4. The Importance of the Teaching Process in Values Education

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The focus of this paper is on the role of curriculum process in values education. It is our belief that curriculum process is a more effective and lasting way to teach values than relying solely on curriculum content. We have given a detailed explanation of our ideas in a paper delivered two years ago here at APCEIU (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1999). We will not repeat those ideas here, but will build upon them.

What do we mean by curriculum process? It can be conceptualised as two inter-related ideas: (i) ways of teaching and learning; and (ii) ways of thinking, knowing and understanding. We believe that children acquire many of the deep values of their society through the ways that teachers communicate with them and encourage them to learn, and through the ways of thinking and knowing about the world that are inculcated from an early age. We will explore these concepts in more detail, and then illustrate them through some case studies based on our own work as university teachers.

1. The teacher as role model

In our view the most powerful way to teach values is by the lived example of the teacher. As teachers we have a daily responsibility to live out the values we wish to share with our students. We must provide a consistent example. This is fundamentally important, but very difficult to achieve in practice. It also implies that every teacher in every school must share responsibility for values education.

Let us give an example. Earlier in the workshop Dr Samuel Lee spoke about teaching for human rights. This is a most important aspect of values education, and UNESCO has published many useful teaching resources to help teachers with curriculum content. But in our view the best way to teach human rights is to demonstrate them in practice at every level of the school: between
management and teachers; between teachers and teachers; between teachers and students; and between students and students.

Some years ago we visited Tikipunga High School in the north island of Aotearoa New Zealand, which at that time was led by a visionary principal, Edna Tait, who has now become the Head of the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States. Fundamental to the operation of the school was the application of human rights to all relationships within the school, and between the school and the local community. When the rights of an individual or a group were thought to have been violated, a small consultative group was formed. These groups were made up of representatives from all sections of the school community, including students. Their role was basically one of conflict resolution, with the aim of achieving human rights in a peaceful and lasting way.

The approach taken at Tikipunga High School is documented by Tait (1995). Our visit to the school confirmed in our own minds that if children experience true human rights in all of the policies and practices of a school, then the actual teaching of human rights as curriculum content will have a very strong foundation. Certainly the children at Tikipunga showed a great deal of respect towards each other, towards the teachers and managers of the school, and towards us as visitors.

2. The role of culture

Bob works with about fifteen MA and PhD students, most of whom are carrying out major research projects and writing dissertations in the field of values education. They come from many countries, including China, Iran, Japan, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, USA and Australia. The group also includes three Indigenous Australians. They also represent a very wide variety of world views: Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, secular postmodernism, Indigenous spiritualities, Baha'i, and the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba.

In our discussions together we have become convinced that the teaching of values must be based on the deep values and beliefs of the particular culture. In other words we believe that values education needs to be culturally specific. We have also reached the view that the search for universal values or core values may be a fruitless one. Amongst ourselves, with our very varied cultural backgrounds, we have yet to find a value that we could truly describe as universal.
Our hunch is that these so-called 'universal' values are simply a reflection of the values of the modern globalised world. There is nothing wrong with such values. However there are times when these globalised values are simply not appropriate in a particular cultural setting. The recent UNESCO report, *Learning: the treasure within* (Delors, 1996) speaks very powerfully about the tension between the global and the local in the delivery of education. And this tension certainly exists in values education.

For example, many cultures in Asia place great importance on values related to interdependence and mutual support, especially within the extended family. Such values are strongly emphasised in the school. Yet, especially in the big cities, the globalised values of competition and individual achievement also are becoming very prominent, posing a great challenge for teachers. There is deep tension between the local values and the global values. Now tension itself can be viewed in two quite different ways. First, we can consider tension as conflict, where two groups are at war with each other, and only one can win. We do not believe this is the kind of conflict that Delors is referring to.

There is also the kind of tension that exists in stringed musical instruments, such as the guitar, or piano, or harp. This is a functional tension, a creative tension. Without the tension in the strings we could not make beautiful music. Each string has to be stretched in a very precise way to achieve the appropriate sound. It is therefore a necessary tension. We think this necessary and functional tension is the kind that Delors implies. When we consider the tensions between global values and local values, we therefore should not see them in opposition to each other. Rather we should search for a functional or creative harmony between them. From this perspective the task of the teacher is to achieve a syncretism between global and local values so that their students are firmly grounded in their own local cultures and values, yet can take their place in the modern, globalised world with ease and confidence.

3. New ways of thinking

When we went to school, most of us were trained to think using curricula based on the western science of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Our thinking has been largely linear, compartmentalised and reductionist. We have assumed that the universe is basically knowable and predictable, and that we can find answers to all of our questions. But as we enter the twenty-first century a deep and profound shift is taking place in our
ways of thinking and knowing. Knowledge, like culture, is in a constant state of change. And at the moment the changes are happening very quickly, and we find it difficult to understand and describe them. However there are several things that we can conclude about the shifts that are taking place in our ways of thinking, knowing and understanding:

(i) They are shifts from a relatively finite system of knowledge, where we have assumed the world to be basically knowable, to the infinite. The sheer magnitude of the expansion of knowledge in recent years, and the potential for continuing expansion, is beyond our comprehension. And the ease with which we can access most of this knowledge, through the world of cyber-space, is even more amazing.

(ii) They are shifts from all of the certainty and predictability of the old scientific understandings of the past few centuries, to the uncertainties and unpredictabilities of the new sciences of chaos theory, relativity and quantum mechanics.

(iii) They are shifts from neatly packaged and defined areas of knowledge from clearly compartmentalised areas of intellectual inquiry to much more holistic and integrated ways of thinking and knowing, ways of knowing that transcend old disciplinary boundaries and venture into areas that may be completely new and unfamiliar to us.

(iv) They are shifts from the security of positivism and structuralism to the insecurities and uncertainties of the post-structural and the post-modern. They are shifts from that which can be known, defined and quantified to that which is fleeting and momentary. Instead of searching for the right answers we are now searching for the appropriate questions.

(v) They are shifts from an exclusively western discourse to new forms of dialogue between different cultural traditions. There is a new respect for Indigenous knowledges and wisdoms, and a genuine search for complementarities between the global and the local. Evidence of this search is apparent in many parts of the world, even within universities (see, for example, Teasdale & Ma Rhea, 2000).

Many of our older ways of thinking and knowing are incompatible with the teaching of human values. For example, most of us were taught to think objectively and in terms of true-false dichotomies. These ways of thinking denied the reality of the spiritual, and implied that human values could be
thought of as either right or wrong, good or bad, etc. In teaching values, we believe there is a need to be open to the new ways of thinking that reflect a more interconnected and holistic approach to knowledge.

We have written a lot about this, and several of our Indigenous colleagues are doing some fascinating work in this area (see, for example, Bishop, 2001, and the chapters by Mel, Thaman, and Slade & Morgan in Teasdale & Ma Rhea, 2000). It is complex and fascinating, and we need to do a lot more work to fully appreciate the implications of these changing ways of thinking and knowing for values education.

4. Unlocking the treasure within

We do not think that values can be taught effectively where there is a strictly hierarchical relationship between teacher and student; i.e., where there is a relationship of power and subservience. Values education must respect the autonomy of the learner. The central idea of the Delors Report (1996) that the teachers role is to "unlock the treasure within" is a very powerful one, especially in the teaching of values. Values cannot be taught in a top-down way. Teachers cannot force values upon their students. Values only can be taught effectively when the teachers journey with their students in relationships of mutual respect.

Some readers may question this approach, noting the Confucian and Buddhist notions of master and pupil. But such relationships are not based on power of the teacher over the student. The relationships are not asymmetrical. Rather, they are relationships of mutual respect and interdependence where there is a fundamental balance, a kind of ying and yang, between teacher and pupil.

5. Environmental values

Finally, we wish to suggest that human values and environmental values cannot be separated. We cannot teach one of them effectively without the other. For example, we cannot have peace with each other unless we build peaceful relationships with the environment. This idea has been comprehensively explored in the context of the Philippines by Maria Socorro Gicain (2001). She argues that there is an essential interdependence and interconnectedness between human and environmental values, and that both need to be taught in an integrated way, not only in schools but in programs of lifelong learning.
Drawing on a detailed case study of her own home island of Manicani in the eastern Philippines, Gicain (2001) shows how a community education program with a focus on values education could be used to restore relationships both with the environment and amongst the people.

There is a particular challenge in relation to environmental values for APCEIU in its serene setting near Ichon. The valley in which APCEIU is set is truly beautiful, with its tree-clad mountains all around. If APCEIU wishes to truly explore human values as part of education for international understanding, perhaps it also might explore how to value even more deeply the beautiful environment in which it is set. Perhaps each group that visits the Centre for a workshop or seminar could spend one day connecting with the land through a work program that seeks to maintain the environment through weed removal and tree planting. Not only would this promote environmental values, but by working together in such a pleasant setting the group might learn to value relationships among themselves in new and positive ways.

**Case Studies**

We now wish to illustrate some of our ideas by sharing with you two case studies drawn from our teaching experiences in an Australian university. There may be some ideas that you could transfer to your own cultural context, but equally they may not be culturally appropriate.

- **Case Study 1: Cross Cultural Perspectives in Education**
  
  **Context**
  
  This class is conducted within the Flinders University School of Education and is an undergraduate elective course predominantly undertaken by teachers in training. Students from other faculties enrol if they expect to be involved in cross cultural employment in the future. Students range in age from 20 to 35 although most of them are in their early twenties. This course is sometimes team taught with additional tutors and lecturers.

  **The class in action**
  
  In a very early session, students and lecturers engage in a group activity in which all participants begin to explore and affirm their own cultural identities. Using significant cultural objects and a narrative technique, contributors shares with the class their chosen cultural object and explain its cultural significance.
for them. Within this Australian class there are many cultures represented, so as each person presents her or his explanation other class members begin to recognise the importance of each of their peers as a living cultural resource.

A particularly exciting aspect of this class is the inclusion of a group of visiting Japanese students, with a minimal grasp of English language, in the weekly work-shops. The majority of Australians have little real knowledge of Japanese language or culture, and conversely the Japanese visitors, until this point of total immersion, have only limited knowledge of the Australian cultural context. By creating a climate of acceptance, both Japanese and Australian students work out an amazingly diverse range of communication techniques that enable them to share their cultures. Australian students take Japanese students into their everyday lives and Japanese students share language and cultural artefacts they have brought from Japan. The class becomes enthusiastically interactive and the energy for cross cultural learning and exchange gains momentum as every class member begins to experience new ways of thinking, knowing and understanding. Students become confident in autonomous learning. They have no need for a didactic teacher in such a context. The teacher too becomes involved in a deeply satisfying two-way learning process.

Assessment has been thoughtfully mapped out. As the course unfolds, students discover and articulate their particular interests. Sometimes individually, sometimes in collaboration with colleagues, students create a topic to research and present as a final assignment. Fellow students and teachers are regarded as resource persons in this exercise. In a final session students share their findings with each other and then move on and out of the course, hopefully with a heightened cross cultural sensitivity that contributes significantly to their international understanding.

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Case Study 2: Sociology for Ministry

Context

This is a class within the Flinders University School of Theology. It is a first year level course that attracts students from differing cultural backgrounds and who have an interest in Christian ministry. It involves about 30 students whose ages range from 20 to 60 years. Many are training to be clergy or lay leaders in the Christian church; others are primarily concerned with extending their knowledge in this area while others have come to audit the course because they have heard of the stimulating teaching methodology used.
The course is a core unit within the Pastoral Studies strand of the Theology degree. If you reflect on the meaning of pastoral studies, images of 'caring', 'nurturing', and 'compassion' come to mind. As facilitator of the course, Jennie was convinced that the topic would have only limited impact if it concentrated solely on content. She was convinced that the process of teaching this topic should reflect the intrinsic nature of pastoral studies and that, as its teacher, she too must reflect these qualities.

The class in action

The first class in the semester is extremely important, for it provides an invaluable opportunity to introduce students to the processes of the course through hands-on activities. One such activity involves class members in an imaginal ecological exercise. Using the analogy of a typical Australian eucalyptus forest, visual images and word pictures are used to describe the interdependence of all aspects of the forest: the plant life trees, shrubs and grasses; the animals, birds and insects that live out their lives in the forest; the climate that surrounds it; and, the soil and geological structures that underpin it. Students transfer this analogy of interdependence to what can happen in the class as a little community of trust is created.

The collaborative research and workshop presentations by participants are a key aspect of class life. During workshops, the teacher becomes a class member, participating in activities like the students themselves. Students collaboratively prepare and present their workshop programs using innovative, often experiential, activities that involve all class members. Students are totally in control of these sessions and dictate the content, the pace and the processes of presentation. Respect for each others contributions is paramount.

Assessment in this topic includes a Reflective Journal. Students are encouraged to share the contents of their journals with colleagues who are asked to respond in writing. Many choose to do this in the form of a letter. Another exciting form of assessment that has evolved in this class is a collaborative research project. Individuals bring case studies together, and over a period of time synthesise the content of each other's work. Working together they discover generic principles, and then produce an article that is published in an appropriate journal.

In summary, although the curriculum content of this course may not be about values education or human rights or international understanding, its
processes of teaching/learning embody many of the concepts explored in the earlier part of this paper. It is clear that these processes can be highly effective in a university environment. We suspect they are equally applicable to teaching in schools, and in adult and community education centres.

References


