” in certain regions (e.g., Switzerland), underscoring the importance of translation and localization strategies.

### Post-report comments:

- The importance of adapting language to cultural contexts was emphasized.
- Difficulty in integrating CE into formal curricula was noted; currently, it often fits under student wellness programs.
- Training local “ambassadors” to communicate CE effectively within their own contexts was proposed.
- Real-life examples (e.g. case studies) were seen as powerful tools for implementation and advocacy.
- Storytelling and lived experience were considered more impactful than data in outreach.
- Concerns were expressed about CE being perceived as tied to Buddhist or religious frameworks.
- Scientific legitimacy (e.g. data) was acknowledged as helpful, but should not overshadow lived experience.

- There was a call to articulate the deep “why” of CE to policymakers and funders without diluting its essence.
- Changing mental models and systems thinking were identified as crucial to educational and societal transformation.

### 3. Closing Remarks and Next Steps

- **Continued Engagement:** Participants were encouraged to join one or more working groups by emailing the CEN team - [contemplative.ed.network@gmail.com](mailto:contemplative.ed.network@gmail.com)
- **Next CEN Virtual Workshop:** Scheduled for 19 September 2025 (3:00–5:30 PM CEST / 9:00–11:30 AM EST).
- **Ongoing WGs Meetings:** Working Groups will continue their activities during the summer; updates and invitations will be shared via the CEN mailing list and webpage - <https://contemplative-education.com/>