
MORAL VALUES EDUCATION IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

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Abstract. Technological advancements, in particular over the past few decades, have brought humans in touch with each other as never before and exposed all of us to many different forms of thinking, being and living. If education is to lead humanity away from the countless wrongs, abuses and perils that afflict the lives of so many people, and towards the broad goals, but elusive achievements, of personal, economic and social development and flourishing, it must therefore help every human being make the most of all his or her talents and potential. There is a clear need for taking an integrated or holistic approach to education: a perspective that recognises and addresses the whole human being and the need for a clear focus on the underlying values, rights and responsibilities that are the very fabric of the individual and the better future that society aspires to. If the character, personality or values of the individual are the foundation of each human being, so also it is the individual that is the building block of society and in many ways determines or influences its trajectory through history and overall development and well-being.

Keywords: Moral Values, Multicultural, Character Building

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements, in particular over the past few decades, have brought humans in touch with each other as never before and exposed all of us to many different forms of thinking, being and living. On the one hand this has brought us on a wonderful never-ending journey of discovery and learning and yielded an exponential soaring of available information. On the other hand it also comprises a tidal wave of changes to more traditional ways of life along with challenges to societal norms and even to our understanding of ourselves and how we think we should live our own lives. Our multicultural world has become more interconnected and interdependent than ever before and brought us to a crossroads, or collection of crossroads, requiring us, collectively and individually, to take choices that will define, and create, our future. Some would argue that the very survival of humanity is at issue while proponents of new technological developments point to a world freed from many of the problems that have

blighted history. The choices that we face as individuals may not always seem to be so dramatically contrasting and yet the decisions that we make as individuals are the building blocks of which are built our collective destiny.

The demands of navigating our way forward, working out how to respond to all that is happening around us, to a world of many polarities, often characterised by extreme points of view, are often more than enough for adults, let alone young learners and those charged with their education. Yet while perils and pitfalls are easy to see this should only urge us to re-double our efforts to call on our instinct to survive, muster our inner resources and rise to the challenge. As educators, we may draw comfort from the proposition that, as Nelson Mandela put it: "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." Thus while the world of tomorrow holds the potential for disaster but also offers the promise of tremendous opportunity neither of these outcomes is an inevitable destination since the future is what we create and shape it to be by our choices and actions today. But to achieve

the better world that we aspire to, we are going to have to work together, take a thoughtful and reflective approach, and see a way past the divisive tendencies and prejudices that otherwise can overshadow the better angels of our nature. In the words of the Preamble to *The Earth Charter* (2000): “To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny.”

This emphasis on one-ness is welcome since, in looking at the kaleidoscope of human life it is perhaps understandable, but nevertheless unfortunate, that the quest to understand, analyse and categorise has often led to a focus, if not over-emphasis, on the ways in which we are different, with ignorance, insecurity and fear breeding resistance or hostility to the unfamiliar. The diversity within the human story is undeniable but this is not to say that there are no common threads that hold this tapestry together. Our richly different traditions may sometimes feel threatening more than inspiring or a source of learning but surely there are also similarities that bind us together and defining values that we share. Anthropologists tell us that humans share a common ancestry, with our ancestors living in what we now know as East Africa before migrating to inhabit other parts of the world. Human biologists have found that the genetic difference between individual humans today is minuscule – about 0.1%, on average – making us about 99.9% genetically similar to anyone else. Notwithstanding such massive similarity for sure there can be, and often are, wide differences in understanding, viewpoints, behaviour and ways of life, even between close family members. Indeed the differences between members of one apparent group may be greater than those between members of that group 2 and another, different group. But perhaps this common genetic heritage also tells us that humanity as a whole is one single human family or race and that beyond or beneath the more superficial differences we can expect to find ways in which we are the same that are more important than the ways in which we are different. While we may have different colour skin our tears and blood are the same colour and it is very often the same things that make us cry or touch our heart.

Wherever one looks in the world, one of the defining, and more admirable, qualities of humanity appears to be our enduring quest for a better future and a sense, albeit dynamic and

often inchoate, that some things in life are better than others or to be more valued. While much can be said about what such better future might look like, for the present purposes suffice it to say that it must take account of the totality of the human experience and address the physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social fulfilment or well-being of the individual and society, in an inclusive world characterised by peace, justice, freedom, respect and responsibility. Insofar as a better future represents a change from the present, education and learning are fundamental paths to pursue in such quest, as education almost inevitably involves new knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities, not to mention physical changes within the brain itself. In the context of shifting contemporary realities, new opportunities, globalised threats and a multi-cultural world, the challenge that faces educationists more acutely than ever before is to define what sort of education is most conducive to a better future and the personal attributes that can create, sustain and safeguard it.

If education is to lead humanity away from the countless wrongs, abuses and perils that afflict the lives of so many people, and towards the broad goals, but elusive achievements, of personal, economic and social development and flourishing, it must therefore help every human being make the most of all his or her talents and potential. There is a clear need for taking an integrated or holistic approach to education: a perspective that recognises and addresses the whole human being and the need for a clear focus on the underlying values, rights and responsibilities that are the very fabric of the individual and the better future that society aspires to. If the character, personality or values of the individual are the foundation of each human being, so also it is the individual that is the building block of society and in many ways determines or influences its trajectory through history and overall development and well-being.

To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

(Theodore Roosevelt)

Thus while education must prepare learners for a hi-tech world, it also has a broader and higher purpose: to cater to the full development of the student as an individual, a member of society and a citizen of the world

community. If this purpose is to be fulfilled, there is, to quote the *Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*, or Delors report: “every reason to place renewed emphasis on the moral and cultural dimensions of education, enabling each person to grasp the individuality of other people and to understand the world’s erratic progress towards a certain unity”.

To achieve this requires that we embark on a collective re-discovery of what it ultimately means to be a human being, a learning process to help us re-find and connect with ourselves. We need to learn more about who we are as individuals and as a society and to learn more about how to live with each other both within our families and more immediate communities but also within the world as a whole. We must maximise our own inner resources and draw deeply on the wisdom of the ages, the best of our traditions, cultures and ways of being and doing. Thus the Delors report succinctly identified two of the four pillars of learning for the 21st Century as “learning to be” and “learning to live together”. We must, in the words of the Preamble to the *Charter of the United Nations* “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

The only type of future that we can have is one that is culturally diverse and thus it is a moral imperative for us to learn ways to build a sustainable global society founded on the awareness of our common underlying human identity, dignity and worth. We must enlist education to help us understand, enhance and draw on the best of our collective heritage and exemplify values such as respect, inclusivity and harmony as together we 3 ... education of the child shall be directed to... the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential... the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms ... the preparation of the child for responsible life 4 learn by engaging in a productive dialogue and exchange between and across cultures, generations and individuals. To quote the Delors report again: “It is ... education’s noble task to encourage each and every one, acting in accordance with their traditions and convictions and paying full respect to pluralism, to lift their minds and spirits to the plane of the universal and, in some measure, to transcend themselves. It is no exaggeration

... to say that the survival of humanity depends thereon.”

If life is increasingly a multi-cultural experience so also work is increasingly carried out in inter-disciplinary teams and environments, which requires the ability to navigate one’s way through interactions with people in a world of diversity and pluralities. This calls for emotional literacy and intelligence, the soft skills of being able to read and understand one’s own and others’ frame of mind and emotions, to respect, empathise, learn from and work with each other, analysing and synthesising across disciplines or skill-sets. Personal attributes of adaptability, curiosity, the willingness and openness to embrace change and innovation and to keep learning are thus clearly critical, the more so as time goes by. It is not enough for an individual to be intelligent, skilled and technically competent but also unable or unwilling to listen to, live, work and interact constructively with colleagues of varied backgrounds or areas of expertise and contribute to society.

Thus as well as being life-long, learning also needs to be life-wide and life-deep, giving individuals a breadth and depth of personality and both intra- and inter-personal skills in their preparation for life and work, helping them identify, and adopt, personal, professional and social values that they can call on to guide the decisions and choices they make. The development of skills and attributes must go beyond the merely technical and thus vocational training, and curriculum content at all levels of education, must not forget the moral, social and personal aspects of life and work, while also endeavouring to reflect this in the ethos or overall approach of the learning community as a whole. Education short-changes society if it produces wealthy but dishonest businesspeople, clever but corrupt politicians or inventive but destructive scientists. We should further the move from an overly materialistic world-view to one that includes greater emphasis on the broader and deeper realities of human life and experience, on notions such as happiness, purpose and meaning and a contribution to the well-being or betterment of society as a whole, remembering that we share just one earth.

Seeing the broader purpose of education and learning as life-long journeys that transcend more immediate, although important, functional processes, practical skills and task-related abilities is certainly not a new concept and one hesitates to talk of

innovations in this regard. Indeed it may well lay claim to deeper roots of more reflecting times, whether in the East or West or indeed elsewhere, and it is perhaps not coincidental that many of the great teachers of ages past, often religious leaders or philosophers, were consummate values-educators or character-builders speaking frequently of values such as love, compassion, forgiveness, righteousness, tolerance, justice, forbearance, simplicity, respect and responsibility. They often also spoke of the need for self-knowledge and introspection. However, over the last few centuries in particular we have often placed much of our emphasis in other places, and more recently in particular, the influence of a more superficial view of life and perhaps an increasingly materialistic society, has left its mark on education as elsewhere. Nevertheless the link between the place given in education to values, and the quality of education, is self-evident, just as the quality of education is a fundamental determinant of the quality of life, both for the individual and society.

Fortunately much has been done in recent years to re-paint the larger picture of education, introduce corresponding reforms and, to a lesser extent, corresponding teacher development activities. For example in 1989 the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* elaborated a set of values subsequently endorsed in nearly all countries of the world as essential for children to be able to fulfil their potential, and Article 29.1 of the Convention declares that: in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples ... the development of respect for the natural environment.

Produced the following year, at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, *The World Declaration on Education for All* defines basic learning needs as comprising: both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning. Following the United Nations *Decade for Human Rights Education*, 2005 saw the beginning of the UN *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* which called for a process of learning how to make decisions that consider

the long-term future of the economy, ecology and equity of all communities. It asked that we develop values, behaviour and lifestyles that take account of others and tomorrow, as well as ourselves and today, and that, reflecting upon the environmental and social consequences of our actions, we make a shift to sustainable development. It is more apparent than ever now that this needs to be a major priority.

As the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said, after taking his oath of office in 2016: "In the end, it comes down to values. We want the world our children inherit to be defined by the values enshrined in the UN Charter: peace, justice, respect, human rights, tolerance and solidarity. All major religions embrace them, and we strive to reflect them in our daily lives. The threats to these values are most often based on fear. Our duty to the peoples we serve is to work together to move from fear of each other, to trust in each other. Trust in the values that bind us, and trust in the institutions that serve and protect us".

In short, education – more so than ever in today's world – must help tap the talents hidden like treasures in every individual and lead to a person complete in the richness of his or her personality. It must address the individual as a whole and help the depth and strength of character required as preparation for life in a complex and challenging world, including constructive and meaningful participation in and contribution to global society. In reconciling needs and aspirations not just within and amongst communities at different stages of development but also across generations in a finite world, it will also need to address head-on substantive questions of values, as signs of an emerging global ethic appear in some areas side by side with rich cultural diversity, individuals' right to their own identity and, unfortunately, intolerance, violence and insecurity.

But if it is easy to say that a better future will include, and indeed depend on, a moral revival of some form, it is far less easy to say what educational practices will best attain this aim. If we are to make the most of new technologies, to create inclusive learning societies in an information age, to achieve our development goals, there has to be a triumph of human values. While this may be clear, it leaves open the question of precisely how do we go about ensuring that values such as respect, responsibility, honesty and love are the bedrock of peoples' character and the

foundation of their lives, attitudes and behaviour – and what role education must play in this.

The virtues are not poured into us; they are natural to us.

Seek them and you will find them; neglect them and you will lose them.

Mencius

On the one hand it is apparent that these values will not necessarily emerge either by themselves or as the result of legislation and, on the other hand, that they cannot – and indeed should not – be imposed from above. Instead, it is submitted, values must be seen not only as the intended outcome but also as the way towards it. The way to peace is through peace, not through war. The way to inclusiveness is through inclusiveness. The way to respect and honesty is through respect and honesty, and so on. In short, we must be the change we want to see in the world, as Gandhi put it. Character cannot be forced onto people, especially 5 children; rather we may seek to draw out that which is latent within, inspire by offering a practical example and seeking to ensure that principle are put into practice.

Thus if the outcome of an educational process is to be respectful, tolerant, peaceful, honest and responsible world citizens, then the way to achieve that is through an ethos, a culture, an environment within the school, in which respect, tolerance, love, honesty, safety are the hallmark of how the school community organizes itself. “At the core of values education lies the establishment of an agreed set of principles, deeply held convictions, that underpin all aspects of a school’s life and work” (Hawkes). This underlines the importance that must be paid to the relationship between the teacher and the student – and indeed other relationships within the school community – and what characterises those relationships. It is suggested that values must be seen to lie not only at the heart of the educational content, the “what”, but also at the heart of the educational process, the “how”, the way in which education takes place.

To reach real peace in the world, we will have to begin with the children.

Gandhi

With this in mind, there would seem to be a need to take a fresh look at the practical implementation of values education in classrooms and the extent to which teachers are adequately prepared for this. Perhaps the first change of emphasis in this regard is not to

see values education as another subject within the curriculum to be imparted to students so much as a philosophy of education that emphasises the importance of a teaching and learning environment that is characterised by values such as respect, responsibility, tolerance, peace and love. If children need to feel loved, valued, respected, understood and safe (Tillman & Quera Colomina, 2000) so too do adults in the classroom, and in their relationships with each other, in order that quality teaching and learning may take place. Therefore, “more than a subject, values education has to be an attitude within the whole teaching practice, involving the entire staff of the school, parents and the surrounding community in a common shared endeavour. Thus, integrating values education gives teachers another vision of their pedagogical work. In order to have a real impact, values education has to be planned as a school project, integrated into every aspect of the curriculum, pedagogy and activities, involving all the teachers as a team as well as the organisational and decision-making structure of the educational institution.” (Combes)

When this ethos is taken as the starting point, the second step is then to look at the curriculum itself and to see how values questions are inherent or embedded within the different subject areas, be they science, language, arts or others. The question becomes not so much of seeing how to add a values dimension into these fields of scholarship or human endeavour as an uncovering and exploration of values inherent within them and their development and practice.

It is only at this stage that we turn to the third strand of this approach, which is to consider how discrete sessions or periods within the school day can be timetabled to address the issue of values as a subject in its own right. Depending on the context, this may perhaps find a home within the context of a lesson dealing with religious education or under a title such as personal and social education, humanities or moral education or within a school assembly or circle time. That a school is able to dedicate time to such a task, whatever the lesson name, is to be welcomed but the point is that the first two strands of this approach stand on their own regardless of whether or not such time is made available. In other words, values education may be distinguished from values-based education; and it should be clear that values education is

likely to be ineffective unless it takes place in a values-based learning environment.

Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.

Socrates (attributed, perhaps Plutarch)

For sure, trying to give values such as respect, tolerance, love and care their rightful place within child-friendly inclusive classrooms, and ensuring that they set the tone, is not a soft answer to a hard question. To a considerable degree, the issue raised is one of educator training and in-service development programmes designed to help deepen or reinforce the higher-order teaching skills and techniques that contribute to the creation and maintenance of such a values-based teaching environment. A greater awareness of their own values can help empower teachers in moving towards a school environment in which explicit values rather than explicit rules have pride of place. The teacher then, and how he or she behaves, what attitudes, mood and values are expressed, is the decisive factor in the classroom. “The whole idea of values-based education is about teachers looking at themselves first” (Combes) or embarking on a process that begins “with self-understanding through an inner voyage whose milestones are knowledge, meditation and the practice of self-criticism”. (Delors). One might even go so far as to say that values education is, at its best, a way of being, in particular in relation to other people in which teachers teach what they are as much as what they know. Certainly modelling values, and teachers doing what they ask students to do, is going to be more effective than demanding students to behave in ways that are at odds with the behaviour of teachers. The teacher and his or her lived values are the best and most effective resource for values education. All of us, but perhaps young learners in particular, are likely to learn more from what we see others do than what they may say, especially if the “talk” is not matched in the “walk”. Accompanying this change of perspective is a shift from an emphasis on external rules to a focus on explicit and clearly enunciated values, which brings with a transition for students to the internal or intrinsic motivation for their behaviour of their own chosen values rather than the external motivation of someone else’s rules.

Living Values Education

The above largely reflects the approach taken by educationists using the Living Values

Education approach. Living Values Education (LVE) is a way of conceptualising education that promotes the development of values-based learning communities and places the search for meaning and purpose at the heart of education. LVE emphasises the worth and integrity of each person involved in the provision of education, in the home, school and community and, in fostering quality education, supports the overall development of the individual and a culture of positive values in society, believing that education is a purposeful activity designed to help humanity flourish.

Principles of Values Education

Living Values Education is based on the following core principles:

On the learning and teaching environment

1. When positive values and the search for meaning and purpose are placed at the heart of learning and teaching, education itself is valued.
2. Learning is especially enhanced when occurring within a values-based learning community, where values are imparted through quality teaching, and learners discern the consequences, for themselves, others and the world at large, of actions that are and are not based on values.
3. In making a values-based learning environment possible, educators not only require appropriate quality teacher education and ongoing professional development, they also need to be valued, nurtured and cared for within the learning community.
4. Within the values-based learning community, positive relationships develop out of the care that all involved have for each other.

On the teaching of values

5. The development of a values-based learning environment is an integral part of values education, not an optional extra.
6. Values education is not only a subject on the curriculum. Primarily it is pedagogy; an educational philosophy and practice that inspires and develops positive values in the classroom. Values-based teaching and guided reflection support the process of learning as a meaning-making process, contributing to the development of critical thinking, imagination, understanding, self-awareness,

- intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and consideration of others.
7. Effective values educators are aware of their own thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour and sensitive to the impact these have on others.
 8. A first step in values education is for teachers to develop a clear and accurate perception of their own attitudes, behaviour and emotional literacy as an aid to living their own values. They may then help themselves and encourage others to draw on the best of their own personal, cultural and social qualities, heritage and traditions.

On the nature of persons within the world and the discourse of education

9. Central to the Living Values Education concept of education is a view of persons as thinking, feeling, valuing whole human beings, culturally diverse and yet belonging to one world family. Education must therefore concern itself with the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical well-being of the individual.
10. The discourse of education, of thinking, feeling and valuing, is both analytic and poetic. Establishing a dialogue about values within the context of a values-based learning community facilitates an interpersonal, cross-cultural exchange on the importance and means of imparting values in education.

The implementation of Living Values Education is coordinated by the Association for Living Values Education International (ALIVE International), a non-profit-making association of values educators around the world. Drawing on a strong volunteer base, the advancement and implementation of Living Values Education has been supported over the years by a number of organisations, UN agencies (including UNESCO), governmental bodies, foundations, community groups and individuals. It is part of the global movement for a culture of peace in the framework of the United Nations International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. ALIVE International groups together national LVE bodies and is an independent organisation that does not have any particular or exclusive religious, political or national affiliation or interest.

As well as offering professional development workshops for teachers, that

include sessions on values awareness, creating a values-based atmosphere and skills for creating such an atmosphere, ALIVE International also offers three teacher resource books, *Living Values Activities for Children Ages 3-7*, *Living Values Activities for Children Ages 8-14* and *Living Values Activities for Young Adults*, which contain a range of reflective, imagining, communication, artistic and participatory activities to help support the awareness, exploration, expression, experience and development of values.

Living Values Education in Indonesia

The LVE approach is currently being implemented and producing positive results in at least 20 countries and was first presented in Indonesia in 2002 where it is now being used by 20 or more organisations including schools, universities, community and student groups and NGOs. The indications to date are that Living Values Education professional development courses and materials have been successful in helping make values education and values-based education a practical reality in a variety of local classrooms in Indonesia and making a meaningful contribution towards a harmonious society and the country's overall education development agenda.

The ultimate aim of education is preparation for life.

Pestalozzi

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the essence of good education is learning to be better people, to have more respect and be more responsible, as individuals, families, communities and societies and global citizens. This is applicable in any cultural context since values and responsibilities lie at the heart of the human person and the best of human civilisation and are critical to the well-being of the individual and societies. A values-based perspective must be at the heart of educational thinking and the mainstream of educational practice for lasting all-round human, economic and social development so that, with a clear sense of self-identity and purpose, we can progress and advance as whole human beings, as active participants in our local societies and as engaged members of one global human family. The kind of world we leave to our children depends on the kind of children we leave to our world and, as their educators, teachers are probably the most important people in the world. Let us salute our teachers!.

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