Prince T. (2019). Mindfulness exercises for the class. 100 practical ideas: Madrid: Narcea

By José V. Merino Fernández

This book is both, innovative and traditional. It is traditional because it recovers and activates a series of ideas and processes that were forgotten by the cognitivists and academicism. It is also innovative because it adapts and focuses those ideas and dynamics in accurate exercises for the classroom.

Mindfulness, (generally translated to Spanish as ‘atención plena’ o ‘plena consciencia’), is it a fashion? Is it a conceptual trend? Perhaps, as the analysis conducted by Ronald Purser suggests, it is a market manoeuver disguised under the ruse of a new spirituality, focused on living in the present moment regardless of past or future. Is it a simple word to emphasize traditional processes such as concentration, meditation orientated to the self-conscience, emotional education, integral education, etc., that were abandoned for years? Is it a psychotherapeutic and educative resource needed in order to regain the internal balance and drive away dysfunctions and other vital issues (stress, existential dissatisfaction, anxiety, pain, sickness..) acquired due to the speed of events happening in the current world? A speed that forces people to change their life into some accelerated existential race in which we feel immersed in permanent competition.

Whatever the answer to these questions, and notwithstanding the naivety of those who defend mindfulness as a revolution, that is going to save the world from a catastrophe, it is true that currently there is a need for ways and tools to not be dragged down by over-information that appears as fast as it disappears. This tormenting and dizzying peculiarity of the current world is generating situations that affect the normal development of infancy, producing stress, anxiety, emotional tantrums or attention deficit between others that affect not only the infancy, but also the rest of the population.

Those practicing mindfulness have reported improvements to their wellbeing because it supports the development of positive socialization processes that help people to be, instead of to have. These processes are necessary in order to activate in each of us, skills to defend ourselves from the thoughtlessness associated to the stressing race of having more, without considering how or when. In summary, when faced with this ‘Kleenex’ culture of using and throwing away knowledge, information, relationships, stuff, etc., practicing mindfulness offers ideas and tools to not be drawn into this tide. This is because it helps us to observe and use by ourselves our internal potential and the present experience. It also helps us to transform the external elements in positive energy that is valuable for the personal processes of humanizing self-realization and to act being aware of every single day.

The book introduces us to 100 exercises of mindfulness for use in the classroom. These exercises are structured into ten chapters that include: breathing, guided meditation, active meditation, gratefulness, yoga, emotional intelligence, mindful colours and scrawl, calming down and relaxing, mindful walking and mindfulness for teachers.

How can I use the book? To be able to answer that question, it is important to consider the title of the book: 100 practical ideas. The mindfulness exercises developed in the book are focused and directly applicable while there are a source of ideas and processes than allow users to adapt it to other situations. Not in vain, at the end of each exercise there are two sections: a) Practical tips (b) further ideas.

The learners, the education professionals and teachers, the parents and anyone who is willing to learn the ideas, dynamics and strategies of mindfulness, will find this book a valuable and multivalent material. This works for both active learning and for emotional issue management. Using this book only as a vademecum would be a mistake, as the practical ideas of each exercise are as useful as the exercise itself. This is why the book has a double value:

1. *practical*: it develops specific exercises applicable in the classroom.
2. theoretical/practical: extracts and adapts ideas and strategies of each exercise towards new situations of self-observation, knowledge, experimentation and calm control of oneself. This allows us to know and control ourselves and therefore the environment instead of it being the environment that controls us.

There are many voices that denounce the lack of educational content in the school, as it has been kidnapped by the dominant academicism exteriorized in endless curricula. This book takes one step towards offering tools of personal development that can be integrated in the school day.