

**VALUES EDUCATION AND TEACHERS' WORK:
A QUALITY TEACHING PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract

In order for values education to become part and parcel of mainstream schooling, the closest possible links need to be found between it and the world of teachers and schools. Teaching has undergone a revolution over the past decade or so. Updated research into the role of the teacher has uncovered the true potential of the teacher (and, through the teachers, the school) to make a difference. Much of this research insight is captured in the notion of 'Quality Teaching', a perspective that speaks of intellectual depth, inter-relational capacity and self-reflection as being among the factors that characterize the kind of learning that makes a difference. There are important synergies between these perspectives and those of values education. Making these links has potential to release the true power of values education and to elevate it to a mainstream issue for all schools. The address will explore these links and demonstrate how other frameworks and resources available to teachers can be incorporated into a comprehensive and powerful values education for all schools.

Introduction

In order for Values Education to become part and parcel of mainstream schooling, especially in public systems, the closest possible links need to be found between it and the world of teachers and schools. Teaching has undergone a revolution in the recent past. It was once a profession whose systems focussed preponderantly on the more academically selective portion of the population, on the learning and cultural preferences of the hegemonic white, largely Anglo-Celtic population and on the essential literacies of language, mathematics, science, history and the arts. It is now a profession whose systems have to find the point of relevance for education of students across a vast array of academic and cultural starting-points. It also has to address dimensions of learning quite beyond the standard literacies because the social agency role of schooling has expanded beyond even the very lofty goals of its founders.

Clearly, these changes, that have nothing to do with values education *per se*, have nonetheless created an environment more conducive to the acceptance of Values Education as a natural attachment to the roles of the teacher and the school.

Moreover, the environment is not only conducive to Values Education as an academic exercise but to it as a practical agency of moral formation. Whether they like it or not, teachers cannot stand wholly apart from this role any longer. Recent and substantial insights provided by research into teaching have overturned earlier conceptions about

the limited capacity of teachers to make a difference in the lives of their students. These insights are increasingly providing the norm and standards expected of teachers and schools, not only around their academic responsibilities but also around their wider role in personal and social development.

Key Insights of Quality Teaching: The Wider Role of Teachers

Especially for those teachers trained in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a dominant credo that limited teachers' self-perception of their role. It was captured well in the words of the educational sociologist, Christopher Jencks. Jencks proposed that "... the character of a school's output depends largely on a single input, namely the characteristics of the entering children." (1972: 256) This was the classic 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear' kind of belief. In other words, there is not much that a teacher can really do to change the stars that have already determined the fate of one's students, primarily through their physical and familial heritage, and one shouldn't beat oneself up too much trying to achieve the unachievable. Now, if this belief related to the teacher's incapacity to make much of a difference even around the business of academic prowess, how totally incapacitating was the belief around issues of instilling personal and social morality. If a teacher could not even rely on their role to take a student struggling with literacy and numeracy to truly new standards of achievement, then what hope could there be of convincing them they could play a determinative role in moral formation?

In the 1990s, however, the Jencks thesis was well and truly challenged by a raft of educational research around the notion of 'Quality Teaching' (cf. Newmann, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1997). This was highly interventionist research designed to show once and for all whether the power of the teacher was in fact as minimal as Jencks had supposed or whether it could effect change in students' prospects. A number of key researchers conducted some of the most wide-ranging research ever conducted in trying to determine this central question. In short, what they discovered, and what is now generally held to be true, was that the power of the teacher to effect change was limited only by the extent to which one did not fully utilize all the capacity one had, or perhaps to the extent that one's training had been deficient.

Studies were conducted that pitted virtually every category of disadvantage (as Jencks would have had it) against the power of ‘Quality Teaching’. In many cases, the studies were around comparisons with equivalent non-disadvantaged cohorts matched up with what came to be known as ‘ineffective teaching’. To the astonishment of a sceptical public, in virtually all cases the results were the same. Where the disadvantaged (including even disabled) cohorts were facilitated by Quality Teaching, and their non-disadvantaged equivalent cohort was being supported by ineffective teaching, it was the disadvantaged who were shown to achieve at a greater rate. In short, when faced with all the ‘chestnut’ barriers to learning (as Jencks would have had it), be they barriers based on gender, class, language or even disabilities of sorts, Quality Teaching had the power to overturn the disadvantage. The power of Quality Teaching had been demonstrated almost beyond contention. This now almost truism is to be found in the thinking of most systems, including in Australia, effectively replacing the earlier Jencksian thesis with a new anthem around teacher quality (Rowe, 2004).

In Queensland, the ‘New Basics’ project was run out in the late 1990s around the belief in the power of ‘productive pedagogies’, a concept that captured a central belief in the comprehensive power of positive teaching to impact on student learning across a wide range of indicators (Qld, 1999). In WA, Loudon and colleagues (Loudon et al., 2004) conducted a Commonwealth Government study titled appropriately, *In Teachers’ Hands*. It engaged in intensive analyses of classroom practice that illustrated clearly the relative effects of socio-economic readiness in the face of the overwhelming effects of quality teaching practice. In NSW, the so-called Quality Teacher Program (NSW, 2000; 2003) was rolled out with the dominant assertions in its foreground: “The quality of student learning outcomes is directly dependent on the quality of the teacher.” (NSW, 2000:2) and “(it) is the quality of pedagogy that most directly and most powerfully affects the quality of learning.” (NSW, 2003:4) In summarizing a vast array of research studies premised on effective teaching, John Hattie (2003) has recommended to systems responsible for the education of young people:

I therefore suggest that we should focus on the greatest source of variance that can make the difference – the teacher. We need to ensure that this greatest

influence is optimized to have powerful and sensationally positive effects on the learner.

Quality Teaching and Values Education: a Common Language and Perspective

It is in probing this question, 'What is Quality Teaching?', that the inherent connection with Values Education becomes particularly and perhaps surprisingly stark. Quality Teaching has been defined in various ways within different projects. Among the differences, however, there is a discernible pattern that has stretched the conception of 'teacher' beyond its former constraints. Beyond the expected criteria related to qualifications and updated skills, there are more subtle features that speak, for instance of, 'intellectual depth'. This is a concept that identifies the need not only to drive students towards dealing with the full array of facts and details related to any topic (in other words to avoid surface factual learning), but to induct students into the skills of interpretation, communication, negotiation, and reflection. In a word, the teacher's job is well beyond preparing students for 'get the answer right' standardized testing, but to engage the students' more sophisticated skills levels around such features as 'communicative capacity' and 'self-reflection'. Communicative capacity takes in many of the dispositions necessary to a highly developed social conscience and self-reflection provides the essential basis for a truly integrated and owned personal morality. In other words, it is not just the surface factual learning so characteristic of education of old that is to be surpassed, it is surface learning in general that is to be traded in favour of a learning that engages the whole person in depth of cognition, social and emotional maturity, and self-knowledge.

For those who know his work, it will not be surprising to learn that the thinking of Jurgen Habermas (1972; 1974; 1990; 2001), the German philosopher, has been instrumental in much of the educational thought that lies behind the moves towards deepening the learning of our youth and stretching the role of the teacher. I say now of these moves what I said about Habermas when first studying him for my own PhD a quarter of a century ago: it all reminds me of the work of the mystics, the mystics of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and of the profound spiritualities of personhood to be found in the likes of Hinduism and Buddhism. For Habermas, the alleged agnostic, it is quite a feat to have brought to life in modern education these forms of mainstream spirituality. Beyond the importance of base technical learning (that is, the knowledge

of facts and figures), Habermas spoke when it was entirely unfashionable of the more challenging and authentic learning of what he described as ‘communicative knowledge’ (that is, the knowledge that results from engagement and interrelationship with others) and of ‘self-reflectivity’ (that is, the knowledge that comes from knowing oneself). For Habermas, this latter was the supreme knowledge that marked a point of having arrived as a human being. There is no knowing without knowing the knower, he would say, and the knower is oneself. In a sense, the ultimate point of the learning game is to be found in knowing oneself.

There have been several attempts in the English-speaking world to capture some of these thoughts and find their application to the formalities of schooling. Stenhouse (1975) was one of the first curriculum theorists to stretch earlier work done by Bloom (1956) and Krathwohl et al. (1964) around taxonomies of learning and to make application to the practical world of curriculum planning and design. Stenhouse did not resile from the importance of instilling strong foundations in children’s learning, foundations which were best managed by learning functions he described as ‘training’ and ‘instruction’. These were hardly new concepts in the exploration and elaboration of learning. The important balance of Stenhouse, however, was in his estimation of training and instruction functions as constituting only the beginning of learning. His great contribution was in reminding educators that the grand vision of learning was way beyond those technical detailed, facts-and-figures goals that occupy so much space in the average curriculum. Instead, the true end of learning was in drawing people into the higher learning functions of what he described as ‘initiation’ (where one grasps and truly understands for oneself) and ‘induction’ (where one comes to own, value and believe for oneself).

While Quality Teaching research is often said to have revived the importance of training and, especially, instruction (Fallon, 2003), it has, far more importantly, ratified the grand vision of Stenhouse. Quality Teaching research has illustrated the true and full power of the teacher to make a difference in student learning not only around the technical (or factual), but around the interpretive (or social) and reflective (or personal) as well (after Habermas, 1972; see also Lovat & Smith, 2003). The notion of ‘intellectual depth’ is teased out to illustrate that the teacher’s job is far more than simply preparing students to ‘get the answers right but to engage the students’

more sophisticated skills levels around such features as ‘communicative capacity’ and ‘self-reflection’ as well.

In the USA, it was the Carnegie Corporation’s 1994 Task Force on Learning (Carnegie, 1994) that in many ways impelled the modern era of Quality Teaching. It represented a turning-point in the dominant conceptions placed on the role of the school and, in turn, on the power of teaching to effect change in student achievement. It also played a part in identifying the range of learning skills that should constitute student achievement. Beyond the more predictable aspects of intellectual development, the Task Force report introduced for the modern era notions of learning concerned with communication, empathy, reflection, self-management and the particularly intriguing notion of self-knowing. It was also explicit in making the point that, while heritage and upbringing could make a difference to the ease with which these forms of learning can be achieved, they were in no way certain predictors of success. Consistent with the era of Quality Teaching which the report in some ways ushered in, the final onus was placed on the school (especially the early years of school) and the teacher in making the bigger difference.

There are other criteria found commonly in the literature of Quality Teaching that merely serve to support and affirm the above essential positioning of education and the teacher. One of these is ‘relevance’. The quality teacher is one who can find the point of relevance for students around any topic. The notion of relevance is teased out to illustrate that teaching is not about imposing fixed ideas from on high but entails the art of connecting and being seen to connect with the real worlds of students. The quality teacher is one who is able to enter these worlds with comfort and conviction and win the trust of the students in his or her care.

Another criterion is variously titled ‘supportiveness’. It further reinforces the notion that the quality teacher will be at pains to construct a positive and conducive environment. It builds on the fundamental notion that people will learn best when they feel comfortable, secure and affirmed, a notion confirmed by modern research to be fundamental to student success (Rowe, 2004). It is a notion that goes to the heart of the relationship between the teacher and the student. The teacher is not merely one

who deals with students' intellectual capacities but one who relates to the whole person and the whole person's needs and development.

In summary, Quality Teaching has illustrated the power of teaching across the range of technical learning (otherwise known as the factual), interpretive learning (otherwise known as the social) and reflective learning (otherwise known as the personal).

Quality Teaching has alerted the educational community to the greater potential of teaching, including in such areas as personal and social values inculcation. As such, it has huge relevance for the world inhabited by a comprehensive and exhaustive Values Education.

Values Education: A Quality Teaching Pursuit

These are the underpinning philosophies of teaching which must be understood in order for the modern values education pursuit to be truly saturating of our schooling systems, religious, independent and public. Especially in relation to the public system, it is only through these linkages with the most updated educational theory and teaching philosophy that the words of the Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century, and the even sharper words of the 2003 Federal Government Values Education Study (DEST, 2003) and the 2005 National Framework for Values Education (DEST, 2005), will truly capture the hearts and minds of the average teacher.

The Adelaide Declaration (1999) tells us that schooling is to provide young Australians with a foundation for “... intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development,” while the Values Education Study tells us that “... schools are not value-free or value neutral zones of social and educational engagement,’ that they are “... as much about building character as ... equipping students with specific skills,’ and that “... values education is ... an explicit goal ... aimed at promoting care, respect and cooperation.” (DEST, 2003:) In a very explicit connection between the goals of values education and the centrality of a quality teaching perspective, the National Framework for Values Education tells us that: “Values education reflects good practice pedagogy.” The report makes explicit reference to the language of quality teaching in extending the general notion of good

practice pedagogy to incorporate the specific notion of ‘good practice values education.’ (DEST, 2005:7)

With the criteria of Quality Teaching in place, the focus of that good teaching that is titled Values Education will fit well and be at one with the underpinnings of teacher practice. Intellectual depth will ensure that Values Education never settles for its own surface learning (= a distinct possibility). Impelled by intellectual depth, a la Habermas, Values Education will be building on any factual knowledge (about values) to develop in students the kind of communicative capacities, interpretive skills and powers of negotiation that are at the heart of a social conscience, and, moreover, the reflective and self-reflective growth that is the foundation of a personal morality. Similarly, the criterion of relevance will serve to ensure that Values Education is always connected with the real contexts and concerns of the students. Furthermore, the criterion of supportiveness will underpin the credibility of the values educator as being someone who practises what they preach, and is a credible and authentic model of the care, respect and love they are proposing as the basis of personal morality and social citizenry.

Ken Rowe (Rowe, 2004), one of Australia’s leading educational researchers, notes that of all the teacher qualities nominated by those students who achieve best at school, that ‘this teacher cares’ about me/us or ‘I trust this teacher’ kinds of responses were first and foremost, with ‘knows her/his stuff’ and ‘makes things interesting’ bringing up an important rear. In other words, the content and substance of Values Education has potential to go to the very heart of the power of Quality Teaching by focussing teacher attention on that feature of their professional practice which has most impact, namely the relationship of due care, mutual respect, fairness and positive modelling established with the student. [In turn, this notion of teacher relationship with students fits well with the priorities to be found in the literature and research around teacher professional standards and ethics (NBPTS, 1999; Lovat, 1992; 1994; 1995; 2000)].

In a word, it is a values-laden notion that marks out the single most important features of teacher impact, with the chestnut areas of content and method coming next in priorities. One is reminded many years on of the caution against instrumentalist

approaches to education that were provided by the eminent John Dewey in the early days of public education. He said that to depend overly on subject knowledge and methods was fatal to the best interests of education. He spoke, rather, of the need for a mindset on the part of teachers that was, at one and the same time, self-reflective and directed towards instilling reflectivity, inquiry and a capacity for moral judiciousness on the part of students (cf. Dewey, 1964). Dewey would not be at all surprised with Rowe's findings. He would also be very much at home, and possibly even feel vindicated, by the priority being given at present to Values Education in the broad and comprehensive way it is being conceived.

Furthermore, with the relationship of due care in place, the hard evidence before us is that a Values Education with an explicit curriculum can make a difference to the ways students perceive and speak about moral issues (Lovat & Schofield, 1998; 2004). In this way, Values Education becomes the firm basis for training in issues of personal and social morality, such as, for example, around drugs education (Lovat et al, 2002) and the addressing of mental health issues for youth, including around matters of depression and suicide (cf. *Mind Matters* at <http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/>).

Anecdotally, at least, it would seem that an effective Values Education has potential to affect the way students behave as well. If I could just go to one strand of evidence to support this assertion, I will quote a school principal whose school was in the trial group for a study focussed on the implementation of the UNESCO-sponsored *Living Values Education Program* (LVEP):

There was the issue of time ... some teachers complained of already having too much to do (how predictable! Isn't this always the teacher's defence from trying anything new). But for us, LVE has meant that we have more time. Our school is a more peaceful place, we have less interruptions and discipline problems now, and this means we can do more teaching in all aspects of our classroom.

Conclusion

Hence, to conclude: we live in a time when our understanding of the role of the teacher and the power of Values Education are coalescing. No longer is Values

Education on the periphery of the central roles to be played by the teacher and the school in our society. It is at the very heart of these roles. Unlike the assumptions that seem to underpin so many of our concerns around structures, curriculum and resources, Values Education is more clearly than anything I could point to in contemporary education premised on the power of the teacher to make a difference. While the artefacts of structure, curriculum and resources are not denied, the focus is, appropriate to the insights of the day, on what John Hattie (2003) describes as “... the greatest source of variance that can make a difference.” In the case of Values Education, the belief is around the teacher’s capacity to make a difference by engaging students in the sophisticated and life-shaping learning of personal moral development.

I suggest that the nature, shape and intent of Values Education has potential to re-focus the attention of teachers and their systems on the fundamental item of all effective teaching, namely the teacher her or himself, the quality of the teacher’s knowledge, content and pedagogy, and above all on the teacher’s capacity to form the kinds of relationships with students which convey their commitment and care and which become the basis of forming personal character and tomorrow’s citizenry. I know it is a challenging thought for many who, rightly or wrongly, were trained to think differently about the role of the teacher and the social agency of the school. However, Values Education or no Values Education, we live in a society that is shouting out a new charter to us. Values Education is one powerful means by which we might realize this charter.

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