

Values activities for the geography classroom

by Jill Sykes, Global Education Victoria Project Co-ordinator

Values education is not new in education, but with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) curriculum reform document there is the impetus to revisit the area. The VELS document clearly focusses on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will prepare students to live in a world that is increasingly global in its outlook and influences. This links very clearly with the knowledge, values and skills that are outlined in the *Global Perspectives statement on global education for Australian schools* and with the values that have been identified in the National Framework for Values Education.

The stated purpose of education in the VELS document is to enable students to develop the capacities to:

- manage themselves as individuals and in relation to others
- understand the world in which they live
- act effectively in that world.

These capacities will provide the basis for students to meet the challenge of creating a future which

- is sustainable
- is innovative
- builds strong communities.

Victorian Essential Learning Standards Overview p.4.

Similarly, the National Framework for Values Education in Australian schools has a vision that "all Australian schools will provide values education in a planned and systematic way ... by developing student responsibility in local, national and global contexts and building student resilience and social skills". (*National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools p.3.*) Within this framework it is important to recognise that individual schools will develop their own approaches to values education based on the needs of the particular school community, often expressed in the school's charter or vision statement. The Global Perspectives statement spells out that "global education seeks to prepare students to live in an increasingly globalised world and to be active, participating citizens who contribute to shaping a better future."

Global Perspectives: A statement on global education for Australian schools p.5.

For geography teachers, values have always been a component of what and how they teach because of the focus on a critical understanding of the society in which the students live and the desire that their students be active participants in that society. All three documents referred to above are explicit about the values that should be taught. There are slight differences but democracy, social justice, and environmental sustainability are basic values in all the documents. The issue for teachers is how to teach values. It is important for the teacher to make a conscious effort to identify and articulate the values involved in the area under study. Students should be given the opportunity through an inquiry approach to explore their own and others' values, form conclusions based on considering alternatives and their implications, and develop a plan of action.

The following activities are some sample learning strategies, designed to give opportunities for students to explore and articulate their values positions. These

strategies enable teachers to avoid the issue of whether they are imposing their own values on students by allowing for critical, open, wide-ranging, and informed discussion that should lead to collaboration in the development of a public course of action. Such collaboration will involve students in conflict resolution, problem solving and negotiation.

1. The Values Continuum

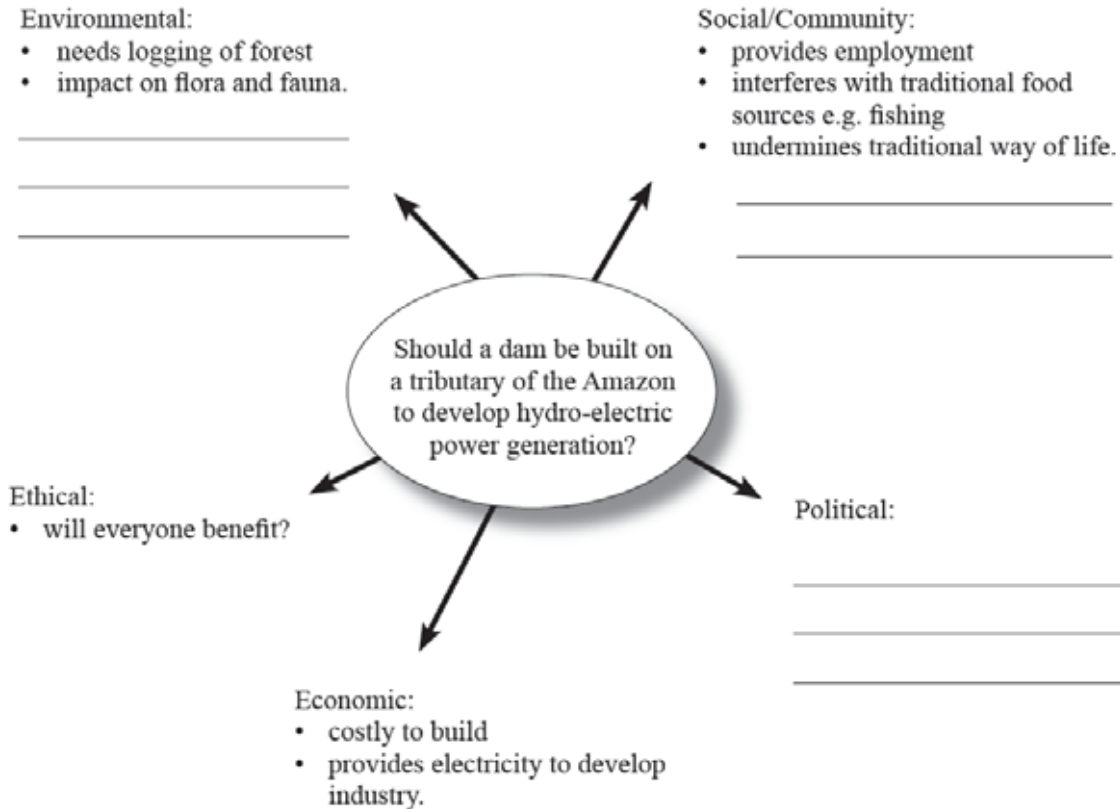
This strategy can be used at the end of a unit as it allows students to base their position on the information they have learnt, clarifies the issue/s that have arisen and allows for the development of an action plan. Students respond to a statement such as "Australia should build nuclear power stations" or to a visual stimulus such as photos of a wind turbine and a nuclear power station. Students are required to move from their seats to place themselves on a line with 'strongly agree' at one end and "strongly disagree" at the other. The line allows for gradations with "don't know" or "unsure" in the centre. This could be part of a Level 6 unit of study on global warming looking at the interaction of human activities with the natural environment. Students discuss with those on either side why they have positioned themselves at a particular spot. The teacher then asks students for their reasons. Students may change their position as they listen to the views of other students. At the conclusion, where most students are comfortable with their position on the continuum, assuming that there will not be consensus on the issue, discuss what actions students can take to support their stance if they feel the issue is important to them.

2. The Oxford Debate

This strategy has some similarities to the Values Continuum. Areas within the classroom are designated as "agree with the statement", "disagree with the statement" and "don't know". A possible topic for debate is "that commercial whaling should continue to be banned". (VELS Level 5: an investigation of an environmental issue and an evaluation of an existing policy to ensure the sustainability of a resource). To start, one student moves to each of the designated areas and gives a reason for their position. At the end of each "round" a further three students move to the area representing their view and give their reason for being there. This continues until all students in the class have positioned themselves. Again, movement between areas can occur as students listen to the arguments presented. It is important to encourage the students to be as clear as they can about the reasons for their decision and the underlying belief/s that are influencing them. Again, at the conclusion when students have finally positioned themselves, discuss what actions can follow.

3. An Issues Map

An issues map can help identify the different dimensions or perspectives that relate to a particular event or topic of concern. It is often helpful to have issues phrased as questions as these can be answered differently depending on the point of view or values held by those who suggest an answer. This could be used to investigate "should a dam be built on a tributary of the Amazon to develop hydro-electric power generation?" In developing the issues map, students become familiar with the classification of factors into social, historical, environmental, economic and political which are commonly used in geography.



The map could be developed individually or in groups. Students could be given different roles to represent the different stakeholders involved in the issue, such as the Indigenous groups, the rubber tappers and Brazil nut gatherers, the small landowners, the cattle ranchers, the government, and the hydro-electrical engineers. Having developed their individual maps students could then be grouped to work at resolving the issue. This would involve significant negotiation, collaboration and problem-solving.

4. Diamond Ranking

The following example is from *Go Global: Global perspectives in the Secondary Classroom*. It would be applicable to both Levels 5 and 6 as part of discussions about sustainability.

Principles of ecologically sustainable development

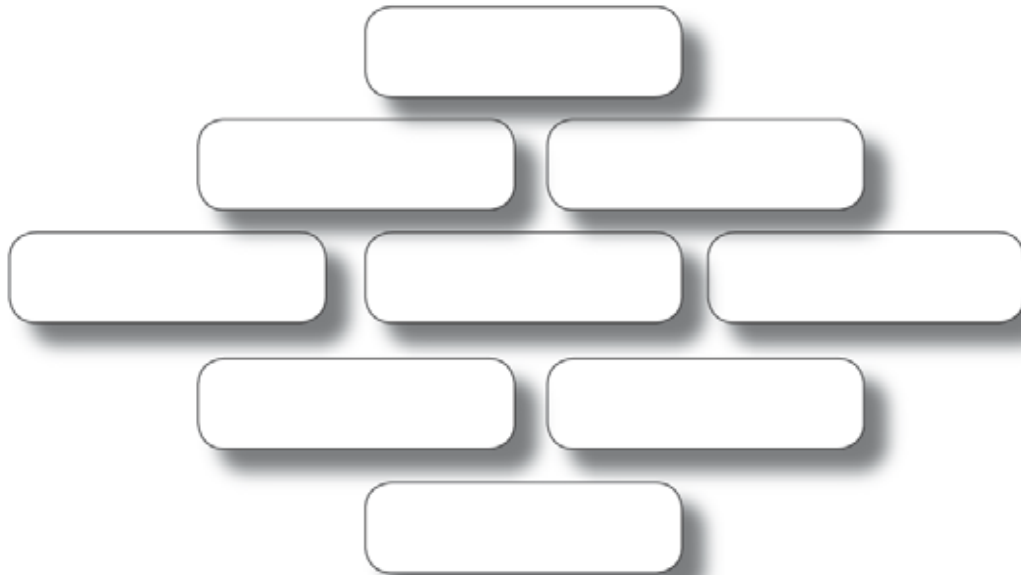
Principles of ecologically sustainable development	Yes	No	Not sure or not applicable
1. Human beings are at the centre of ecologically sustainable development and are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.			
2. Countries have the right to use and develop their resources provided they do not damage their local environment or the global environment.			

3. The use or development of resources by the current generation shall not affect the ability of future generations to enjoy the resources or environment.			
4. Protection of the environment shall be built into development projects and not be additional or separate.			
5. Countries shall co-operate in the task of eradicating poverty to encourage ecologically sustainable development.			
6. Countries shall co-operate to conserve, protect, and restore the environment.			
7. Countries shall reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption.			
8. Countries shall co-operate to improve scientific understanding and share scientific and technological knowledge, skills, and technologies.			
9. The environment is looked after best when citizens are well-informed and can participate in decision-making and activities.			
10. Countries shall co-operate to promote economic systems, policies or projects that lead to economic growth and ecologically sustainable development.			
11. Development projects shall include environmental impact assessments.			
12. Women have a vital role in environmental management and development, and their full participation is essential to ecologically sustainable development.			
13. Young people shall be educated and encouraged to work for ecologically sustainable development.			
14. Indigenous people shall be encouraged as participants in the achievement of ecologically sustainable development because of their traditional knowledge and practices.			

Adapted from Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), in *Agenda 21: United Nations Program of Action from Rio 1993*, United Nations Department of Public Information, New York, pp 9–11.

Students are given the hand-out which lists the principles of ecologically sustainable development. They are all important but some people believe some are more

important than others. Have the principles printed on a set of cards. Using the “think, pair and share” technique, students work with a partner to select the nine principles that they think are most important. They may need to compromise to achieve agreement. Once agreement has been reached about the most important nine principles, the students then rank those principles in a diamond shape with the most important principle at the top of the diamond.



Again, it is important for students, as they develop their ranking, to explain their decisions and explore the beliefs that underlie the decisions. Once the pairs have completed their rankings, the completed diamonds should be displayed and compared. The ensuing discussion may illustrate the difficulty of reaching consensus and making decisions. Students should be encouraged to consider what they can do to encourage sustainable development within their families, their school community, and their local community.

The strategies outlined give teachers an opportunity to bring values education into the classroom in a way that allows students to listen to and respect the views of others while clarifying their own values.

Some useful references:

- Gilbert, Rob (ed) 2004, *Studying Society and Environment A Guide for Teachers* third edition, Thomson Social Science Press.
- *Global Perspectives: A statement on global education for Australian schools*, 2002, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton South.
- Kriewaldt, Jeana, 2003, *Values: Dimensions in Geography*, Geographical Education, Volume 16, Australian Geography Teachers' Association, 2003.
- *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*, DEST, 2004 downloaded from www.curriculum.edu.au/values/index.htm
- Triolo, Rosalie, 2000, *Go Global: Global perspectives in the Secondary Classroom*, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton South.
- *Victorian Essential Learning Standards Overview*, Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority, East Melbourne, 2005.