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# Effective Values Education:

## Introduction:

An individual's values are formed and informed through the beliefs, history and traditions of their family of origin, their culture, and the society in which they live. A person's values underpin the decisions they make, the behaviour they express and, therefore, the impact on others with whom they live in society. Schools have a significant impact on the development of a student's value systems. This is both through the curriculum content and the social behaviours they model.

That schools, as mini communities, implicitly model values and, therefore, influence an individual's value system, has always been acknowledged. However, the New Zealand and Australian governments are now committed to the open discussion of values and their role in education and society. This includes the explicit teaching of particular values that have been identified as shared and that reflect each country's democratic way of life, in addition to values agreed upon by the school community itself.

Values specified in *The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium Teaching and Learning in Years 1-13*, which must be implemented in all New Zealand schools in 2010 are:

- Excellence, by aiming high and by persevering in the face of difficulties
- Innovation, Inquiry and Curiosity, by thinking critically, creatively and reflectively
- Diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages and heritages
- Equity, through fairness and social justice
- Community and participation for the common good
- Ecological sustainability, which includes care for the environment
- Respect, for themselves, for others and for human rights
- Integrity which involves
  - Being honest
  - Being responsible
  - Being accountable, and
  - Acting ethically

*“The NZ Curriculum identifies a number of values that have widespread community support. These values are to be encouraged and modelled, and they are to be explored by students. Schools need to consider how they can make the values an integral part of their curriculum and how they will monitor the effectiveness of the approach taken.”* (Curriculum Document pg 38)

The NZ Curriculum also identifies **five key competencies** which “students need in order to live, learn, work and contribute as active members of our communities” (Curriculum Document p 12)

- Thinking
- Managing self

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- Relating to others
  - Participating and contributing
  - Using language, symbols and texts

These compare with the following values to be explicitly taught in all Australian schools:

- Care and Compassion
- Doing Your Best
- Fair Go
- Freedom
- Honesty and Trustworthiness
- Integrity
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion

“... These shared values such as respect and ‘fair go’ are part of Australia’s common democratic way of life, which includes equality, freedom and the rule of law. They reflect our commitment to a multicultural and environmentally sustainable society where all are entitled to justice.”

*(National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools 2005, p 4)*

## Effective Values Education:

Both the New Zealand Curriculum and the Australian *National Framework* give schools the flexibility to actively involve students in what they learn, how it is taught, and how the learning is assessed. They both invite schools to design relevant learning programmes in consultation with the parent community, which will be meaningful and engaging to all students.

Ensuring that education is presented in a safe and supportive learning environment in which students are encouraged to explore their own, their school’s and their communities’ values means allowing students to question, and this may feel decidedly un-‘safe’ for many teachers. This involves a shift from what Paulo Freire (1993) coined as the “banking system” of education – a vertical system of teaching that involves an expert teacher depositing knowledge into the heads of passive students – to a horizontal educational environment, where teacher and students learn co-operatively. In this way, the emphasis on values education is part of what this writer perceives as a wider shift within education as a whole.

In addition, ensuring that education is presented in a safe and supportive learning environment, raises the importance of allowing each student to ‘have a voice’ during the values exploration process. <sup>1</sup>

## Defining Values: The Importance of Language:

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<sup>1</sup> Deborah’s seminars demonstrate strategies for including the quiet students in the class.

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The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium Teaching and Learning in Years 1-13 (2007, p 10) defines **'values'** as “deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable. They are expressed through the ways in which people think and act.”

The *National Framework For Values Education In Australian Schools* (2005) offers two definitions of **'values'**.

“the principles and fundamental conviction which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable”

(Halstead, J. and Taylor, J. & M., 2000)

And

“the ideals that give significance to our lives, that are reflected through the priorities we choose, and that we act on consistently and repeatedly.” (Hill, B., 2004)

The *National Framework* also provides the following definition of **'values education'**:

“Any explicit and/or implicit school based activity that promotes student knowledge and understanding of values, and which develops the skills and dispositions of students so they enact particular values as individuals and as members of the wider community.”

The language of these curriculum documents states that schools must now teach *through* values and *about* Values. There is both a theoretical and an applied aspect to Values Education. Values education is not just understanding the theory – it is about agency – that is, the internalization and practice of values. Schools must articulate and model the values from the Curriculum/Framework document, in addition to values agreed upon by the school community. Further, schools must provide appropriate and sufficient opportunity for students to put these values into practice within their school and community environments.

Teaching *through* values begins with the teacher, as facilitator of the class, modelling values. This is deeper than simply modelling patience and good manners. Rather, it requires us as teachers to identify the values that influence all the choices we make in our learning environment and the teaching strategies that we employ. In this respect, teaching through values relates to the provision of a “safe and supportive learning environment in which students are encouraged to explore their own, their school’s and their communities’ values”. (National Framework, 2005)

Further, teaching through values lends itself to experiential learning, including the use of real-life situations, simulations and role-play. Similarly, teaching *about* values may be experiential. When teaching the value of “Excellence through perseverance” or “Doing your best”, it is possible to identify “this is what perseverance looks like”, “this is what perseverance feels like”, thus connecting the concept with the action or behaviour.

When values become the object of study, we both clarify our own values and analyse the values of others. In his book *Moral Thinking*, R. M. Hare (1981) distinguishes two levels of moral reasoning – the everyday intuitive level and the more reflective critical level. There is more to an individual’s value system than simple intuition and emotion. If students are to be encouraged to truly “explore” their own values and those of their community, they must be facilitated into listening to their own responses and questioning where these come from. Dr Felicity McCutcheon (2002) refers to this as “honouring the minds of your

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students”. It involves drawing a student’s attention to an emotional “gut reaction” as opposed to one based on critical thought. It is my experience that an important aspect of values education lies in challenging students to articulate their thinking clearly. Advertisers, politicians and spin doctors, understand the subtleties of language and the power of persuasion very well. Listen for the subtleties in the language of your students and challenge them. Use every opportunity that presents itself to tune them to the language of emotion and intuition and provide them with the language of critical reflection.

An excellent opportunity to explore values occurs when reflective language is modeled and articulated explicitly. For example, consider ‘cultural diversity’ as opposed to ‘cultural difference’. The term ‘difference’ has an evaluative/comparative quality, where diversity conveys a notion of equal standing. (De Luca, 2009) Similarly, consider using the terms ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ when evaluating arguments, rather than ‘good’ and ‘bad’.

In the process of exploring values, I would recommend that the meanings of specific terms be investigated. For example, what does ‘ethics’ mean when we speak of environmental ethics? How, if at all, does this differ from the use of the word in other situations, for example, where a company director’s behaviour may not have been illegal, but is publicly described as “unethical”? In this way we continue to build our student’s **Values Vocabulary**.

Values education is an extensive and multifaceted field. Gilbert and Hoepfer (1996, p. 60) cited in Keown *et al.*, (2005, p. 6) distinguish a number of different ‘types’ of values each with their own associated concepts and ideas.

- Aesthetic values are related to ideas and concepts such as beauty and symmetry
- Economic values are related to ideas and concepts such as efficiency and productivity
- Intellectual values are related to ideas and concepts such as truth and clarity
- Political values are related to ideas and concepts such as justice and freedom
- Environmental values are related to ideas and concepts such as ecological harmony and sustainability, and
- Moral values are related to ideas and concepts of right actions toward other people such as respect, care, integrity and so on. Moral values may be informed by religious (spiritual) values.

It is of note that when the *National Framework* (2005) was released, emeritus professor of education, Professor Brian Hill, whose definition of Values is one of the two provided in the document, commented that the Government’s list of values were principally moral values and should be widened to include aesthetic, socio-cultural, economic, spiritual, interpersonal and political values.

[Teaching moral values in isolation] “smacks of a desire to domesticate growing learners rather than to liberate them”

Emeritus Professor Brian Hill, April 2005, Sydney Morning Herald  
(See Appendix 3 for a copy of the article.)

This idea of ‘domesticating’ rather than liberating students links us back to Freire’s vertical “banking system” of education, still prevalent in all too many classrooms. Values education is not effectively achieved in a passive ‘lecture’ situation. The process of learning

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in Values Education requires the articulation and critical assessment of thoughts. Values are not abstract concepts, but concrete as they are about agency and relationships. As per the opening paragraph, a person's values underpin the decisions they make, the behaviour they express and, therefore, the impact on others with whom they live in society.

There is scope for increasing the structure, consistency and academic rigor of values education. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Deborah facilitates professional development seminars for teachers in which she shares resources and methods that she has trailed and found useful in achieving this. Deborah's seminars demonstrate ways to infuse the teaching of values across the curriculum and to make such teaching evident.

The ideas shared in Deborah's seminars demonstrate how curriculum boundaries may be crossed as values are explored, modelled and encouraged. Participating teachers have found the seminars stimulating and the ideas shared have provided a springboard for them to develop, monitor and assess values education in their classrooms.

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## Appendix One:

Article: Sydney Morning Herald, April 2005

The Sydney Morning Herald

# Core values said to skirt real world

Linda Doherty  
Education Editor

The nine values that Australian schools will study from this year were a collection of "apple pie" words that would not help students analyse current and emerging issues, a British values education expert said yesterday.

Peter Vardy, vice-principal of the specialist theology and philosophy Heythrop College at the University of London, said the Federal Government's string of values now mandatory for 3.3 million students needed to be developed into a wider educational setting.

Students had to grapple with complex issues, such as the war in Iraq, refugees, sexual morality and genetic engineering, but schools were not equipping them with the ethical and "thinking" skills to argue, identify and critique their own values.

"These issues cannot be resolved by apple pie words like 'fairness' or 'tolerance'," Dr Vardy yesterday told the Dialogue Australasia conference on values education at Sydney's Newington College.

"One in three Australian girls will abort during their life; one in 10 of them has chlamydia by the time they are 17.

"This is the real world in which young people live and if values education is to mean anything, then this is the world that values education needs to address.

"The Australian Government's proposals for values education lack almost any rigour. The rhetoric cannot easily be challenged but the content beneath it is remarkably empty."

Brian Hill, emeritus professor of education at Murdoch University, said the Government's list of values were mainly moral values and should be widened to include aesthetic, socio-cultural, economic, spiritual, interpersonal and

### LIFE'S SIGNPOSTS

Care and compassion  
Doing your best  
Fair go  
Freedom  
Honesty and trustworthiness  
Integrity  
Respect  
Responsibility  
Understanding, tolerance, inclusion

Source: Federal Department of Education, Science and Training

political values. Teaching moral values in isolation "smacks of a desire to domesticate growing learners rather than to liberate them", he said.

After a generation of post-modernism where every opinion was considered valid, students had been left to become "their own Socrates and invent their own framework of values".

But in some religious schools values were being selectively taught because the particular doctrine was "out of bounds, off limits" to critical discussion, Professor Hill said.

Dr Vardy said the habit of not letting students question their school's religion "may be particularly a problem in Sydney".

The Federal Government last year allocated \$30 million over four years for values education studies schools. Learning the nine values is a condition of federal funding to schools.

The parliamentary secretary for education, Pat Farmer, defended the values list and the accompanying teaching framework, which was agreed to by state and territory education ministers. He said it would allow students to practically "develop an understanding of compassion, courage and tolerance".



C'mon, get a move on ... Gordon Hill shows Ben Winchester

## Down to the wire

Richard Macey

It was a technological race between the best that 19th century science could muster and the latest in 21st century communications.

Sitting by his morse code key, set up yesterday inside the Powerhouse Museum, was Gordon Hill, 93, a veteran telegraph operator who joined the post office 78 years ago.

Across from him, armed with her mobile phone, was Brittany Devlin, 13, of Seven Hills, with two years of texting experience. "I send about three messages a day," she said. "I used to send lots more but I ran out of credit."

The rules were simple: Mr Hill had to translate a message into morse code and send it to another telegraph veteran, Jack Gibson, 82, sitting a few metres away. Mr Gibson then had to decode the transmission and print it out using a manual typewriter.

Brittany had to use her mobile

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