Strategies in Values Education: Horse or Cart?

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Abstract: This article describes briefly the growing emphasis in Australia on values education as evidenced by the Australian Government's National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (2005), and the responses of the respective States and Territories. Arguing that the major approaches to the teaching of values (the trait approach often taught through moral biography; values clarification; the cognitive developmental approach taught typically by discussion of moral dilemmas; and role playing) are markedly different in theory and practice, and that the National Framework is not prescriptive about the nature of teaching, the author suggests that the strategies embedded in the approaches, rather than fully predetermined content, should drive the enterprise of values education. The implications for teacher educators are discussed.

Introduction

The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005a) was the product of a national values education study endorsed in 2002 by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

Arguing the need for a more committed vision of values education in schools, the document addresses the need for the integration of values education throughout the curriculum; promotes the necessity for community involvement; and defines briefly nine values for schooling: (1), care and compassion; (2), doing your best; (3), freedom; (4), fair go; (5), honesty and trustworthiness; (6), integrity; (7), respect; (8), responsibility; and (9), understanding/tolerance and inclusion.

Many of these values are 'traditional' or universal (for example, 'honesty and trustworthiness'), though at least one might be defended as typically 'Australian ('a fair go').

More detail was provided in *Values for Australian Schooling Professional Learning Resources (DEST 2005b).* This document provided teachers with resources to promote an understanding of the nature of values; the characteristics of values education in Australia; the policies and programs for implementing values education; classroom learning and teaching; and the requisite community support of parents, families and caregivers.

The Australian States have also been vigorous in their advocacy of values education, either in specific or substantive documents such as the NSW *Values in NSW Public Schools (2004),* or in more inclusive curriculum offerings (the Queensland Department of Education's *Strategic Plan for 2004-2008*; South

Australia's *Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework;* Western Australia's *Curriculum Framework*; and Victoria's *Essential Learning Standards*).

The National Framework avoids the charge of over-prescription: 'individual schools will develop their own approaches to values education…' (DEST, 2005a, 4), and apart from a single page of 'Teaching and Learning Strategies and Tools', it focuses on school 'procedures' rather than on classroom approaches.

Traditional models of program design such as the 'objectives' or 'means-end' model emphasise the need to select content to achieve identified objectives (or outcomes). This practice was arguably reinforced by the advent of the national curriculum with its emphasis on outcomes based education in the early 1990s. Method, or strategies for teaching and learning, the other 'means' of achieving the 'ends,' has conventionally followed the full delineation of content.

This article argues that in relation to values education, decisions about content, and method or learning strategies, need to be considered interactively. A teacher's response to the values education imperative may well be to ask 'how' (to teach values) rather than 'what' (values to teach). The major approaches to values education have such different theoretical underpinnings and expressions of practice, that it may be more appropriate to regard the strategies as 'the horse that drives the cart.

The Approaches

The following facetious extract exemplifies, albeit simplistically, the four different approaches to values education:

As I arrive, my hostess welcomes me, dressed in sequin embroidered psychodelic nylon crepe, a military jacket and mauve galoshes. When asked what I think of her ensemble, I tell her it's hideous. She retreats, obviously hurt. Later that night I'm alone with four male guests. The first is hostile, rebuking me with the criticism that what I said to Susan was unkind and inconsiderate. 'People with real values,' he avers, 'are kind and sensitive'. The second man, to whom the first had turned for support, adopts a more interrogative approach. 'Does that remark you made to Susan' he asks, 'embody a value that you've chosen freely, from alternatives, and after reflection, that you prize and are willing to publicly affirm, and that you act upon, repeatedly if necessary'. Deliberating for a while, I reply in the affirmative. 'Well I have no argument then,' the man approves. The third man, introducing his question with the claim that a person's values can't be evaluated only by their behavioural outcomes, looks at me quizzically, and asks 'Why did you tell Susan that her dress was hideous?' 'If I hadn't', I hesitate, 'I would not have not lived up to my own standards of truthfulness, and I would have a troubled conscience'. 'Do you know', the man smiles, 'that you've just used the highest possible stage of moral reasoning?' The tide has turned in my favour, and the fourth man turns on the first, condemning him for his over-zealous judgments, and suggesting that he try to 'climb into my shoes' to imagine my thoughts and feelings when faced with Susan's confrontational question.

Each of the four men in this extract represents, at least stereotypically, one of the approaches to values education: the trait approach, values clarification, the cognitive developmental approach and role playing respectively.

The Trait Approach

The trait approach is probably the most 'content-specific' of the four. Based on values 'absolutism' (the notion that certain values are more worthwhile than others), it involves the teaching of predetermined qualities or traits. These have traditionally been honesty, loyalty, compassion, perseverance, kindness and service, and their determination inevitably raises the question of 'determined by whom?' Such a question prompted Kohlberg (1975, 673) to refer to the approach pejoratively as 'the bag of virtues approach'. For example, Aristotle's 'bag' was liberality, temperance, pride, truthfulness and justice; and that of the Boy Scouts is honesty, loyalty, reverence, cleanliness and bravery. Proponents argue that it is our responsibility as parents and teachers to transmit the moral-cultural heritage by teaching the appropriate values.

While the approach is content-specific in that certain values are isolated for teaching, method considerations hinge on the extent to which the teaching is indoctrinative. At one end of the indoctrination continuum, the values could be taught by exhortation and as unproblematic; at the other end, the values could be exemplified by the actions of worthy role models through moral biography. Of course, the use of moral biography may involve little more than reading the biography (usually abridged to one or two pages), and ascribing the desired value label to a character's exemplary action (service, bravery, kindness).

Alternatively, the biography may not require a bald deduction from one or a number of actions, but provide statements from the characters about their thoughts and feelings that prompted the 'worthy' actions. Rowan, Gauld, Cole-Adams & Connolly (2007) provide extracts, predominantly of defining moments in the lives of worthy role models, rather than the traditional chronology of achievements in the lives of 'historical' characters such as Florence Nightingale, Confucius and Lord Shaftesbury, that often contained unexplained action. These extracts, often revealing the motives that prompted a particular character's behaviour, are supplemented by strategies for students that typically produce a range of different interpretations of the nature of the values demonstrated. So while content, like the nine values for Australian school children, may appear to be prescriptive, decisions about method, or how the content is taught, are interwoven.

Values Clarification

This approach is based upon the principle of values relativity (that we should not judge the worthiness of each other's values), and that we should strive to clarify those values that are personally meaningful, that is, the values that make us more purposeful, productive and socially aware, and better critical thinkers.

While values clarification may operate within a content framework of prescribed values (for instance a nominated such as responsibility, or a theme such as social care), it typically involves clarification of multiple values, and focuses on the process involved in realising a value. This process, according to the authors (Raths, Harmin & Simon 1978) involves satisfying seven elements, grouped according to three broad criteria: (1), *valuing* (freely, from alternatives, and after reflection); (2), *prizing* (cherishing and being willing to publicly affirm the choice); and (3), *acting* (acting on the choice, and acting repeatedly if necessary). Of course teachers, in providing a range of clarifying strategies, teachers rarely follow such a formal

process. They provide the strategy, and subject the responses to scrutiny through questioning.

Method, as befits the notion of relativity, is also student-centred in terms of learning 'structures'. Students typically work in small groups on strategies, and report back in the full class context, although some strategies may be undertaken individually, in pairs or by the whole class working together. Teachers facilitate by questioning. If they choose to adhere to the process described above, their questions will relate to each of the seven elements. For example, for *choosing from alternatives*, the teacher might ask 'Have you thought of another way? For *prizing*, the question might be ' Are you willing to tell the class about that belief/value?'

Following are typical values clarifying strategies that exemplify the open-ended and student-centred nature of the approach:

- *Y chart*. Students develop a list of actions that demonstrate a value (say care and compassion) by listing respectively in the three segments formed by the Y, what the value looks like (people helping, people giving), sounds like (gentle talking, 'come with us'), and feels like (warm, friendly).
- *Values shield*. Students display what is meaningful to them by drawing symbols or pictures on a cardboard family crest. The crest is usually divided into six segments, and students complete each according to criteria provided (for example, what your family believes to be important; what you do to help others).
- *SWOT analysis*. Students identify the relevant *S*trengths, *W*eaknesses, *O*pportunities and *T*hreats relating to a particular issue. For example, the issue may be 'that euthanasia be legalised'.
- *Ranking*. Students are given numerous statements on an issue and asked to rank them in order of importance or commitment. Alternatively, they may be asked to generate a list before ranking (what qualities are most prized in a person; what is most feared; what comprises the greatest challenges to faith).
- *PMI*. Students are required to list the positive (Plus), negative (Minus) and interesting (Interest) aspects of a nominated issue, thereby articulating their own values. For instance, the issues might be building high-rise structure in a local area, or logging a forest.
- *Consequences chart*. Students record the likely consequences of decisions and actions based on the values that individuals or groups hold. The chart assumes the appearance of a 'branching' graphic organiser.

It is no accident that the eight strategies provided in the 'Glossary of Teaching and Learning Strategies and Tools' in *Values for Australian Schooling Professional Learning Resources* (DEST 2005b) are examples of values clarification.

While the nine values for Australian schooling may constitute a loose content framework, the values clarification approach provides a method that enables students to interpret, construct and co-construct their own personally meaningful values, and saves policy makers from the criticisms of over-prescription and indoctrination that run counter to the prevailing ethos of constructivism in learning and teaching (see Brady, 2006).

The Cognitive Developmental Approach

This approach is more concerned with 'structure' than with specific content. It is 'developmental' because values education is perceived as movement through

stages, and according to Kohlberg (1980, 31) these stages are 'structured wholes': 'total ways of thinking, not attitudes towards particular situations'. We are located at particular stages according to the quality of our moral reasoning, and not its content. So two people may have opposite views on euthanasia (different content), yet be reasoning at the same stage level (the same 'structure').

The focus of the cognitive theorists is therefore on improving reasoning and facilitating movement through the stages, rather than to differentiate between right and wrong decisions.

For Kohlberg (1975, 1980) there are six stages of moral reasoning: two 'pre-conventional' stages; two 'conventional' stages; and two 'post-conventional', 'principled' or autonomous stages. The following are characteristics of the stages and of stage transition:

- The stages form a fixed sequence, and movement is forward. People do not move backwards through the stages.
- People can fixate at any one stage, and not all people reach the highest, or autonomous stages.
- The stages are universal in that they apply to all cultures. Kohlberg (1980,17) argued that he could 'define a culturally and historically universal pattern of mature moral thought'.
- People are 'modal', that is they tend to reason at a particular stage level, although Kohlberg (1975, 672) acknowledges the factors of motive and emotion in accounting for fluctuations between stages.
- The stages are 'hierarchical integrations' in that reasoning at higher stages includes lower stage thinking. As a result, people prefer reasoning at a higher stage (one stage above) their own.
- A person's intellectual stage (Piaget's stages) imposes a ceiling upon the moral stage that can be achieved. For instance, a child who is only at the Piagetian concrete operational stage is limited to moral stages 1 and 2; and the morally autonomous person has to be at the fully formal operational stage.

Kohlberg (1975) argued that the means of promoting development through the stages was the exposure of students to conflict, so the classroom strategy involved the presentation of a moral dilemma story, sometimes dubbed a 'conflict,' or 'unfinished' story. It was 'unfinished' because it concludes with a question as to how the protagonist should solve a hypothetical student-centred conflict. While a moral dilemma may focus on a general 'content' area (compassion or responsibility), it typically includes a variety of moral issues and encourages students to view the issues as problematic. Tight prescription of what to value would be anathema, for conflict after all is the agent of moral growth.

Teachers facilitate a full class discussion of the dilemma, injecting the requisite conflict by asking both questions that relate to substantive issues in the dilemma, and questions that are generally applicable ('What might have caused that? What might the consequences be? Can you suggest an alternative? Who might be hurt if that action were taken?). Major teacher roles include ensuring that the conflict is not so great that it is frustrating, and not so slight that it is not challenging; and exposing students to the reasoning of those who are thinking at the next highest stage (plus one stage), as students prefer and are more influenced by it. Teachers do not endorse a particular solution as 'right', and they do not impose their own views (a forceful teacher might eliminate potentially growth enhancing conflict by declaring a strong position on an issue). However, the lesson may conclude with a teacher summary, and the delineation of possible solutions.

So while broad content areas such as respect, compassion and integrity may be pre-specified, the approach is driven by the method of applying reasoning to values-laden, student-centred scenarios that generate conflict for those involved in their discussion.

Role Playing

Role plays, like moral dilemmas, explore multi-layered values in complex moral scenarios. Shaftel (1967, 84) provides an early definition of role play as 'the opportunity to explore through spontaneous improvisation…typical group problem situations in which individuals are helped to become sensitive to the feelings of the people involved'. In a typical role play, two people engage in spontaneous, unrehearsed dialogue that explores a solution to a problem.

This dialogue assumes a 'transactional' quality in that the responses of one person are complicated by the unpredictable responses of the other. By 'climbing into another's shoes', both players are forced to see things from another perspective, and as a result, they learn more about themselves and the other players.

The following six steps in conducting a role play are an elaboration of those suggested by Brady (1989):

1. Solution Confrontation. The teacher explains to the class the solution or problem to be role played, and may clarify the main issues (particularly if it is one of a number of solutions delineated from discussion of a moral dilemma). If there are characters in a scenario that have been given names, these may be restated.

2. Briefing. This step is essential to overcome the perception that role playing is simply play acting: an opportunity to entertain an audience or realise another's creative vision. The two students chosen for the role play stand in a central position with the teacher who briefs either by statement (sensitising the class and players to the situation by indicating in as neutral as possible a way, what each player may be thinking or feeling), or by questioning about each player in turn (questions directed at both the class and the players). If the players have not sufficiently 'entered' their roles when the exchange begins, the teacher halts the role play and resumes briefing.

3. Role Play. Indicating the player who should begin, the teacher moves aside, and the players react to each other in dialogue. No props are necessary, as this accents the theatrical, and extraneous dialogue is discouraged ('Come in. Would you like a drink?'). While there is typically a natural conclusion to most role plays, the teacher may stop a continuing exchange if it doesn't seem to be heading for resolution, or if valuable insights can be discussed.

4. Debriefing. This is an optional step for those players who may have difficulty exiting the role they have played. As the players return to their seats, the teacher may simply state 'now remember Elise, you're not Maroun anymore. You don't have those things to worry about'. The teacher may also use the nametag strategy whereby the players remove a tag of the named role, thereby symbolically discarding it.

5. Reflection on Transaction. Before the players return to their seats, the teacher questions each in turn about the transactional nature of the exchange: how the other's statements or behaviour shaped their own responses. Class members are then called upon to share their perceptions. When the players return to their seats, the teacher directs a discussion on the perceived reality of the exchange. Typical

comments indicating disagreement include the aggression or yielding nature of the players.

6. Further Enactments. Two new players can be selected to role play the same scenario; a new solution may be role played with new characters; or one player may be retained from the original exchange and a new one chosen (often one, who during discussion, disagreed with a 'position' taken by one of the players).

As for the cognitive developmental approach, broad content areas may be established, but the approach is driven by the sophisticated social learning technique of 'decentring' through spontaneous verbal improvisations. Specific values learned in such exchanges are multi-layered and cannot be fully predetermined.

Implications for Teacher Education

The DEST (2005a & 2005b) documents provide a challenge for teacher educators, not only because their implementation is mandated but also because there is a negligible amount of attention given to the question of *how* values education should be implemented in classrooms. Only rarely do documents issued by State systems provide a comprehensive list of strategies, and when they do, like those outlined in the NSW Department of Education and Training (2004) that identifies 22 strategies, they are not linked to the specific methodology of the various approaches (and are typically only values clarification strategies).

This is not an abrogation of responsibility on the part of policy makers. In such a sensitive area, there are dangers of over-prescription and consequently claims of indoctrination. The lack of clearly articulated approaches or strategies, and the statement that schools should assume the responsibility of developing their own approaches, is not a 'cop out'. It is a strength of the documents that they acknowledge the expertise of schools.

As this discussion has indicated, the four common approaches outlined have different theoretical underpinnings and expressions of practice. Whereas the trait approach presents values as absolutes (even though they can be taught as problematic), values clarification is based on the principle of moral relativity: the notion that we can select our own personally meaningful values. The cognitive developmental approach advocates the use of moral reasoning applied to hypothetical student-centred dilemmas that generate conflict and thereby facilitate movement through stages; and role playing promotes self and 'other' awareness by assuming multiple perspectives in spontaneous, verbal, transactional exchanges. As indicated, these approaches each have specific methodologies with which teachers need to be familiar.

The challenge for teacher educators is to assist both pre and in-service teachers by providing a deeper understanding of how to implement values education. Because the approaches have different methodologies they defy a uniform teaching model. Teachers also need to know how seemingly disparate approaches can be integrated into lessons, and how they can be incorporated into evolving models of constructivist learning and teaching.

Conclusion

The area of values education is replete with contentious issues involving the nature of schooling, ideology, democracy and power. Questions about what knowledge is marginalised and legitimated, whose interests are being served, and how to provide an empowering school education are at the heart of the critical debate. It has not been the purpose of the article to engage in this critical dialogue, although some of the issues were identified as problematic in the approaches discussed, but to outline the common and contemporary approaches to values education and to suggest that method or the 'how' of values education should drive considerations of the 'what' (the content of values education).

While the latter raises the questions of what values, and who selects them, the former generates a variety of problematic questions:

- Should values be taught directly as 'absolutes', thereby risking criticisms of indoctrination?
- If the notion of moral relativity is adopted in teaching values, how can teachers and policy makers ensure sufficient rigour in the process of student adoption?
- Is self-awareness enough, or might values education degenerate into declaring personal preferences or matters of taste, rather than passionate commitment to personally meaningful values?
- Is there a developmental sequence in values education, and if so, what are the implications for practice?
- To what extent should reasoning (about student-centred moral scenarios) be involved in values education?
- How significant to values education is 'decentring' or seeing things from another's perspective?
- In the current 'constructivist' climate of teaching and learning, what role should the teacher play?

While *The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (DEST 2005a) specifies nine values, their brief and general definitions confer the status of a loose framework rather than a tight prescription. Furthermore, DEST (2005a, 4) places the onus of 'method' responsibility on the schools: 'individual schools will develop their own approaches to values education'.

While a broad content framework (nine general values) is helpful as a guide, decisions about more detailed lesson content need to consider the questions posed above. In this respect, the method horse needs to drive the content cart, and teacher educators have a dynamic role in educating pre and in-service teachers in the different pedagogies.

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