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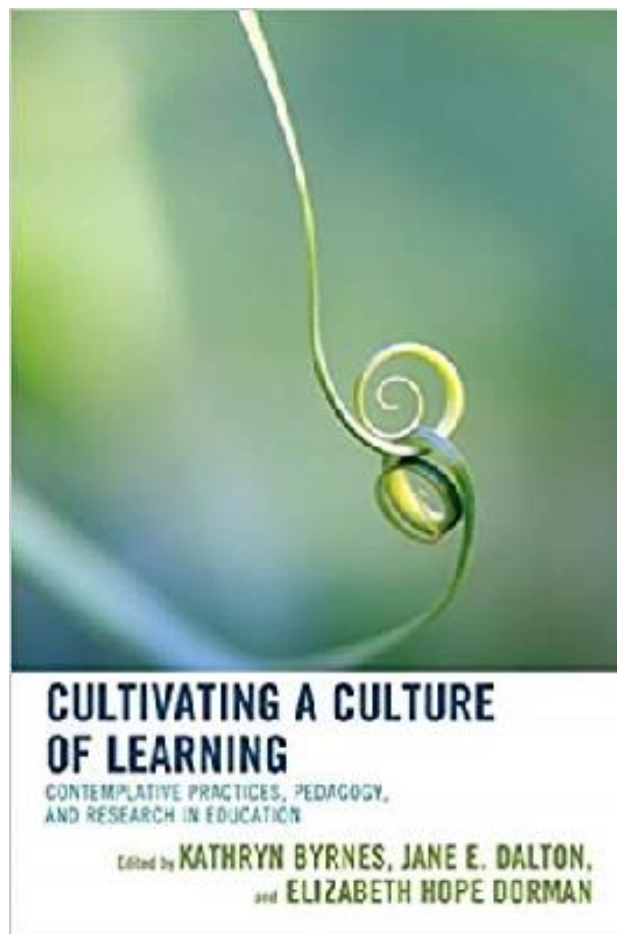
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Contemplative practices and mindfulness are quickly becoming buzzwords in education and in many other disciplines that promote mental and physical health. *Cultivating a Culture of Learning: Contemplative Practices, Pedagogy, and Research in Education* is the first in a series of a three-volume set of edited books that provides ways to prepare preservice teachers to implement contemplative practices in their lives. This review focuses on the first volume of the series.

Mindfulness is an innate human quality that can be more fully developed through contemplative practices. To be mindful is to be fully present, in the moment while experiencing life. Often while multitasking in our daily lives, we do things without much thought. Being mindful means that we pay attention to what we are doing while we are doing it. Contemplative practices such as meditation, doing yoga or tai chi, using visualization techniques, journaling, or sitting quietly and focusing on one's breathing are all examples of slowing down and being in the moment and becoming more centered or



mindful. Contemplative pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that focuses on helping a student make personal connections with what they are learning so that the learning becomes more meaningful. This pedagogy is supported by contemplative practices. This book offers strategies that have been incorporated into preservice teacher education programs, and it describes how these practices were received and how students benefited from these meaningful experiences. The contributors to this collection assert that a culture of learning was developed and supported by these contemplative practices.

Citing Owen-Smith (2004), and Waxler and Hall (2011), the editors proposed that the integration of both academic knowledge and emotional connectedness is required to prepare educators fully for their future profession. This book was written with the assumption that traditional teacher preparation programs may be neglecting the development of non-academic teacher qualities that are essential for teacher longevity. Both teacher competence and teacher resilience are key to teacher longevity. Traditionally, teacher education programs have provided limited opportunities for preservice teachers to build resilience. This book offers ways to integrate contemplative practices into teacher education programs with little disruption to their focus on academic preparation.

The front cover of the book captures the reader's attention by taking the first step toward cultivating a culture of learning through contemplative processes. The attractive green, blue, and yellow hues of the cover provide a canvas of peace and tranquility. By closely examining the cover of the book, the reader can prepare to begin a personal journey toward developing a greater awareness of the power of introspection, reflection, and contemplative practice.

This book addresses the need to provide emotional support for preservice and current

teachers alike. Through contemplative practices, preservice teachers may build resilience and be able to model the benefits of contemplative practices to cultivate a culture of learning with their students. Four themes appear throughout the eight chapters: a) opening oneself to the processes of reflection, introspection, and mindfulness through contemplative pedagogy; b) seeking to understand oneself and others by challenging the origins of one's understandings; c) developing a deep sense of self and purpose within an interconnected global society to foster an openness to new perspectives through deep listening and authentic dialogue; and d) caring for oneself internally and externally through mindfulness training. These themes are embedded throughout the teaching and modeling examples of contemplative practices implemented in undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs. Many of the strategies could also be easily implemented in preservice teacher programs.

The chapters were written by university professors. A common goal of these authors was to provide preservice teachers an opportunity to experience and utilize contemplative practices to enhance their mindfulness. The purpose of developing these attributes (mindfulness and contemplative practices) is to foster internal resources to cope with the stresses that future teachers are likely to experience as well as to promote a greater awareness and understanding of themselves and of others.

Guiding preservice teachers to listen to their inner-selves and to the voices of others, the authors have attempted to broaden the minds of the preservice educators and develop cultures of learning that extend beyond the college classroom. In chapter three, *Reframing How We Think About Learning*, students were taught to use a *Four-Source Model*. This model assisted the preservice teachers in "learning from one's teacher, oneself, one's peers and with time" (p. 23). The purpose of this model was to help the preservice teachers develop a

deeper understanding of how they learn and grow, and to utilize it to develop their contemplative practices.

Diversity and context are also themes explored in this book. One contributor describes how “contemplative pedagogies can foster learning experiences that encourage future teachers to become more effective and inclusive educators by approaching each educational situation and relationship in its context and on its own merits” (p. 32). The preservice teachers in this chapter attended school in West Virginia in rural Appalachia. Contemplative and mindful inquiry practices were utilized so that students “... learn[ed] to speak for and define themselves, recognize the voices and uniqueness of others, value this interplay of diversity, and transcend the narratives that have been spun to constrain their interactions” (p. 32). The goal of these activities was to help the students “recognize the narratives that they may unintentionally apply to others, especially the students they will eventually teach” (p. 33). The contributor shared how students in his course created lessons to engage students in self-exploration and self-examination. The preservice teachers learned how to reject prejudice, inequality, and unchallenged narratives. The hope is that these mindful explorations that challenge the status quo will be modeled for students by the preservice teachers when they become teachers in their own classrooms.

Perceptual benefits garnered through the practices presented in this book may offer preservice teachers the opportunity to examine their own values, intentions, and behaviors, and to nurture a greater connectivity in their relationships with themselves, friends, family, colleagues, students, and parents. In the first chapter, Hall, Falk Jones, and O’Hare address the failures of the current state of teacher education programs to produce “emotional and psychological success for all” (p. 1). These authors believe that current education programs are failing to develop the coping strategies in preservice teachers that are

needed to foster teacher resilience. The authors explain that teacher education programs should prepare the whole person to attain full potential through the development of mindfulness.

The need to build resilience into teacher education programs is evidenced in the current teacher shortages across the nation. Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) investigated the emerging teacher shortages in the United States. Their report identified teacher attrition as a major contributing factor to the teacher shortages. Nationally, teacher attrition is at 8% annually. Many of the teachers who are leaving the profession do so prior to retirement age. There are many reasons why teachers are leaving the field of teaching, including: a) poor pay, b) inadequate working conditions, c) large class size, d) lack of support and autonomy to make decisions, e) increased focus on test preparation and results, and f) poor school leadership. There are many costs associated with teacher attrition that impact student achievement, such as: a) disruption in teacher/student relationships and connectiveness, b) inability to find highly qualified teachers to replace current teachers, and c) disruption of collegial and collaborative relationships. This book offers strategies that may help preservice teachers develop contemplative practices and the skills needed to help them to become more resilient. Enhanced resilience may help teachers cope more successfully with the forces that pull teachers away from the classroom and into other fields.

Relatively little has been offered to preservice teachers to prepare them to cope with the stresses that affect teachers throughout their careers. Contemplative practice and pedagogy may offer future and current teachers the strategies they need to manage the varied demands of the teaching profession. The authors of *Cultivating a Culture of Learning: Contemplative Practices* have shared empirical research that has been conducted in

university programs providing preservice teachers with the tools they need to develop deep understandings about themselves and others so that they are better prepared to handle the many stresses that influence teachers' dissatisfaction. By encouraging teachers to be mindful and present in the moment through a) meditation, b) journaling, c) positive self-awareness activities, d) deep listening, and e) authentic dialogue, the authors argue that teacher education will be more effective in its preparation of teachers for the challenges that await them. Daily participation in contemplative practice will aid preservice and inservice teachers in modeling the presence of mindfulness in their classrooms, which will enhance the development of a culture of learning.

This book has value for anyone interested in contemplative practices, but especially for those who teach in preservice education programs in colleges and universities. Many of the practices in this book are practical for almost any course in a teacher education program. As a preservice educator, I found myself taking notes throughout the book so that I could also include some of the approaches offered in the book in my courses. They may also be adapted for online learning formats. One chapter, "Across Time and Space," has a direct application to the online teaching environment. In this chapter, Brynes acknowledges the challenges that are inherent in an online teaching environment, including the management of technology, people, unrestricted time, and available resources. Online learning is unique in its ever-present and isolating qualities. Brynes creatively navigated the online challenges to contemplative practice and was able to achieve a sense of presence within an online learning community.

Educators who are interested in bringing a greater open-mindedness and a deeper sense of critical global education will find value in reading the chapter written by Augustine. In this chapter, the reader learns how to use

contemplative practices to develop open-mindedness and awareness of others' perspectives. The author perceives an alignment between contemplative practices and the design of critical global education. The chapters written by Rainville and Egan and by Price both share strategies that challenge the preservice teacher's sense of knowing oneself to derive a greater understanding of self and others.

The idea of mindfulness is not a new practice with its roots in Buddhist practices, but it is experiencing a new popularity. The attractiveness of mindfulness practices may arise from our modern, always plugged-in, connected, frenzied, and fast paced world. The critical awareness of being emotionally tuned in is supported by the work of Daniel Goleman (1995) in *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* and his many other books related to emotional intelligence and mindfulness. *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning* by Barbezat and Bush (2014) is frequently used in higher education courses to include contemplative practices, but it is not intended specifically for preservice teachers. *Cultivating a Culture of Learning* fills a gap left by Barbezat and Bush and includes an application for contemplative practices within community college settings. The authors focus on preservice teachers and do not make recommendations for applying the contemplative practices with students in non-teacher education programs. The lack of focus on contemplative practices for liberal arts studies does not preclude the potential for these applications. A growing interest for contemplative practices as part of educating the whole college student has made this book timely. It is particularly useful and appropriate for supporting the development of resilience through contemplative and self-discovery practices with preservice teachers.

The authors have successfully argued that there is a need to develop a greater resilience in teachers since the field of education is filled

with stresses from many sources. My experience with preservice and current teachers has demonstrated that teachers must be resourceful and find meaning in the small wins that make their teaching meaningful and rewarding. I have likened teaching to a calling that must be nurtured and reinforced. Teachers are caregivers who must engage in self-care so that they can continue to be effective and joyful. This book offers a beginning for preservice teachers to develop a mindset of self-care and an appreciation for the often overlooked moments in life. The

effectiveness of the strategies proposed in this book will be best judged when they are tried by the readers. Every group of students is unique and to be effective there must be a *buy-in* into the need for and the benefits of the contemplative practices being taught and modeled. The authors make it clear that they believe there is a need to integrate academic and affective pedagogy in teacher education programs, and this book may serve as a valuable resource for preservice and in-service teachers to support this integration.

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## About the Reviewer

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