



Book Reviews

One aspect that the three books in this reviews section have in common is the absolute dedication of the authors to their topic. Both Kevin Hawkins and Amy Burke, authors of *The Mindful Teacher's Toolkit: Awareness-based Wellbeing in Schools*, have worked internationally with children and young people and with teachers in developing awareness-based well-being through mindfulness and social-emotional learning (SEL), so they bring to their book a wealth of experience and deep knowledge of the theory and practice of mindfulness across cultures. Kevin and Amy are also co-founders of *MindWell Education* - www.mindwell-education.com - a network of resources and ideas for good practice. Similarly, Murli Desai & Sheetal Goel, authors of *Child Rights Education for Participation and Development*, build on the idealism of the Child Rights and You (CRY) movement founded in India in the 1970s by the late Rippa Kapur who was committed to the values of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and justice, as well as child rights principles, such as the right to participation, the right to education, the right to be free of discrimination and violence, and the right to play and recreation. Finally, Ken Rigby, author of *Multiperspectivity on School Bullying: One Pair of Eyes is not Enough*, has devoted his life to understanding the phenomenon of school bullying through his work as a teacher, as a lecturer, as a trainer and workshop leader, as an author and as a researcher.

These authors have a vision of a better world and express their commitment to disseminating their values at a time of acute anxiety about social and political issues and fears for the very future of our environment. Each recognizes the complexity of the issue that they are concerned with. Each is aware that, despite years of research and practice, the challenging issues that they face are not easily resolved. Despite this, with their erudition and commitment, they inspire the reader to continue the struggle against such aspects of the human condition as insensitivity to others' feelings, abuse of power, lack of self-awareness, perpetration of injustice and social exclusion of vulnerable individuals or groups.

Helen Cowie
Reviews Editor

1. *The Mindful Teacher's Toolkit: Awareness-based Wellbeing in Schools.*

Author:

Kevin Hawkins & Amy Burke

Publisher:

Sage/ Corwin, Thousand Oaks, California: USA

Year of Publication:

2021

ISBN:

978-1-5297-3177-4 (hbk), 978-1-5297-3176-7 (pbk)

The book is divided into four distinct sections: *Introduction*, *Teaching Mindful Awareness*, *Embedding Mindful Awareness* and *Conclusion*.

The *Introduction* guides the reader through the practice of mindfulness, recommending that teachers too take time to develop their own self-awareness, capacity for emotional regulation and concern for their mental health and emotional well-being. This, the authors argue, is an essential part of the process since the experience of mindfulness is likely to change the teachers' perspectives on life, work and relationships. The authors base this belief on their own experience as teachers and workshop leaders as well as their knowledge of the research findings in the field. They are also aware of the huge changes that are taking place in the world today at a time of global warming, mass migration due to wars and economic adversity, the COVID pandemic, systemic racism, and other burning issues. All the more need, they argue, to help the next generation to be equipped emotionally and intellectually to address these world-wide problems, and to develop their inner subjective selves as well as their capacity to relate with sensitivity to other people from different cultures. This eloquent justification for their approach to education sets the scene for how the teacher might begin to put the ideas into practice.

In *Teaching Mindful Awareness*, the authors present an impressive range of activities carefully designed for children and adolescents at each stage of their development.

The chapter by guest author Krysten Fort-Catanese shows us how to introduce the concept of mindfulness to pre-schoolers, for example, by blowing bubbles, moving feathers in the air, encouraging active listening to the sounds around them, and focussing on natural materials like pebbles and stones. There is also guidance on how to create a 'calm corner' where children can take care of their own emotional needs as they arise every day in the classroom by revisiting the mindfulness materials, like the glitter jar, that they themselves have created. The next section builds on this early learning with many imaginative ideas that are adapted and extended to take account of the needs and interests of students at different ages and capabilities by continuing, for example, to focus on their senses, making use of relevant resources in music and story-telling, and guiding them as they become increasingly aware of their inner and outer experiences. In this way, the teacher can continue to develop the children's attentional skills and self-awareness as they progress through the education system.

Of course, this process is not without its hazards and the authors have a lengthy section in which they provide guidance on how to address understandable anxieties on the part of teachers that their students will misbehave during mindfulness sessions. Potential difficulties are explored through a series of questions and answers and illustrated with case studies drawn from the authors' own wide experience.

They build on this in the third section, *How to Embed Mindful Awareness* into the culture of the school. The examples come from such activities as sport and performance. Here the authors draw on the theory and practice of coaching, based on research and practice in the field of sports psychology, but in fact the principles can apply to any area of the young person's learning and creativity, and their capacity to work in teams. The case study material drawn from different cultures is illuminating as are the suggestions for further reading and study.

In the *Conclusion*, the authors align their approach to mindfulness in educational contexts with the wider issues of societal and environmental change. They urge the need for awareness that is directed at finding new ways to live together and in harmony with one another. This is a laudable ambition in which they affirm the links between self, others, and the rest of the world. They acknowledge that their approach is but one piece of a larger jigsaw. Possibly here they could have invoked Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of development which takes account of the wider social issues such as inequality, disadvantage, social exclusion of minorities, oppression of certain groups and cultures, and the historical events that form part of the collective memory of a nation or a social group within that country. This final section in my view could form the basis for another book where they could build on the concept of 'global' awareness and strengthen their argument about the links between mindfulness and social change. I was more convinced by their examples of the practice of cultivating mindful 'leadership' in education. The case study of awareness-based systems change in schools in Amsterdam is particularly illuminating. The authors also commend the growing emphasis on well-being in the curriculum, some of which has arisen directly from the adversity experienced by so many during the COVID pandemic.

There is so much in this book that it is impossible to do it justice in a short review. I recommend that you read and re-read it for its practical advice, its vision and the dreams for the future of our society.

2. *Child Rights Education for Participation and Development.*

Author:	Murli Desai & Sheetal Goel
Publisher:	Springer, Singapore
Year of Publication:	2018
ISBN:	978-981-13-4297-4 (pbk), 978-981-10-9007-3 (ebk)

This book is the second in the series of source books *Rights-Based Practice with Children* which have grown out of the Child Rights and You (CRY) movement founded in the 1970s by the late Rippa Kapur. The contents of each of the books in the series have been piloted with children and parents in eight states in India where CRY has already been implemented. The book has a comprehensive introduction on a rights-based vision for children's well-being. Useful charts and tables summarise such important concepts as child citizenship and children's fundamental rights. The authors devote space too to the issue of balancing rights with responsibilities. Interesting examples of this approach in practice include descriptions of child workers' unions, children's parliaments, children's culture and media clubs, school councils.

This book would be especially useful for trainers and researchers working on child rights issues in developing countries, but the message is also relevant to Western countries where disadvantaged children are too often denied their fundamental rights. The vision of the CRY founder was that all children should have access to free, high-quality education, primary healthcare, adequate nutrition and safety from domestic abuse and exploitation.

The ideology of the book is grounded in the values and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf> Each Unit contains one or more activities/discussion points that the trainer can adapt to the relevant target group, whether students, parents, teachers, social workers, or others who work directly with children and young people. The materials are varied and imaginative, including case studies, videos, stories, charts, graphs, and summaries of key concepts. There is also a reference list for those who wish to take each topic further.

The section on child participation through children's associations is relevant to all children and young people in its exploration of empowerment through organisations and networks as an effective way of helping them to become active citizens.

In my view, the activities are relevant for use in both developing and developed countries. However, some adaptation would be necessary since many of the illustrative examples come from workshops run in India. But the knowledge and vision of the authors shines through, making this a thought-provoking book for all who work with children.

3. *Multiperspectivity on School Bullying: One Pair of Eyes is not Enough.*

Author:	Ken Rigby
Publisher:	Routledge, UK, USA
Year of Publication:	2022
ISBN:	978-1-138-21075-2 (hbk), 978-1-032-08106-9 (pbk), 978-1-315-45445-0 (ebk)

Ken Rigby, pioneer researcher into the causes and outcomes of school bullying behaviour, has excelled himself in his latest book, the fourth in the series *The Mental Health and Well-being of Children and Adolescents*, edited by Garry Hornby. Here, Ken Rigby explores a range of perspectives on the phenomenon by taking account of the views and experiences of children and young people, their parents/carers, teachers, researchers, and policy makers. He also draws on his extensive knowledge of psychology, sociology, philosophy, literature, and history. Each section is illustrated with lively case studies, figures, graphs, drawings, tables, as well as discussion points. His experience as a gifted communicator is evident and his voice comes through clearly in each chapter.

He advocates the position of ‘multiperspectivity’ from which to view events as other people see them and really attend to what they are saying. Part 1 (38 pages only) is devoted to an analysis of what the concept of ‘multiperspectivity’ is. Part 2 (118 pages) presents a range of perspectives on bullying which provide the reader with deeper insights into definitions of bullying over time; Ken Rigby also indicates the importance of taking account of differences in attitudes towards violence and aggression in contrasting cultures and throughout history. It becomes clear that each representative group has different ways of viewing bullying. Researchers, for a start, have a range of theoretical positions from which they interpret their empirical findings. These inevitably influence the guidance that these investigators create for those who daily try to counteract bullying in their schools or communities and Ken Rigby does not minimise the challenge that these different solutions to the problem present to teachers and parents, let alone the victims of bullying who are suffering in their everyday experience at school. Then there are cultural factors that have a strong influence on how bullying is viewed; some cultures are more individualistic than others and so perceptions of bullying are bound to differ.

One point of agreement for most practitioners and researchers, he argues, is the value of a whole-school approach to the issue. But more controversial is his assertion, based on evidence from surveys of children and young people, that teachers do not make enough time in class to talk about peer relationship difficulties. Many teachers would disagree. It is interesting too that the interventions he cites, on the basis of another survey comparing Australia with the UK, typically involve sanctions or ‘zero tolerance’ against the

bully as well as some form of restorative practice, while non-confronting approaches, such as the Method of Shared Concern, are less frequently used, despite evidence that they are effective. Furthermore, Ken Rigby reports on quite widespread scepticism on the part of teachers about the impact of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) methods on reducing bullying behaviour. He is also negative about the value of peer support despite considerable evidence that, when systematically applied and consistently supervised by dedicated teachers, it helps victims and is perceived to improve the climate of the school. Here more reference to the research of Christina Salmivalli and her colleagues on participant roles in bullying would have been appropriate, as would have been the success of interventions such as KiVa in Finland where peer support plays a central part.

Having proposed the need for multiperspectivity, Ken Rigby is finally faced with the task of reaching a conclusion. This is easier said than done and it is perhaps disappointing that there is no real resolution of the issue, other than the advice to keep an open mind and try to take the perspective of others whenever possible. Perhaps in his next book Ken Rigby will offer an integration of approaches and interventions as applied in different cultures and communities. Perhaps he will evaluate the contributions and partnerships of researchers and educators in a range of social contexts. Perhaps too he will offer us more on the participation of children and young people as they identify the 'active ingredients' that promote well-being and supportive relationships in schools and that create inclusive environments which celebrate diversity in all its forms.

Helen Cowie

Reviews Editor

Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Surrey