

Can State Schools Teach Values?

END-GAMES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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The title the organisers suggested to me was: “Can State Schools Teach Values?” Socrates was even more radical, asking whether anyone can teach values directly. But I take it that the concern of this conference, though not less philosophical, is political as well, in that one of the arguments advanced by critics of state schools is that their secular mandate inevitably compromises any attempt at values education.

My point of entry to this debate is foreshadowed more particularly by my sub-title: “End-Games in Public Education.” That may seem to be introducing a morbid note. After all, an end-game is some tactic adopted to bring a contest to a conclusion – a last throw of the dice, a last game in a series. I hope you don’t think me tactless, speaking of such things so soon after the test cricket series between our two countries!

Coupling the metaphor of end-games with our main title may seem to imply that, where common values are concerned, the state school is on its last legs, wilting under the onslaught of the value-diversification that is occurring in our increasingly pluralistic societies, ready to try anything to keep its innings intact (even to bowling under-arm?). Perhaps the state school is on its last legs, especially since the end I have in mind, by courtesy of a pun, is actually the educated person: the final hoped-for outcome of compulsory schooling. In this sense, the whole of education is an end-game.

There are critics aplenty in both our countries who consider that the state school has lost its way and cannot hope to satisfy all its diverse clients in a value-pluralistic society. State authorities, they say, lack any coherent vision of the end product we want from compulsory schooling; all they have is an internally contradictory shopping list of the outcomes demanded by competing power blocs in the wider society.

Some of these hostile critics, of course, are running an agenda of their own, namely, that non-state schools – and religious schools in particular – are intrinsically better able to sustain a unified vision of education. Ah, but there’s the rub. Is their preferred end-game as supportive of the common good as we expect the state school to be? Are they as committed to preparing their students for active citizenship in a pluralistic democracy? Many schools in the private sector promote divisiveness through social elitism, and/or religious or ethnic isolationism.

Some defenders of the state school try to deflect criticism by putting their trust in more sophisticated curriculum processes. They hope that technology will save the day. In Australia at the moment, the new snake oil is outcomes-driven curriculum. But the question still dogs the planner: Better processes, by all means; but to what end? Ultimately, all educational ends are value judgments. Moreover, every step of the

planning and teaching sequence is infected by somebody's values. Not even our methods of testing are exempt.

Now I am assuming that I don't have to argue this point any further with people like yourselves. Hopefully, both our countries have left behind the era when state education was described as value-neutral, at least in regard to ways of life. That is now recognised to be a myth that has crippled the brave experiment of state schooling for too long.¹

Paradoxically, it has been another of the reasons why critics of the state school insist that it has passed its use-by date. It seems you're damned if you do, and damned if you don't. Try to avoid values and you lack vision; try to please all your masters and you will either offend some or succumb to a weak compromise. Even many friends of the state school fear that because it lacks a unified vision, a plethora of market-oriented outcome statements is threatening to pull the poor student this way and that like a rag doll caught in a dispute between children.

The first step in appreciating what is happening is to identify some of the end-games that education systems play. I will then address two issues that currently challenge those who would refocus educational effort on the right ends. And I will then move on to suggesting some positive strategies for getting there.

IDENTIFYING THE END-GAMES

It is a useful exercise to expose some of the actual end-games that state systems have attempted to play in their short history. By way of illustration, let me identify two nodal points in the Australian story. You may well find parallels in your own story.

Rationality and Conformity

First, consider the situation just after the Second World War. The end-game implicit in state schools of this period may be characterised as Rationality and Conformity.

It was a time when the corporate memories of our state systems still bore scars from the acrimonious nineteenth century debates between those who championed state and church schools respectively. These debates goaded state legislators into trying to keep religious end-games out of the public school system. Hence the evolution of the myth of value-neutrality.

But it was only some values that were outlawed by this ruling. The schools could not have proceeded without some vision of the kind of graduate they were aiming to produce. Terms like "liberal education" and "education for citizenship" were freely bandied about, seeming, by their very abstractness to mean a lot and still be value-free, or at least, blandly impartial.

¹ See Brian V. Hill (1988). The brave experiment: is state schooling in jeopardy? *Discourse:the Australian Journal of Educational Studies*, 8, 76-96; reprinted as chapter 7 in Brian V. Hill (1991). *Values education in Australian schools* (Melbourne: ACER).

Today, thanks to the deconstructionists, we are much wiser about the values that were actually being taken for granted. The curricula of the time endorsed the legitimacy of existing class-based power blocs and the superiority of academic studies. Certain people were in control, and universal education was not going to be allowed to threaten their hegemony.

When I became a high school teacher in the 'fifties, this was the state of affairs I was inducted into. The secondary curriculum had been stable for a long time, and consisted of the same subject matter that I – and my father before me – had encountered as school students. Since my family did not have much money and lived on the wrong side of the tracks, I counted myself lucky that competitive state scholarships enabled me to penetrate the glass ceilings of the upper secondary and university levels of education then available only to an élite. And I was able to become a high school teacher.

Later, in the 'sixties, I went on to pursue higher professional studies, These made me aware of the rationale behind the education I had received, particularly as refurbished at that time by Richard Peters and Paul Hirst in London.² I learned later, from a personal conversation with Peters, that his crusade on behalf of critical rationality had been triggered by a trend in government planning to shift all the emphasis to industrially driven vocational objectives. His counter-stroke had been to exalt the thinking person, initiated into the forms of knowledge, and able to exercise rational autonomy in choosing values for living. He feared that otherwise unchecked socialisation and vocational objectives would domesticate rather than liberate the individual.

Initially, he justified his stance by claiming that the education of reason was an objective untainted by partisan values, because it was logically implied by the concept of education. Later, in 1979, he was forced to concede that it was just as value-loaded as any other objective.³ That did not invalidate it; it just required finding a more robust justification.

However, Kevin Harris in the same year argued convincingly that the way Peters and his collaborator Paul Hirst were spelling it out, it was in fact biased in favour of the English cultural élite, re-affirming the traditional grammar school curriculum and the political power of England's upper classes.⁴ It was formal rationality in the service of social conformity.

There was nothing value-free about this! But the neutrality myth endured. I remember moving to work in New South Wales just at the time when the "Wyndham Report" was being translated into the 1961 Education Act. This was a new broom in secondary education, and the Report even included a chapter on educational aims nominating eight components of a rounded education – no, not mathematics, science, English and so on, but –

- Health
- Mental skills and knowledge
- The arts of communication
- Vocation

² Dearden, R. F., Hirst, P. H. and Peters, R. S. (eds) (1972), *Education and the development of reason*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

³ Peters, R. S. (1979), Democratic values and educational aims, *Theory and Practice of Education*, 80, Feb., 463-482.

⁴ Kevin Harris (1979). *Education and knowledge: the structured misrepresentation of reality*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Capacity for critical thought
- Readiness for group membership
- Leisure
- Spiritual values

It was a magnanimous vision, an end-game calculated to drag a conservative society into the 'sixties. But it also fell short, in two particular ways. One was that it did not unpack the curriculum implications of the category called "spiritual values", and none of the subsequent changes in schools related to this area. Secondly,

If the spiritual context [was] vaguely defined in the Report, the social context [was] even worse off. Apart from one passing use of the adjective "Australian" - ironically in reference to the pursuit of leisure - it [was] not even possible to deduce from the chapter that it was written in and for an Australian context! Nor [was] the word "democracy" mentioned at all, though the plausibility of the whole chapter [rested] implicitly on acceptance of the value system of a western liberal democracy.⁵

Vocationalism and Productivity

A later end-game in Australian education that contrasted sharply with the Rationality and Conformity project was the one that has taken centre stage in the last fifteen years: I am calling it Vocationalism and Productivity.

An economic down-turn in the 'seventies, exacerbated by Britain's entry into the Common Market, provoked our politicians to embark on a substantial re-structuring of the economy. The perceived priority was to develop new industries and a more skilled workforce. The scenario will not, I suspect, be unfamiliar to you.

The politicians, seeking scapegoats for having been caught napping, blamed rising unemployment on the schools, which were accused of neglecting skills development. This in turn was used as a justification for increasing political intervention in their management, even in detailed curriculum decision-making. Professional teachers could not be trusted to get it right. Look at the number of unemployed. Obviously their fault!

The Great Lie continues to be perpetuated in a number of ways. A managerialist philosophy has been imposed which replaces educational leaders with resource managers. Use of the word "training" is now preferred to the term "education." Outcomes talk, in focusing on the acquisition of specific skills, makes it difficult to espouse holistic goals like gaining a broad understanding of a field, or becoming a morally responsible decision-maker. The great end-game has become a means-game serving the ends of big business.

TWO CURRENT CHALLENGES

These, then, are two of the main end-games which have dominated Australia's postwar era. And in both cases, the socially responsible self has been shortchanged. The Academic-Rationalist era appeared to be

⁵ Brian V. Hill (1994), Is value-added education in the national interest? The fourth Harold S. Wyndham Memorial Lecture, *Bulletin of Proceedings 1993, New South Wales Institute of Educational Research*, 30-39.

exalting the individual, but it did so at the expense of equity and community. The Economic-Rationalist era has subordinated the individual to the economy, also at the expense of equity and community. And now two new challenges threaten our project.

Ends and Outcomes

I hinted at the beginning that the current rhetoric in curriculum reform is all about outcomes-driven programmes – a discourse born in part out of the industrialisation of education.⁶ The equivalent term here, I understand, is “achievement objectives.” My concern is that the attempt to itemise all the competencies we want the child to be able to demonstrate is causing us to lose sight of the person we hope the child will become.

To be fair, the outcomes focus has been very useful in shifting the attention from the teacher’s objectives to the learner’s achievements. It is also a step towards recognising that we cannot avoid end-games in education. Thinking back, we can see that, even in the period when the myth of value-neutrality was most dominant, we had ends in view.

Certainly, the early pages of most of the curriculum documents I have been talking about commence with laudable motherhood statements which appear to embrace some of the values whose suppression I have been lamenting. But these are rarely translated into hard-nosed expectations comparable to those framed for skills-learning.

As a result, even teachers with more humane visions of what they hope their students will become have been pulled into line, disempowered by the insistence on measurable outcomes. Professional intuition and interpersonal transactions in the classroom are dismissed as subjective, unreliable as data: if it can’t be measured, it can’t be important. Or alternatively, if it can’t be measured, don’t waste time trying to teach it; teach to the test.

These points may be illustrated by citing findings in the early stages of a collaborative project I have been involved in over recent years. It began in the non-state sector with a shared concern about the biases apparent in a national curriculum launched in 1993 by the Federal Government.⁷ To see if our unease had any basis in fact, one thing we did was to carry out a fairly simplistic word count analysis of the 800-odd outcome statements which made up the National Curriculum’s “Assessment Profiles.” Diagram 1 reports what we found.

⁶ I say “in part”, because the seeds of this kind of emphasis were sown in the ‘sixties when talk of “Behavioural Objectives” was all the rage. The extremes of this period were due to overconfidence amongst experts in “Educational Measurement” swayed by radical behaviourism in psychology. This time the push has come from industrial sources, with unions seeing a way to tie wage awards to training levels in the further education sector, and economists hoping for direct correlations of “competencies” with commercial productivity. The former experience (plus threats of job losses if they don’t produce “the goods”) has predisposed many professionals to co-operate with recent trends by generating the emphasis on outcome statements that we have been discussing.

⁷ See T Wallace, (1999) Mainstreaming values in schooling in Western Australia, *Journal of Christian Education*, 42, 1, May, 51-58.

As to how values fared in the Outcome statements, four areas virtually avoided reference to values altogether. They were The Arts, English, Languages Other Than English (LOTE), and Mathematics. The Arts confined themselves to aesthetic criteria, except in one cryptic reference to the need to examine the influence of the arts on "prevailing values", whatever that phrase was meant to signify. They did not say. English and LOTE confined themselves to identifying technical skills. And Mathematics conceded only once in its nearly 200 national targets that at the eighth level students might be alerted to "a relationship between mathematics and social conditions and values" – again undefined.

The curriculum's greatest omission was its failure to enfranchise either ethics or social philosophy as distinct priority areas, and it totally ignored the phenomenon of religion. By default, pragmatic utilitarianism reigned supreme. And that is a value!

The initial reaction of the various States to this curriculum proposal was cool, since in Australia, state schools are a State responsibility. To assert their independence, most States then undertook curriculum revisions of their own. But it was notable that the resultant curricula were largely clones of the National Curriculum – eight learning areas, outcomes-driven, etc.. But there were small changes in nomenclature to prove that each States had thought of it all by itself!

Literal references to:	ARTS	ENG	HPE	LOTE	MATH	SCIENCE	SOSE	TECHNO
Beliefs			5			1	4	
Commitment	1							
Critical responses	10	5	12		1	1	1	
Empathy/sympathy								
Ethics, -al			5			2	1	2
Evaluation-(technical)	5	6				1	3	12
Evaluation-(life values)			7				3	
Justification- (moral)		2	1					1
Moral, -ity			1				1	1
Religious, -ion								
Responsibility (moral)			3			9	2	
Rights, human							3	
Values (descriptive) [Mostly technical e.g. aesthetic]	10	1	4		1	1	9	5
Values (normative) [Basically fifteen in total]	to promote: - personal devel. - fitness - recreation - sport - Ottawa Charter		care for environ- ment encourage participation reduce energy waste care for living things protect people		care of place recognition of achievements ecological sustainability social justice democratic process		environ. effects	

[Total number of Student Outcome Statements about 820. References to above in about 60. Each of the eight Key Learning Areas grouped outcomes in eight sequential levels]

Diagram 1: A Values Item Analysis of Student Outcome Statements in the 1993 Australian National Curriculum

More latterly, however, further curriculum revisions in several States – partly due to turn-overs in elected governments - have shown signs of responding to the criticisms made of the value vacuum in the National Curriculum. One of these – in Western Australia – has explicitly acknowledged the influence of the project I mentioned earlier, of which the word count analysis was a part. Whether the project's influence has been felt farther afield is for others to say.

Pluralism: obstacle or opportunity?

So then, the search for a viable agenda for values education is on. But in the postwar period a second challenge has arisen. As I suggested at the beginning, some are asking: Have value-diversification and pluralisation now reached such a point that the search for a robust community-enhancing consensus is doomed in advance to failure?

I don't think there is an objectively empirical answer to this question. It lies in the area of human intention. And any predictions about that will rest on prior assumptions about human nature and social process.

For example, there are those who say that our communities now accommodate people with such vastly different world-views that the best thing we can do is to maintain minimal structures of civil order and economic exchange and leave everyone free to do their own thing. To quote a post-modern litany:

I do my thing, and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.
You are you and I am I.
And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be helped.⁸

It is questionable, however, whether one person's "own thing" will always be compatible with other people's own things, especially since the distinction between private morality and public morality is ultimately another myth; one which I do not have time to discuss here.

Secondly, any society will contain many people disadvantaged by reason of physical or intellectual limitations or vulnerable age (very young or very old). Such people will *always* need guidance and protection. Nor should we ignore the power imbalance between the average citizen and the controllers of the media and entertainment outlets. The bedrock principle of respect for persons requires us to be far more proactive in fostering shared community values than minimalists are prepared to acknowledge.

If we are not, one consequence is likely to be an acceleration of an opposite trend which is already apparent. Let us call it "enclavism", that is, the trend for sub-cultural groups to retreat into exclusive enclaves designed to protect or advance their own interests at the expense of others. It is one thing to respect differences in cultural identity; it is another to scorn the common good in the name of religion or ethnicity.

I said that it is not merely an empirical question what our response to pluralism should be. The search for consensus is not damned in advance by the “fact” of Pluralism. We are simply obliged to be more realistic and ethical in the way in which we conduct the search – if we want to! There’s the crunch! It is a matter of personal choice whether we view pluralism as an obstacle or see it as an opportunity to combine social justice and cultural enrichment.

Certainly, the two variables I just touched on - religion and ethnicity - tap into ultimate levels of identity and value, obliging us to exercise great circumspection. But the answer is not to pretend they are unimportant or can be left out of the equation, which is what has tended to happen in State school curriculum. The challenge is to find ways of affirming the value-heritages our students bring with them, while at the same time enabling them to evaluate the influences that are shaping their lives and the lives of their fellow-students.

SOME CONSTRUCTIVE END-GAME STRATEGIES

I turn now to the identification of four actual strategies that can help in the great end-game of values education.

Rehabilitating ethical discourse

The first of these is the rehabilitation of ethical discourse. We face a big problem here, because the study of what values are, and how to go about justifying them, is generally neglected both in school studies and in training for the professions.

This is the more serious because in recent decades the force of religious sanctions has diminished. Many individuals have fallen back on pragmatic opportunism and a shallow “me-first” philosophy. And even many adults endorse the sub-moral view that to be in the wrong is to have been caught doing it.

It is a common criticism that in Western societies – competitive and consumerist as they are – individualism has eroded the amenities of the civil society. Nor can it be said that the discipline of ethics been much help, thanks to a barren period when meta-ethical preoccupations took precedence over issues of value justification. Encouragingly, there has been increasing interest in the academy recently in what is called *applied ethics*.⁹ It is a sad irony that people have felt the need to add the adjective “applied”, as though “pure” ethics was above considering practical issues, when that is what it should be all about.

But is not this discussion getting away from compulsory schooling? Surely ethics as a technical study is beyond the scope of compulsory schooling? Not so, despite the apprehensions of some developmentalists. The *Philosophy for Children* movement has demonstrated how possible it is to engage very young children

⁸ Quoted in Millikan, David and Drury, Neville (1991), *Worlds apart? Christianity and the new age*, Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 21.

⁹ Well represented by Winkler, Earl R. and Jerrold R. Coombs (eds) (1993) *Applied ethics: A reader*, Oxford: Blackwell.

meaningfully in ethical discussion¹⁰, and who could doubt the moral fibre and insight of the children so revealingly described by Robert Coles.¹¹

The problem is finding teachers who themselves are able to model and foster ethical discourse. Older teachers tend to reflect an upbringing in an era of dogmatism and moral decrees; younger teachers by contrast often reflect the moral free-fall of the baby-boomer generation. Neither orientation will cope with today's problems, whether at the personal, ethnic or environmental levels.

The first step in this process is *values-transmission* – which – as well as affirming the individual's personal value-heritage - will need to include both multi-faith and multi-cultural content. Secondly, the Richard Peters era has at least helped us see that the greatest safeguard against indoctrination – which in turn leads either to ethnocentric prejudice or a relativism that leaves the student all at sea – is the ability to think critically. Arriving at this level of understanding involves skills of both *values clarification* and *values justification*.

As regards clarification, I often use Diagram 2 with older students. It is an attempt to develop a consistent vocabulary and clarify the path to commitment. A person hears an opinion or judgment, and must first understand what it means. But awareness is not yet acceptance. Further thought leads to belief or disbelief in its claim to truth.

But it is important to recognise that intellectual belief doesn't automatically imply commitment to live by that belief. My belief that there actually is a football team called "The Wallabies" has not led me to enthuse about their code or urge others to follow it – though I had to wait till I was offshore to say so!

Moral educators are all too familiar with the gap between *knowing* the good and *doing* it. This distinction between belief and value is well supported by the fact that we all know of people – present company excepted, of course – who certainly believe that society is better off when people are generally honest with each other, but who choose nevertheless

to be dishonest in their dealings with their neighbours, believing that if other people are naïve enough to be honest then this is their chance to exploit them.

¹⁰ Splitter and Sharp put an effective and practical Antipodean spin on this movement, in Laurance J. Splitter and Ann M. Sharp (1995) *Teaching for better thinking: the classroom community of inquiry*, Melbourne: ACER.

¹¹ Coles, Robert (1986) *The moral life of children*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

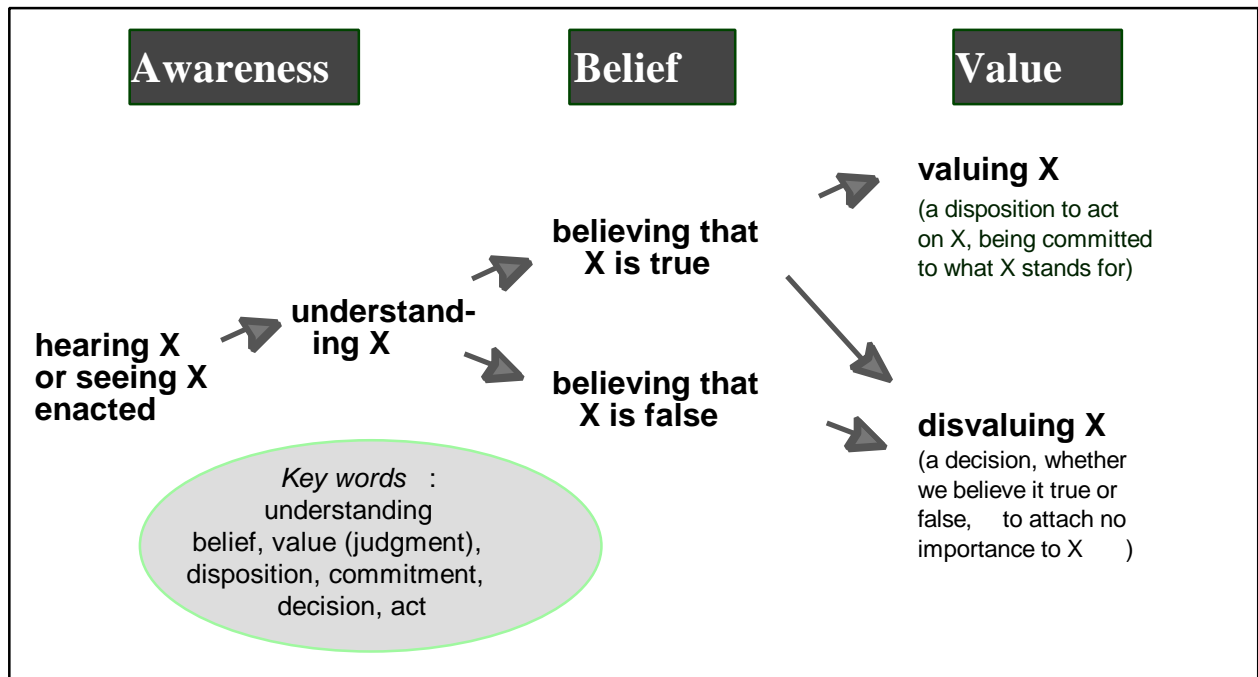


Diagram 2: From Hearing to Valuing

In this connection, let me wave briefly before you another chart I use with teenagers and teachers (Diagram 3). In it I am trying to help teachers by providing both a clarification of terms and some specimen outcome statements relevant to the teaching of values.

Following the major headings, the first is *Description and Transmission*. This validates making students aware of the value traditions alive in their community, both in their own background and others. But whereas through previous centuries this was effectively the whole syllabus of values education, today we are more alert to the need to build higher order learning upon it. So the second category of outcome is *Clarification*. I have referred to these two phases already, but up till now I was primarily focusing on *cognitive* skills and processes.

It is important to add to these, however, capacities of a more affective and intersubjective kind, given that morality is more than merely a form of rationality. So parallel to operations of this kind are experiences that develop the natural capacity for *empathy*. In regard to moral education in particular, the ability to enter into the feeling states and motivations of others is as foundational as the ability to reason. Proponents of the Values Clarification movement of the '70s¹² tended to move from this stage direct to social neg-

¹² E.g. L. E. Raths, M. Harmin and S. B. Simon, *Values and Teaching*, Columbus, Ohio: C. E. Merrill, 2nd ed., 1978 and an evaluation of the approach by Jack R. Fraenkel, *How to Teach About Values*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977, chap. 3.

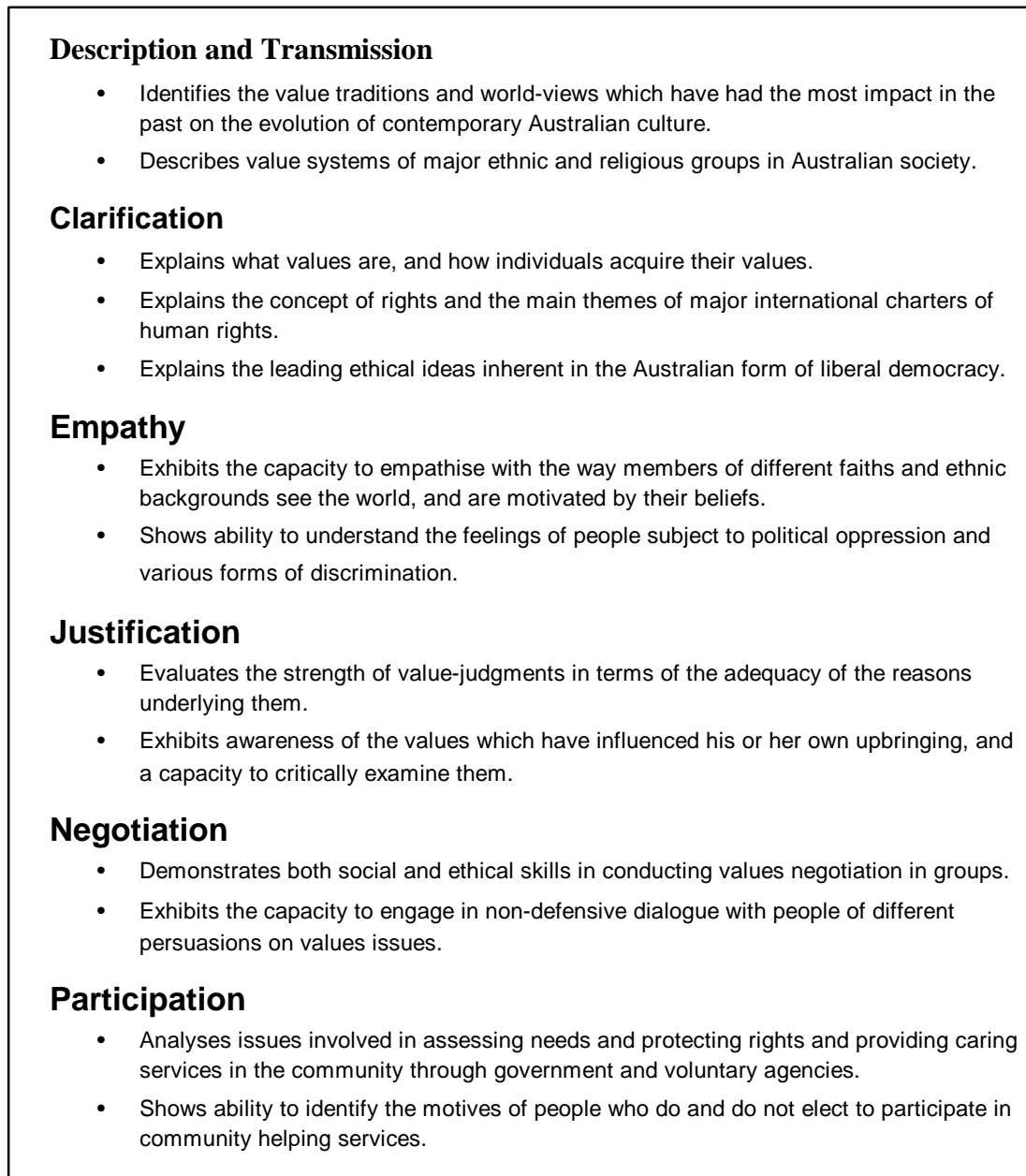


Diagram 3: Some Process Student Outcomes for Values Education

otiation, neglecting the need to examine one's *reasons* for adhering to certain values. That is, they put little emphasis on seeking *Justifications* for one's values. For them, values negotiation in the classroom tended to be merely a matter of finding a compromise between individual wants.

If this is all that is involved, you could, for example, get an ethnically homogeneous classroom comfortably agreeing that students with different ethnic backgrounds from themselves could be excluded from their community. It has happened! But an understanding of what is involved in values justification should help students to take a wider and more moral view.

Finally, recognising that values without actions are impotent, the teacher must continually be creating opportunities for *Participation*, drawing students into deciding and acting upon the values that hold the

classroom and school together as moral and learning communities. Which are these? The question brings me to my next end-game strategy: Developing a values charter.

Developing a values charter

Schools are sometimes referred to as “learning communities”: a description which has great potential – not always realised – to encourage co-operative learning. Much less often you may hear someone describing the school as a “moral community.” Three cheers! Students are more than rats in a maze or even just learners under compulsion.

I remember in the ‘sixties coming across Philip Phenix’s book *Education and the Common Good*.¹³ In his sub-title he called it a moral philosophy of the curriculum. It was a brave bid in the hey-day of behaviourism in education. Rather later, Richard Peters’ book *Ethics and Education*¹⁴ struck a similar chord. Both realised that schools are populated not just by learners and instructors, but by *persons*. If teachers resile from the moral domain in their enthusiasm for compulsory discipline, compulsory curriculum and behaviourist models of teaching, then they have got into the wrong end-game.

Talk about moral community and the common good has not been fashionable. Forty years ago scientific method was going to save the world. Latterly; the postmodern spirit has fragmented society into plural, private goods. But for all the reasons I was advancing earlier, schools – and particularly state schools – must place their ideological bets on the search for a robust value consensus. And this consensus, while spelling out the common good, must also include affirmations about the value of cultural diversity, personal freedom to choose, and moral responsibility for one’s choices.

There are major challenges in such an enterprise. As I said in the beginning, some believe that the eleventh hour is past, and enclavism plus a strong police force is now all we can look forward to. I decline to submit to such fatalism. And I am encouraged in my choice by the goodwill shown towards the W.A. values project to which I referred earlier. This is the place to say more about it.

Briefly, leaders of four school systems, initially, in the non-state sector – Anglican, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim – were invited to dialogue on a possible common charter of values as a prelude to developing values outcome statements. The exercise could easily have been stalled over differences of belief between the consortium partners, particularly in regard to ultimate values and life-views. But what saved the day was an agreement that the quest we were engaged on was for an “agreed *minimum*”, not a contestable maximum. If a particular value proposed by one party was disputed by another, it was put on hold for further exploration later, so as not to delay the current process.

¹³ Phenix, Philip (1961) *Education and the Common Good*, New York: Harper and Row.

¹⁴ Peters, R. S. (1966) *Ethics and Education*, London: George Allen and Unwin.

The outcome was a surprisingly high level of agreement on an “Agreed Minimum Values Framework”¹⁵ consisting of sixty robust value statements ranging from ultimate values, through democratic values, to educational values. After that was achieved, workshops were set up where teachers framed specific *values outcome statements* derived from the Framework that would be workable in the classroom. These outcome statements were then trialled in a large number of schools – non-state *and* state. The project aroused considerable teacher enthusiasm and has since led to the compilation of a teachers’ kit and a school administrators’ kit to keep the ball rolling.

Of course the obvious question is how much more widely might such a consortium of partners be extended without losing the consensus? One promising sign was the subsequent interest of the state education department. Initially they were wary of entering such a controversial exercise on the grounds that the State could not be seen to be promoting particular values, but they thawed when they saw what had been achieved by the consortium, and the Department subsequently authorised further revisions in its own curriculum to incorporate values outcome statements.

Then in 1998 a newly formed W.A. Curriculum Council, straddling both the state and non-state sectors, issued a comprehensive Curriculum Framework in which is included a substantial values charter.¹⁶ The value headings of this charter are shown in Diagram 4.

Roughly 80% of the entries were indebted to the Agreed Minimum Values Framework - sometimes retaining the identical wording: a debt, I should add, that was generously and openly acknowledged. I quote this as an example of acting on the bet that people of goodwill, from many different value perspectives, can be expected to converge on many of the core values necessary to the survival and enrichment of life in a democratic community. Cynics notwithstanding, we have got to try!

Honouring multicultural diversity

Part of the balancing act involved in deciding what are core values is doing justice to the fact of multiculturalism. Brian Bullivant many years ago dourly labelled this “The Pluralist Dilemma”,¹⁷ and his book did not give the impression of holding out much hope for a State school solution.

Diagram 4: WA Curriculum Values¹⁸

A first safeguard, perhaps, is to ensure that one core value at least must be the according of worth, within the limits of democratic polity, to the identities and values of minority groups and persons. We are more alert today than we were in the **early** stages of the multicultural debate that merely cosmetic celebrations of

¹⁵ W.A. Values Review, *Agreed Minimum values framework*. Perth: National Professional Development Programme Values Review Project, 1995.

¹⁶ *Curriculum Framework: for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia*, 1998; Perth: Curriculum Council of Western Australia.

¹⁷ Bullivant, Brian (1981), *The pluralist dilemma in education: six case studies*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

1. PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND ACHIEVING POTENTIAL	2. SELF ACCEPTANCE AND RESPECT OF SELF	3. RESPECT AND CONCERN FOR OTHERS AND THEIR RIGHTS	4. SOCIAL AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY	5. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY
Personal excellence Domains of human experience Empowerment Knowledge Values systems Critical reflection World views	Individual uniqueness Personal meaning Ethical behaviour and responsibility Openness to learning Initiative and enterprise	Compassion and care Equality Respect Open learning environment Individual differences Cooperation/ conflict resolution Family/ home environment	Participation and citizenship Community Diversity Contribution Authority Reconciliation Social justice Responsibility and freedom Benefits of research	Cultural heritage Conservation of the environment Sustainable development Diversity of species

different foods and costumes are pernicious, if they leave unaddressed deeper structural issues of prejudice and economic disadvantage. As Stephen May has said:

A key weakness historically of multicultural education theory and practice has been an overemphasis on the significance of curricular change and an underemphasis, and at times disavowal, of the impact of structural racism on students' lives.¹⁹

May goes on to add that reinterpreting the multicultural issue solely in terms of anti-racism, while more realistic, still has a narrowing effect. Equally, a postmodern prioritising of local identities has a tendency to fossilise difference and discourage the hope that interpersonal negotiations will reveal much common ground. May's suggested remedy is to appeal to a critical pedagogy which helps students to reach the position where they themselves can become contributors to "an ongoing and recursive process of cultural

¹⁸ Summarising the chart on the inside back cover of Curriculum Council, Western Australia, *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia, 1998*.

¹⁹ May, Stephen (ed.) (1999), *Critical multiculturalism: rethinking multicultural and antiracist education*, London: Falmer Press, 2.

construction and *reconstruction*.²⁰ I endorse this as, in part, another way of insisting that critical rationality be one of the bedrock values in a values charter, together with multicultural sharing.

Celebrating spiritual values

The final end-game strategy I want to commend to you is the celebration of *spiritual values in state education!* If I had said that fifteen years ago it would have evoked pitying smiles. The term “spiritual” was embargoed in secular circles, as was the subject area most readily associated with it: religious education.

To the extent that religious education was countenanced in Australian State systems, it was usually staffed by visiting lay volunteers validated by Christian denominations. It was generally assumed that the content was derived from religious doctrines, and taught dogmatically. Then, in the 1960s, each State – independently of course – had an enquiry into religious education. Consistently the resulting reports showed that secular educational thinking had moved on, and there was now a general view that religious education, admittedly in a more open form, was an appropriate and necessary component of core curriculum in the public school.

It must be said, however, that most efforts since to put it on this footing have either been forestalled or have fared badly. Meanwhile, although a vast army of denominational volunteers continues to operate in a twilight zone outside the secular curriculum, the overall coverage of classrooms leaves the majority of Australian students unserved.

In the meantime, an alternative discourse has been developing around the notion of the “spiritual.” A straw in the wind was the use of the term in the 1988 Education Reform Act in England. It has also found favour in some of the recent State revisions to which I have referred.

Converging with it is the noun “spirituality”, which is popular with many New Age writers. They see it as connoting human potential at its highest, without any strings of dogma, except a commitment to the belief that self-transformation will lead to “the next phase of human evolution.”²¹ This seems to be speaking to many members of Generation X and a younger cohort some are referring to as the “Netgen”.²² These sense behind the glitter of technological wizardry a value vacuum that is leading many towards self obliteration through drugs or suicide.

But the word “spirituality” functions more often as an incantation than a describable concept. In 1989, responding to the English Reform Act, I published an article in a British journal in which I attempted to attach

²⁰ Page 33.

²¹ Drury in David Millikan and Nevill Drury (1991) *Worlds apart? Christianity and the New Age*, Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 39.

²² Sweet, Leonard (1999), *SoulTsunami: sink or swim in new millennium culture*, Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan.

meanings to the term which might be acceptable to all parties and point the way to viable curriculum reform.²³

I cannot canvass here the arguments I tried to develop in that article, but I can perhaps be permitted to share some of the conclusions I came to. As you look critically at them, remember that I was trying to speak to the situation of the public school in a pluralistic society. They are best summarised in five propositions.

1. In purely descriptive terms, the spiritual domain may be regarded as embracing those aspects of human experience which transcend the merely bio-social functions and responses of the human organism, and, following the intentions of the conscious self, integrate that experience through development of a personal value-complex that provides the individual with meaning for living.
2. Education may then be seen to achieve its highest end to the degree that it enhances the fully human potential of learners, and helps them pursue the search for meaning at all levels of their being.
3. This then becomes a unifying "across-the-curriculum" thread, obliging teachers in every subject to prioritise their achievement objectives in relation to the spiritual becoming of each learner as an integrated self.²⁴
4. For education to rise above mere indoctrination, the development of a personal value-complex *must* include study of the religious and other value traditions to which one's culture and upbringing have been indebted, coupled with help in interrogating them in a critically appreciative way.

(A curriculum which neglects this requirement falls vastly short of an adequate general education).

5. The principle of impartiality in regard to school policy and teacher behaviour is best honoured *not by exclusion* of partisan views but by studying their meaning for, and influence on, those who hold them; and confinement of our formal assessment and grading procedures to the measurement of understanding and capacity, *excluding* level of commitment to specific sectarian values.

CONCLUSION

I dare not pretend that these formulations are uncontroversial, but I am claiming that they are defensible and achievable within the value-charter of the State school. Moreover, if it can be shown that any non-State school is unwilling to endorse them, I would question whether, ethically, the Government should grant it either registration or subsidy. These are but minimal expectations for schooling in a pluralistic democracy.

²³ "Spiritual Development" in the Education Reform Act: A Source of Acrimony, Apathy or Accord? *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 37, 2, May 1989, 169-182.

²⁴ It should be noted in passing that the itemisation of "student outcome statements" will work against this in proportion to the tendency of concepts such as imagination, creativity, critical autonomy, empathy, self-esteem, initiative, moral responsibility, etc. - despite their centrality to what is distinctively human - are allowed to fall between the cracks in the quest for behavioural markers for specific skills.

But we began by noting that some people feel that even minimal expectations are too much to hope for in the light of the multiplication of sub-cultures, the struggle of indigenous peoples for rights, the globalisation of power blocs, and the resurgence of militant nationalisms. Even so, as Bill Clinton said recently at Camp David - in reference to some other multicultural problem in the Middle East, "To try is no guarantee of success, but not to try is to guarantee failure."²⁵

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²⁵ Speaking on a Telecast news item broadcast 11.7.00.