What Shall Contemplative Education and Our Network Become?

Contemplative Education Network Provisional Steering Committee

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PLANTING THE SEED OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION NETWORK

June 19-23, 2024
Padova, Italy

ISCR
2nd ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

DREAMING ABOUT A NETWORK

The key motivation:

the need for a consistent space to gather

and share ideas, scholarship and research

STARTING TAKING ACTION

We formed a provisional steering committee
to start exploring how a collaborative
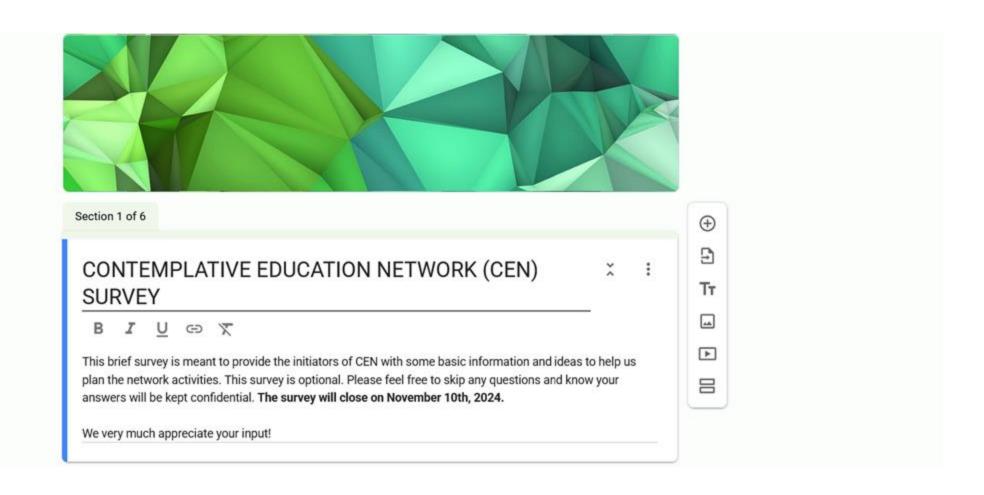and interdisciplinary network could begin taking action

POTENTIAL AIMS FOR THE NETWORK
WORK IN PROGRESS

- building a community

- having a consistent place to meet and forge international exchanges and collaborations

- cross-fertilization of sciences and humanities approaches to CE from pre-school to post-secondary settings

- upgrading of CE scholarship and research

- working on models and standards for CE programs at various levels, with CE pedagogical manuals for curricula

- fostering scientific documentation on the societal impact of CE, to be presented to law-making bodies for support
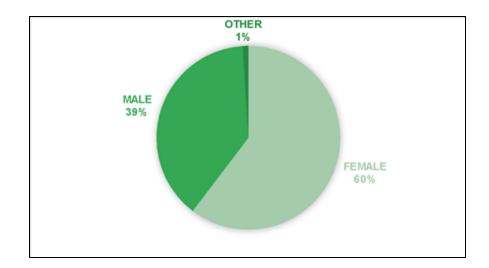
CEN SURVEY to launch the Network
June - November 2024

CEN SURVEY
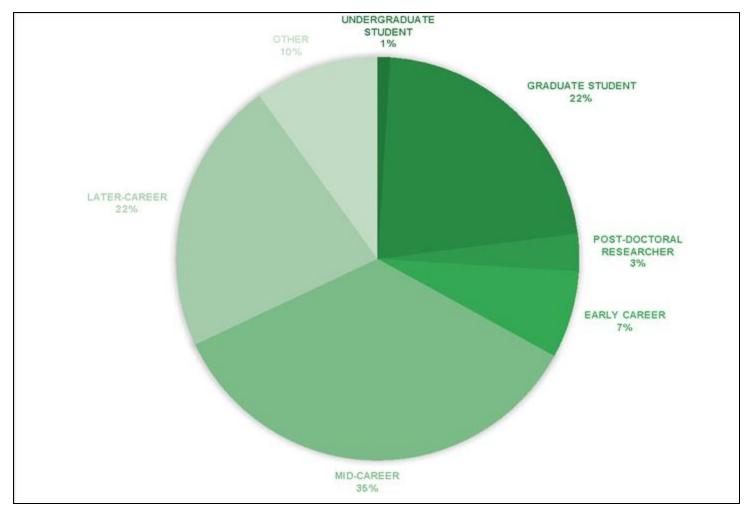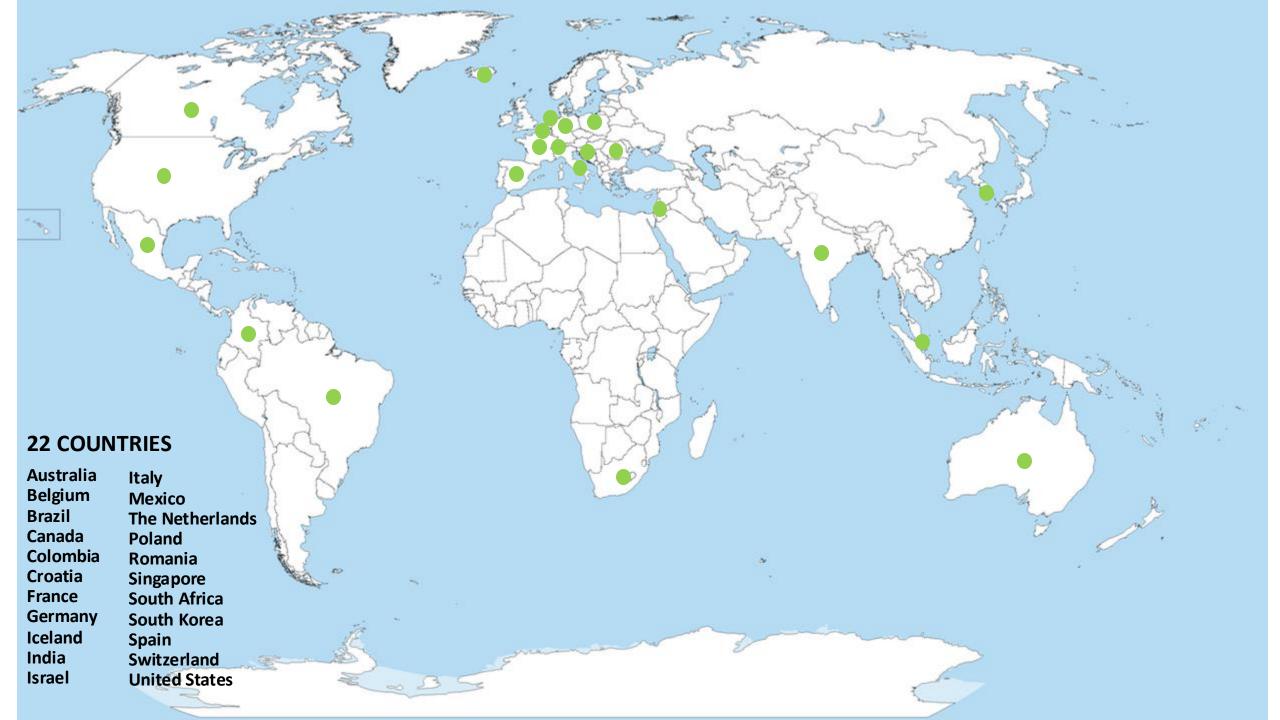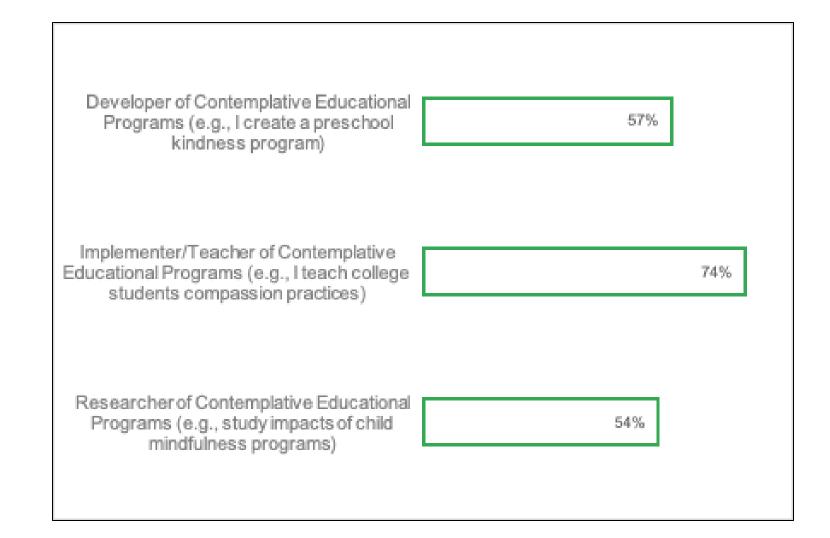## participants

N=100
M age=48,89

22 COUNTRIES

Australia
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
Colombia
Croatia
France
Germany
Iceland
India
Israel

Italy
Mexico
The Netherlands
Poland
Romania
Singapore
South Africa
South Korea
Spain
Switzerland
United States

Developmental Science
Cognitive Neurosciences
Education
Education, Psychology, Religious Studies
Creative Arts Education & Practice - Literature,
Performance
Psychology
Gerontology and health
Psychology, contemplative research
History
Contemporary art history and theory
Psychology/Social work
Contemplative practice
Religious Studies
Education / Organizational Theory & Culture
Psychology, contemplative practice, education, social
and emotional learning
Chinese and comparative philosophy
Education / History
Mindfulness, Organizational Behavior
Religious studies

Contemplative studies
Computational Cognitive Neuroscience
Philosophy
Cognitive science of religion
Composition
Clinical Psychology
Open, Digital & Distance Education
Contemplative science
Contemplative Studies; Religious Studies, East Asian
Studies
Contemplative Education
South Asian Religious Studies
School Psychology
Psychology/Religious Studies
Philosophy, education
Philosophy of Education & Contemplative Education
Contemplative education
Prevention science
Communications, public affairs
Comparative Literature; Interdisciplinary Humanities;
Liberal Education

PROFESSIONAL ROLE VIS A VIS CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION

Developer of Contemplative Educational Programs (e.g., I create a preschool kindness program) — **57%**

Implementer/Teacher of Contemplative Educational Programs (e.g., I teach college students compassion practices) — **74%**

Researcher of Contemplative Educational Programs (e.g., study impacts of child mindfulness programs) — **54%**

PRIMARY AGE OF INTEREST IN CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION

Post-Secondary-Education — 91%

Secondary Education — 54%

Pre-Primary and Primary Education — 58%

SURVEY ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION:

How would you define contemplative education?

Holistic Development

- Contemplative education is framed as a holistic approach to learning, emphasizing the development of the *whole person*—not only intellectually, but also emotionally, socially, ethically, and spiritually. This theme focuses on the integration of multiple dimensions of human experience (body, mind, heart, spirit) into the educational process, fostering personal growth that transcends academic achievement.

- **Keywords**: Whole person, holistic, body-mind connection, emotional development, spiritual growth.

- **Examples**: *"Education that prepares you for life, not just a job"; "Cultivation of ethical values/attitudes"; "A way of learning in which mind is connected with feelings, emotions, and body."*

Self-Awareness and Reflection

- A core theme - the importance of developing self-awareness through reflection. Contemplative education encourages students to engage in introspective practices that help them observe their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This self-awareness is intended to foster personal transformation, ethical reasoning, and deeper understanding.

- **Keywords**: Self-awareness, reflection, introspection, personal transformation.

- **Examples**: *"The ongoing process of getting to know oneself and the present moment"; "Fostering self-awareness, emotional growth, and holistic development"; "Education that helps students connect with their inner selves."*

Meditation Practices

- Mindfulness, meditation, and other contemplative practices emerge as central tools in this educational approach. These practices are used to develop attention, focus, compassion, emotional intelligence, and mental clarity. They support students in cultivating a state of presence, enhancing their ability to engage with both academic content and their personal experiences.

- **Keywords**: Mindfulness, meditation, contemplative practices, presence.

- **Examples**: *"Using contemplative practices such as meditation and mindfulness exercises in the classroom"; "Education that equips students with tools to find meaning"*

Compassion and Empathy

- A consistent theme across the text is the cultivation of compassion and empathy. Contemplative education aims to nurture a caring attitude towards oneself, others, and the world. By developing emotional intelligence and mindfulness, students are encouraged to understand and respond with kindness and compassion to their own experiences and the experiences of others.

- **Keywords**: Compassion, empathy, kindness, emotional intelligence.

- **Examples**: *"Teaching caring and compassion for self and others"; "Promoting kindness and compassion to address the challenges of modern life."*

Existential and Ethical Exploration

- Contemplative education is often seen as a means of engaging with deep existential and ethical questions. It encourages students to reflect on fundamental questions of identity, meaning, and how to live a good life. This theme is intertwined with self-awareness, as students are encouraged to explore their values, motivations, and ethical considerations, both individually and collectively.

- **Keywords**: Existential, ethical, meaning, identity, values, how to live.

- **Examples**: *"Who am I? Who are we? How are we to live?"; "Education that allows us to be in contact with something greater"; "The exploration of mind/body/interpersonal practices that support one's emotional, relational, and ethical development."*

Transformation and Flourishing

- The theme of personal transformation is central to contemplative education. It seeks to foster enduring personal growth and human flourishing (eudaimonia). Students are encouraged to engage with their own potential, transcend conditioned habits of mind, and develop capacities for greater authenticity, resilience, and well-being. This transformation is often framed as not just individual but collective, aiming for societal improvement.

- **Keywords**: Transformation, flourishing, resilience, authenticity, eudaimonia.

- **Examples**: *"Equipping students with tools to live a better life"; "Contemplative education as a force for collective transformation."*

Mind-Body Integration

- Integration of *mind and body*. Contemplative education emphasizes learning that involves both intellectual and embodied experience. Practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and reflective exercises are used to connect cognitive processes with physical sensations and emotional responses, encouraging a deeper, more integrated understanding of learning.

- **Keywords**: Mind-body connection, embodied learning, integrated learning.

- **Examples**: *"Learning created by embodied experience"; "Combining body-mind dimensions in learning processes"*

Social Awareness and Justice

- Contemplative education is seen as a vehicle for promoting social awareness and addressing social injustices. By developing self-awareness and compassion, students are equipped to engage with the world in a more empathetic and ethical manner, contributing to broader social change. Many definitions mention the potential of contemplative education to address inequities, promote sustainability, and foster a more just society.

- **Keywords**: Social awareness, justice, social change, sustainability, equity.

- **Examples**: *"Education that promotes greater clarity and deeper understanding of ourselves and systems and cultures we are a part of to support more joy, peace, and equity"; "The emerging field to create a new human society"*

Inquiry and Critical Thinking

- While contemplative education emphasizes mindfulness and reflection, it also values critical thinking and intellectual inquiry. Several contributors mention that contemplative education complements conventional education by encouraging a deeper level of inquiry, not only into academic content but also into one's personal and ethical worldview. It promotes a balanced approach that integrates reflection with critical analysis.

- **Keywords**: Inquiry, critical thinking, intellectual exploration, reflective inquiry.

- **Examples**: *"Integrating contemplation with critical thinking"; "Contemplative education complements conventional education with clarity and compassion"*

Lifelong Learning

- Contemplative education is framed as a *lifelong journey* of growth and self-discovery. This theme emphasizes that the practices and insights gained through contemplative education should extend beyond formal schooling into adult life. The ongoing process of reflection, mindfulness, and personal transformation is viewed as essential for continued well-being and development.

- **Keywords**: Lifelong learning, ongoing development, self-discovery, continuous growth.

- **Examples**: *"Contemplative education as a lifelong path"; "The process of personal development aimed at flourishing"; "The ongoing process of getting to know oneself and the present moment."*

Educational Environment and Pedagogy

- Contemplative education is not only about content but also about the environment and the *pedagogical methods* employed. Many contributors stress the importance of creating a space for reflection and mindfulness within the classroom and beyond. The approach involves a pedagogy that encourages presence, attentiveness, and deep listening, fostering a learning environment where both students and teachers can engage in the reflective process together.

- **Keywords**: Pedagogy, educational environment, teaching practices, presence.

- **Examples**: *"A quality of presence in teaching and learning"; "Teaching and learning of, with, through, and as a form of contemplative practice."*

IN BRIEF

Holistic Development

Self-Awareness and Reflection

Meditation Practices

Compassion and Empathy

Existential and Ethical Exploration

Transformation and Flourishing

Mind-Body Integration

Social Awareness and Justice

Inquiry and Critical Thinking

Lifelong Learning

Educational Environment and Pedagogy

SURVEY ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION:

What are your ideas
for what our network should focus on?

Community Building and Networking

Focus on Collaboration: A need for creating networks to share research, methods, and practices.

E.g., "A community of researchers and teachers to share ideas, studies, and experiences."

Supportive Communities: Building a supportive space that balances encouragement and constructive critique.

E.g., "Creating a community that is supportive but allows space for challenge."

Global Engagement: Interest in fostering international collaboration and cultural exchange.

E.g., "Comparing notes, voicing challenges, and obtaining feedback globally."

Research and Evidence-Based Approaches

Rigorous Research Needs: There is an emphasis on developing scientific methods to measure the impact of contemplative practices and conduct outcome-based studies.

E.g., "Continued research on effectiveness and processes."

Policy Impact: Evidence-based findings are considered vital for influencing educational policies.

E.g., "Speaking with Educational Ministries (having scientific evidence) to bring contemplative education to the curricula."

Practical Implementation

Integration in Curricula: Practical methods for embedding contemplative practices across different levels of education (K-12 to post-secondary education).

E.g., "Identifying most effective contemplative practices to use developmentally."

Developmental Appropriateness: Exploring which practices work for specific age groups and cultural contexts.

E.g., "Developing curricula for each age group."

Overcoming Modern Challenges: Addressing contemporary obstacles like short attention spans and cultural barriers.

E.g., "Practices to assist with fragmented attention spans."

Teacher Training and Capacity Building

Focus on Educators: Training teachers to embody contemplative practices and to disseminate them effectively.

E.g., "Providing training and support for those developing contemplative education practices."

Resource Sharing: Developing and sharing tools, materials, and workshops to help teachers and educators.

E.g., "Collaborative development of materials, activities, and practices."

Ethical and Philosophical Considerations

Cultural Sensitivity: Ensuring contemplative practices respect cultural, religious, and secular contexts.

E.g., "Fostering diversity in religious and cultural practices."

Balancing Secular and Spiritual Values: Exploring how to integrate contemplative practices while respecting secular educational environments.

E.g., "Exploring the secular ethical basis for contemplative education."

Broader Aspirations

Transformative Education: Positioning contemplative practices as tools for systemic change, personal growth, and social transformation.

E.g., "Using contemplative practices to support more joy, peace, and equity in our world."

Interdisciplinary Integration: Expanding contemplative education into diverse fields such as law, sociology, and STEM.

E.g., "Showing how contemplative education can be integrated into all disciplines."

Recurring Challenges

Scalability vs. Fidelity

How to scale contemplative practices across large systems without losing their depth and authenticity.

Cultural and Contextual Adaptation

Balancing universal principles of mindfulness and meditation with diverse cultural and individual needs.

Evidence and Policy

Demonstrating impact through scientific evidence to gain broader acceptance in mainstream education.

Overcoming Resistance

Addressing misconceptions and skepticism from educators, policymakers, and parents.

Opportunities for Development

Establish	**Establish a Knowledge Repository** •Create virtual libraries and platforms for sharing best practices, resources, and research findings.
Promote	**Promote Cross-Cultural Dialogue** •Host symposia and conferences to advance global and transdisciplinary conversations.
Build	**Build Teacher Training Programs** •Develop mentorship programs, workshops, and certifications to empower educators.
Create	**Create Scalable Models** •Design pilot projects and frameworks that can be adapted and implemented at varying scales.
Strengthen	**Strengthen Research and Advocacy** •Develop collaborative studies that inform evidence-based policymaking and address common critiques.
Foster	**Foster Systemic Change** •Leverage contemplative systems thinking to address broader educational challenges such as mental health, social justice, and global crises.