

**2005 National Values Education Forum
National Museum of Australia
2 May 2005**

Values Education: Setting the Context

***Susan Pascoe
Executive Director, Catholic Education Commission of
Victoria (CECV)***

1.1 The world in which we live

The twenty first century has opened with a series of arresting events which have shaken our core values and beliefs. The attack on the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11th 2001 confirmed terrorism as the modus operandi of some aggressors and robbed us of the comfort of homeland security. Later terrorist attacks in Madrid, and closer to home in Bali and Jakarta, underlined the scale of this silent network and its deadly force. We began the century on a high with the ‘millennium bug’ relegated to the realms of techno-nerd paranoia and a Mexican wave of celebrations across the globe. Commitments by major industrialised nations to poverty alleviation in less developed countries put the globe on a small first step to a fairer share of its bounty.

It is beyond the scale of this paper to undertake a full geopolitical analysis which would draw attention to ongoing tensions in Africa and Northern Asia, the scourge of disease in many parts of the world and the continuing need for the more affluent to address poverty reduction with the less affluent. The destruction of the Boxing Day tsunami which claimed some 300,000 lives and wrought devastation in our neighbours’ back yards, drew an unprecedented response of compassionate concern from the Australian community and highlighted the degree to which we understand our lives and fates are interconnected with the human family in the region.

On a smaller scale, the technology of the global village allowed us to sit in our lounge rooms in April this year and observed the different deaths

of Terri Schiavo in a hospital in Florida and Pope John Paul II in his apartment in Vatican City. The ethical debates on rights to life and death were aired universally.

I am beginning this paper with a broad brush to illustrate the value laden environment in which we live and the need to continually reassess our ethical response. If technology allows Terri Schiavo to remain alive, should she? If our neighbours suffer a devastating natural disaster, what should be our response? If poverty and disease afflict other parts of the world, are we in any way responsible for their alleviation? And if our silent enemy uses terrorist tactics against us, how should we protect ourselves?

My role is to set the context for the forum and to canvass some of the issues. My own view is that in May 2005 we cannot afford the narrow comfort of focussing solely on the values we developed ourselves for Australian schools – as good as they are. Instead we need to consider them in the light of local and global realities and the social, geopolitical and technological environments in which we live. How does an Australian experience these realities?

1.2 Being an Aussie

The birth of Australian democracy was arguably the most peaceful in the world. There were no revolutions and the Eureka Stockade was a rebellion generated as much by miners' rights as by the lofty ideals of the Ballarat Reform League. While we have little to be proud of in our first piece of legislation, the White Australia Policy, we have since the post war migration waves of the second half of the twentieth century shown ourselves to be amongst the most welcoming and inclusive nations on earth. We enjoy a respected judicial system, stable governments and electoral processes which are scrutinised to ensure they are fair and transparent. While our current period of prosperity has not been equally shared by all, the standard of living for most Australians is rising. This is not a triumphalist note of self-congratulation, but a recognition of the robust institutions and cohesive communities we enjoy.

Australia has a system of government and non-government schools which provide choice and diversity. All schools operate within the framework of the 1999 *Common and Agreed Goals for Australian Schools* (the Adelaide Declaration) and all are expected to teach democratic values. All schools receive partial or full government funding and all are

accountable for the appropriate expenditure of that funding and for the effectiveness of their educational programs.

Given our history and current circumstances, what kind of values should Australian schools teach? Can we expect all schools to teach common values? Where do we begin this complex task?

2.0 Where do we begin?

The Australian Government's *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Australia, 2005) is an outstanding initiative which builds on the *National Goals* (MCEETYA, 1999) and complements earlier initiatives such as the *Discovering Democracy Project* (Australia, 1997). As argued earlier, we need to locate the values in the *National Framework* (outlined in Attachment 1) in a broader local and international context if we are to maximize the learning benefit to students. Our global interdependence is recorded daily in economic and security treaties with neighbours, cross-national environmental tensions related to water usage and air quality and markets which transcend national boundaries and the Gross Domestic Product quantum of many countries. And the spectre of terrorism lives within us.

Business as usual won't do. We need to attend to our own Australian *Values Framework* as well as imbue in students an understanding of universal values and intercultural and interfaith understanding. What better place to start than the United Nation's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948)

Wrought from the wreckage of World War 11, this declaration sought to affirm fundamental and common human rights and freedoms and to lay the groundwork for a more peaceful world. Time does not permit a full examination of its thirty articles. However, even a cursory look at Articles 1, 3 and 7 will illustrate the degree to which the values in our Australian framework are derived from these universal values.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.

While the values in the *National Framework* are written in accessible language, the congruence with the values in the *Universal Declaration* is clear. For example, the values of a fair go and freedom can be related to all three articles cited above.

As we are preparing students for the reality of globally connected lives it is essential to relate our own values to a more universal values set. Recent efforts in Victoria to embed these disposition and values in the curriculum will be discussed below.

Another means of ensuring our values achieve the dual goals of social cohesion and global connectedness is to consider them in light of the report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Delors, 1996). There is a timeless quality to this report which argues that learning should be organised around four pillars:

- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to be and
- Learning to live together.

All of the values in the Australian framework can be related to these four pillars. It is important that we stretch ourselves beyond our shoreline to international education initiatives such as the Delors Report as they provide a common and comprehensive basis for dialogue and understanding. Common ground is important in considering the role that education can play in promoting intercultural and interfaith understanding and thereby contributing to initiatives to combat the threat of terrorism.

A shared understanding of and commitment to our own values is an important place to start. From there we can enter into dialogue. Maximum benefit will be gained from dialogue when we have some knowledge of the culture or faith we are encountering.

At the recent conference of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, *Education for Shared Values and for Intercultural and*

Interfaith Understanding, delegates from 51 countries put the position that education has a role to play in the immediate and long-term process of building peace and intercultural and interfaith understanding. In doing so the conference recognised the roles of families, other cultural and religious institutions, governments, the business community, NGOs and the media. Educators do not work in isolation but we do have privileged access to the next generation and the capacity to work toward more harmonious futures.

The report of the UNESCO conference (UNESCO, 2005) called on education systems (amongst other strategies) to incorporate common and agreed values into curricula and to prepare education content capable of promoting intercultural and interfaith understanding. It made reference to the necessity of preparing and supporting teachers for values teaching and the need for quality teaching resources. In light of these calls to action, it is pleasing to see that Australia has gone a long way to meeting these recommendations and that this second DEST forum is providing a valuable educational experience for teachers.

This discussion on starting points has made reference to international initiatives and to Australia's National Goals for schooling. It is also instructive to note the understanding of MCEETYA¹ at its July 2002 meeting when it endorsed a values education study that education is as much about building character as it is about equipping students with specific skills, and that parents expect schools to help students understand and develop personal and social responsibilities.²

Similar understandings were contained in the 1994 report of the Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People...* (Macintyre, 2004) This report argued that civics and citizenship education was as essential a foundation in Australian schooling as literacy and numeracy and that effective teaching in the area would depend as much on good curriculum and teaching materials as on the structures and practices in the school and the dispositions and actions of teachers. Like citizenship education, character building is as much modelled as taught.

The program of professional development and materials development that sprung from the report of the Civics Expert Group lasted for a decade under the rubric of *Discovering Democracy*. There are online and print resources from this extensive materials development exercise which can

¹ MCEETYA is the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.

² Cited in *National Framework for Values in Australian Schools*, (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005)

be used by teachers working to instil the nine *Values for Australian Schooling*³. The principles explicit in the program are those relating to:-

- Democratic decision-making and popular sovereignty
- Government accountability
- Civility, truth-telling and respect for the law
- The value of individual and collective initiative and effort and
- Concern for the welfare, rights and dignity of all people.

These principles are supported by values such as tolerance, acceptance of cultural diversity, respect for others and freedom of speech, religion and association – all contained within the nine *Values for Australian Schooling*. *Discovering Democracy* provides a strong foundation for teachers work in values education.

3.0 How do systems respond?

The support of all Ministers at MCEETYA in 2002 for the Values Education Study provides the foundation for systemic responses. While the development of the *National Framework* has been lead by the Australian Government, it builds on MCEETYA's Goals and was developed through national consultative processes. Some systems may encourage schools to implement the national framework under the auspices of the Australian Government's Values Education Programme⁴ while others may introduce initiatives of their own. Arguably the values base of the curriculum in Western Australia and the recent moves to assess students in years 3, 7 and 10 (Pascoe, 2005) in the social domain exceeds the scope of the Values Education Program.

In a similar move the recently launched *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (VCAA⁵, 2005) argues that all students need to develop capacities to:

- Manage themselves as individuals and in relation to others
- Understand the world in which they live and
- act effectively in that world. (Overview p4)

To prepare students for a modern, globalised world the VCAA curriculum pays as much attention to processes of physical, personal and social development as traditional disciplines and interdisciplinary capacities. (See attachment 2) The learning principles – learning for all, pursuit of excellence, engagement and effort, respect for evidence and

³ Print materials including *Discovering Democracy* kits and readers were sent to schools during the development period and online materials can be assessed at www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy

⁴ This program has a budget of \$29.7m over four years for a range of initiatives.

⁵ VCAA is the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

openness of mind – mirror many of the values in the *National Framework*. Curricula such as the VELS and the WA Curriculum Framework make it easy for teachers to implement values as part of the process of learning.

Two ways that systems can encourage the teaching and attainment of values is to evaluate programs in school reviews and to provide assessment in the area. School reviews can and should move beyond those areas which are directly measurable to ensure schools are attaining their missions⁶. System wide assessment has begun in Civics and Citizenship including assessing citizenship dispositions and skills⁷. At a future conference (Pascoe, 2005) I will argue that sufficient robust and innovative research has been done in Australia on assessment in the social domain for us to consider systemic and school applications.

4.0 How do Schools Respond?

There is a baseline requirement for schools' work in values education and that is the prominent display of the poster of the nine *Values for Australian Schooling*. It is anticipated that most schools will avail themselves of the funding to conduct local forums to consider the place of values in school policies and practices. In addition some schools will have already tendered in clusters for generous funding in the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project to demonstrate how values education is core to education provision in their school.

As the *National Framework* notes in its introduction, there is a significant history of values education in government and non-government in Australia. One noteworthy project is the *Harmony through Understanding Project* conducted across Jewish, Islamic, Catholic, Government and other non-government schools in Melbourne. The project brings students face to face to get to know one another and to discuss their cultural and religious differences. It has been conducted successfully for a number of years and is lauded by all those involved as increasing intercultural and interfaith understanding and providing an opportunity for students to move from their comfort zone to get to know 'the other'.

⁶ A clear account of how one school measured the attainment of its Mission Statement is given in a paper by Michael Chaney to the Association of Heads of Independent Schools in Australia (AHISA) in 2002

⁷ This is conducted under the auspices of MCEETYA's Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce and administered on a sample basis to students in years 6 and 10.

A good account of values education approaches in a range of different schools is contained in the Australian College of Educators' 2002 Yearbook *Values in Education*. Amongst the descriptions, Principal Christine Cawsey describes principles of learning at Rooty Hill High School in New South Wales which predate and predict the *Australian Values*; Paul Forgasz surveys the literature on teaching values in Jewish schools; and Salah Salman, Principal of King Khalid College in Melbourne provides an Islamic perspective. One can make the judgement that all these schools could integrate the *Australian Values* with ease. Indeed, as they are 'values literate', they are already a step ahead.

Other schools will need to review their vision and mission statements, audit their curriculum for opportunities for explicit values teaching where appropriate and plan for extra curricular opportunities for students to learn or demonstrate values dispositions and behaviours. This might sound daunting but all schools are teaching values already – there is no such thing as a value free or value neutral school. Neutrality is in itself a value. This exercise asks schools to check that the values they are imparting are the ones they value.

5.0 How do teachers respond?

The nine *Values for Australian Schooling* are a mix of democratic virtues, ethical dispositions, personal attributes and learning principles. As such some will lend themselves to explicit modelling in classrooms and others will require cross-curricular and whole school approaches. Some teachers could feel ill-equipped to respond and professional development will be required. It is a truism that values are caught and not taught. While initial learning can happen in formal settings, changes in behaviour usually require opportunities for students to spontaneously demonstrate the attainment of an attribute in a real or simulated situation. Such opportunities will need to be carefully planned and teachers will require some guidance. It would be helpful if the learnings from the 'Good Practice' schools can feed into this process.

School structures and organisation and teacher attitudes and behaviours will be as influential as learning opportunities. Unequal learning opportunities, inconsistent discipline, lack of follow up on absenteeism or lack of pastoral care will all speak volumes to students about the real values in the school. Conversely, teachers knowing students' names and asking after their wellbeing, applying consistent consequences to misdemeanours, correcting work in a timely fashion and providing

constructive feedback also implicitly demonstrate the values in the school. School leaders and teachers will need to ensure that they model the values they espouse.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the *Values for Australian Schooling* are being implemented at a point in history when we are facing uncertainty and change. As such the values anchor us to those beliefs and behaviours we share in Australia and which help provide social cohesion. They provide the starting point for future Australians to embrace the opportunities of engagement with our neighbours, and life in interdependent global economic, technological, social and environmental orders. This values initiative will be strengthened by reference to universal values and rights and to international efforts to promote dialogue, intercultural and interfaith understanding and peace. Our students deserve no less.

Bibliography

Australian College of Educators, (2002) *Values in Education: College Yearbook 2002* (ed S. Pascoe.) ACE, Canberra.

Chaney, M (2002) *The Importance of Corporate Planning in School Governance*. Paper delivered to AHISA Chair of Governing Bodies Conference

Civics Expert Group, (1994) *Whereas the People...*

Commonwealth of Australia (1997) *Discovering Democracy* DEST. Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia (2005), *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*, DEST. Canberra.

Delors, J (1996) *Learning: The Treasure Within* Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. UNESCO Publishing. Paris.

MCEETYA (1999) *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century*, MCEETYA. Melbourne.

Pascoe, S (2005 forthcoming) *Assessing Social Competence: Can and Should we be Assessing in the Social Domain?* Curriculum Corporation Conference, June 2005. Brisbane.

United Nations (1948) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Geneva.

UNESCO (2005) Report of Conference on *Education for Shared Values and for Intercultural and Interfaith Understanding* Australian National Commission for UNESCO. Canberra.

VCAA, (2005) *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* VCAA, Melbourne.