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Amanda Mergler  
*Queensland University of Technology*

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## **Making The Implicit Explicit: Values And Morals In Queensland Teacher Education**

Amanda Mergler  
Queensland University of Technology

*Abstract: Since the mid-1990s, the role of the teacher has expanded to include overseeing and intervening in the moral development of students. In Australia, this expectation of teachers was generated largely by the national coalition government, and has been continued by the Labor government. As a result, it is essential that pre-service teacher education courses skill pre-service teachers in appropriate ways to educate students about values and morals. Additionally, education degrees must provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to analyse and reflect on their own values and morals. Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers (Queensland College of Teachers, 2006) takes the view that teachers must be reflective practitioners who are aware of their own morals and values. This paper argues that while Australian teacher educators integrate values into the units they teach and demonstrate values through what they teach and how they teach it, they often fail to address values and morals explicitly. Some ways in which teacher education degrees could be reshaped to provide an explicit focus on values and morals are discussed.*

### **Introduction**

The role that teachers are expected to play in the lives of their students has undergone significant change in recent years. More than ever, teachers are expected to be moral guides (Beavis, 2004). This increased and important responsibility makes it imperative that pre-service teachers be trained to fulfil such a role, and highlights a need to re-examine and adapt teacher education courses. This paper argues that the Professional Standards for Teachers (Queensland College of Teachers, 2006) lend further weight to the view that teachers must be reflective practitioners who are aware of their own morals and values. It will be suggested that, while teacher education courses do contain a range of values and morally-based ideas (and that teacher educators strive to create morally-sound teachers), the process is often implicit and students may not make these necessary connections. Teacher educators may need to shift the focus of their courses to make *explicit* the morals and values that are, in many cases, already embedded in them.

### **Teaching: a morals and value-based process**

The range of skills teachers have in order to carry out their job depends to a large extent on the breadth and quality of training they have received during their education degree studies at universities. Universities have been involved in the pre-service preparation of teachers for over 30 years (Campbell & Sherington, 2002) and their role is to educate students in the ways of being a professional teacher. Therefore, they must first establish what it means

to be a teacher and then create courses that capture these aspects of the profession. A study by O'Sullivan (2005) that examined the reasons why pre-service teachers entered the profession highlighted their desire to make a difference to the lives of students and to help them to become more aware of their needs, abilities and goals.

This desire to shape, support and care for students is supported by research (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Stiegelbauer, 1992). More recently, Watt & Richardson (2004) surveyed 1,140 first-year teacher education students to determine the factors that most influenced their choice of teaching as a profession. Their findings suggested that the strongest influences on the choice of teaching as a career were values-laden, including the intrinsic value of teaching, the opportunity to shape the future of children and adolescents and make a contribution to society, and a desire to work with young people.

In addition, the pre-service teachers' self-concept of ability (including perceived teaching ability and previous teaching and learning experiences) influenced substantially their choice of teaching as a career. Day (1994) argued that teaching was fundamentally a moral process, in which teachers strove to shape, challenge and change students' understandings for the betterment of the students.

Historically, schools have considered character development part of their mission. Education has been viewed for a long time as one way in which students learn to become responsible, moral people (Connors, 2002). In 2002, the Australian Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs highlighted the need for schools to teach values education *explicitly*. MCEETYA argued that education must concern itself with building character, and that doing so could increase students' self-esteem, generate in them a positive outlook on life, assist them in making ethical judgements, and enhance their sense of social responsibility (MCEETYA, 2002).

In Queensland, the College of Teachers, an independent professional body representing all members of the teaching profession in that State, has devised ten professional Standards that define what is expected of all teachers. These Standards cluster around three key facets of teachers' work – teaching and learning, professional relationships and professional growth. While each facet is imbued with values, of particular importance to this paper is the focus on professional growth, further articulated as a commitment to reflective practice and professional renewal.

Teachers in Queensland are expected to analyse and critique their practice, a process that involves value judgements and moral awareness. Clarity about one's stated values, and the teaching choices made in response to one's actual values, is imperative if teachers are to reflect meaningfully on what they do in the classroom. In a situation in which stated values and behaviour clash, teachers must then be able to identify the contradiction and alter their behaviour.

Each of the ten Standards comprises three main areas: **practice** (what teachers do), **knowledge** (what teachers know) and **values** (what teachers are committed to). Standard Four, for example, entitled 'Design and implement learning experiences that value diversity', states that teachers must be committed to 'valuing and responding positively to diversity, having positive regard for and empathy and rapport with all students and their families, caregivers and communities, recognising that student engagement and performance is influenced by multiple factors and that students bring particular talents and strengths to learning, and ensuring students have equity of access to the curriculum' (Queensland College of Teachers, 2006). While there has long been an implicit expectation that teachers will uphold values supporting social justice, equity and compassion (Lumpkin, 2008), the College has now made these values explicit by outlining them within each standard.

As the College stipulates specific Standards and values that teachers are expected to embrace, it is essential that pre-service teachers in Queensland be not only taught in ways that

uphold these values and encouraged to uphold them themselves, but also that they be encouraged to debate the set values and their implications.

As graduates from teacher education degrees are expected to demonstrate the ways in which they meet the Standards before they are registered by the College to teach, it is essential that teacher education degrees require pre-service teachers to be aware of, understand and demonstrate their ability to uphold the Standards. Pre-service teachers must be able to reflect on the Standards and values presented, in order to understand what they believe currently and implement changes to their developing teacher identity where appropriate.

By making values an integral part of the Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers document, the College has offered pre-service teacher educators the opportunity to rework their degrees to have a values focus. As the standards make it clear that teachers are expected to be professionals who demonstrate and uphold stated values and morals, an opportunity exists for teacher educators to address these standards explicitly with pre-service teachers and encourage reflection. In cases where pre-service teachers' beliefs contradict those offered in the Standards, an opportunity is created for all students to examine and develop their own value-based beliefs. In addition, this emphasis on values allows teacher educators to explore with pre-service teachers ways in which they can teach values and morals to their future students explicitly.

The call for teachers to teach values and morals explicitly to their students, which has come from parents as well as government (Beavis, 2004), places pressure on universities to skill pre-service teachers in how to do so. Teachers must be able to challenge their students' beliefs and points of view by offering different perspectives and allowing students to consider the options and make informed decisions (Sims, 2004). For teachers, this demands advanced critical thinking skills and strategies that allow them to move students forward in their thinking with compassion, patience and open-mindedness. Most importantly, teachers must have an awareness of their own moral and values-based positions, and have spent time challenging, changing and solidifying their own beliefs. In classrooms as diverse as those found in Australian schools, different values exist, and teachers must be skilled in handling this diversity with respect and inclusion (Van Kraayenoord, Barnett, Roberts, & Moni, 1999).

Recent research funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Australian Council of Deans of Education has examined the relationship between values education and quality teaching (Lovat & Toomey, 2007). While values education can be defined and implemented in many ways, it involves the explicit consideration, discussion, and/or debating of values such as respect, inclusion, responsibility and perseverance in the classroom and/or the school community. Lovat & Toomey argue that values education and quality teaching create what they term a 'double-helix' relationship, explained as the two factors coalescing to produce desired learning outcomes. Teaching that focuses on developing values and is undertaken with respect, warmth and acceptance, has been claimed to result in positive educational outcomes for students (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006; Brooks & McCarthy, 2001; Ferguson, 1999; Weinberger, 1996). Lovat & Toomey argue that for education to be effective, it must seek to develop the whole person, and pre-service teacher education must address explicitly values education, values development and the importance of reflection.

Education researchers have long contended that teacher education programs should examine ethical issues and moral reasoning overtly (see for examples Cummings, Harlow, & Maddux, 2007; Guy, Spalding, & Westcott, 1961; Yeazell & Johnson, 1988). However, empirical studies of the moral dimensions of teaching and the moral awareness of pre-service teachers have been rare (see Cummings et al., 2007 for a review). Most that have been undertaken have used measures based on three levels of moral development: the pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional (Kohlberg, 1976). The responses

participants give to hypothetical moral dilemmas reveal the complexity of their moral reasoning, with those reasoning at the post-conventional level showing the most advanced moral understanding.

Studies that have compared the moral reasoning of pre-service teachers with those undertaking other degrees have revealed somewhat lower moral reasoning scores for pre-service teachers (Cummings et al., 2007; Lampe, 1994; McNeel, 1994; Yeazell & Johnson, 1988). Of further concern is the finding that, compared with other university students, pre-service teachers do not show increases in their moral reasoning scores over the duration of their degree studies (Cummings et al., 2007; McNeel, 1994; Yeazell & Johnson, 1988).

Teachers who have higher levels of moral development and awareness generate better academic outcomes for students (Chang, 1994; Cummings, Dyas, Maddux, & Kochman, 2001). On the other hand, teachers with lower levels of moral development teach students less effectively and demonstrate inappropriate behaviours (Reiman & Peace, 2002; Thies-Sprinthall, 1984). For teachers to demonstrate the values of respect, inclusion, sensitivity to difference, open-mindedness and cooperation, they need to have reflected on, and realised the value of, upholding these values. According to Reiman & Peace (2002), public school classrooms, because of the diverse nature of the students' backgrounds, religions and points of view, require teachers with advanced moral reasoning, as they are more likely to model appropriate, caring and meaningful interactions with students. In contemporary classrooms, it is essential that teachers be aware of their own moral and values bases, and be willing to embrace moral issues as they arise in the classroom.

### **Training teachers: changing the focus**

Lovat & Toomey (2007) argue that teacher education degrees must focus on improving the moral development levels of pre-service teachers to encourage effective teaching. Anderson et al. (2007) maintain that it is difficult to know exactly what attempts universities are making to teach about values, because institutions are loath to specify what values they are targeting for fear of appearing to 'indoctrinate' pre-service teachers and because research in this area is difficult. The fact that teaching is inherently a moral process and that teachers must make moral decisions continually throughout the school day (Connors, 2002) makes it particularly worrying that this element appears to be missing from teacher education degrees. It is imperative that researchers begin to examine how the courses offered by universities can best educate pre-service teachers about their own values and the values they model in the classroom, and provide strategies and resources that allow teachers to enhance the values of their students.

Pre-service courses do contain units with moral and value components (such as the progression of children's moral development, the importance of children's social relationships and teachers' responsibility to be inclusive and open to diversity). Pre-service teachers are taught to consider their own beliefs about teaching and learning and how these may influence their teaching styles. In addition, classroom and behaviour management instruction focuses on values of respect for others' opinions, student cooperation and social responsibility. It is also true that most teacher educators strive to create pre-service teachers who are knowledgeable, caring and reflective. It appears, however, that they have fallen into the trap of assuming that their students will identify the moral components of what they are learning by osmosis. It is rare for units in a teacher education degree to outline explicitly how they will enhance, challenge or shape the moral and values development of students. Day (1994) argues that a lack of exposure to ideas of morality and values in teacher education undermines the teacher's essential passion and leads to dissatisfaction with the profession and burnout. We

may find that making the teaching and learning of moral and values explicit goes some way to alleviating these causes of teachers leaving the profession.

As teaching is a moral process and education degrees cover a range of areas in which moral development and values are implicit, it seems negligent not to target the examination of one's own values and morals within individual units and indeed to embed the process throughout the degree. It is left to individual academics with a particular interest in the moral development of pre-service teachers to encourage their students to reflect on their own moral positions during lectures and in their own time. This risks implying to pre-service teachers that the process of self-examination is not essential to their teaching careers and need be done only if they personally wish to do so. It may also mean that many pre-service teachers will not be encouraged by anyone to engage in these discussions and reflections. While degrees may require pre-service teachers to consider their own moral and values-based positions, in general they do not demand consideration of how to teach and develop morals and values in their students. As a result, they fail to provide the strategies and resources they need to shape, support and develop students.

In a survey of 97 Australian Year 7 and Year 10 humanities and science teachers that examined how they felt about teaching ethics to students, Verrinder (2007) found that half to two-thirds considered that they lacked effective strategies and resources. The study also revealed that 84 per cent of teachers were interested in exploring ethical issues in the classroom and 70 per cent wanted access to more resources and professional development on ethics teaching. These results indicate that while teachers are willing to explore complex issues with students, they lack the confidence and ability to do so. If teacher education degrees do not offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to discuss and debate their own values and morals and provide valuable resources to make moral and values education part of classroom practice, teachers will continue to dream about transforming the lives of students, without the real skills they need to be able to do so.

Despite the desire of pre-service teachers to transform their students' lives and the Commonwealth's directive that schools and teachers implement values education, the moral dimensions of teaching are still viewed as being peripheral to the training of teachers (Revell & Arthur, 2007). In the main, teacher education courses (and, as a result, teachers), do not address directly the moral and values development of students (Lovat & Toomey, 2007).

### **Embedding values and morals in education degrees: the way forward**

From the foregoing, it seems that to develop and support students effectively, pre-service teachers must be trained openly in the areas of moral development and values education (Revell & Arthur, 2007). Before teacher educators can begin teaching pre-service teachers about values however, they must identify and clarify the values inherent in the curriculum and pedagogical choices they offer in their education degrees. Teacher educators have infused education degrees with the values they believe are important for those in the teaching community to uphold. Aspin (1999, 128) argues that within the 'culture of a community' those values selected establish the 'norms and conventions in and by which our common purposes may be pursued, promoted and realised'. Teacher educators must begin the challenging work of making evident the values they see upheld and reinforced within education degrees. A requirement of unit outlines could be the explicit statement of those values that are expressed within the content of the unit, and an acknowledgement of the ways in which the content learned and/or assessment required will enhance, challenge and/or shape pre-service teachers' values and moral understandings. Doing so may engage pre-service teachers in discussion and debate about the appropriate values for teachers to uphold.

The explicit examination of the values inherent in education degrees allows for an in-depth examination of whose values and morals are being reflected. As schools and universities operate within and reinforce only certain values (Beyer, 2001), and the beliefs and actions of teachers will privilege and prejudice particular students, pre-service teachers must be expected to become aware of the assumptions at work within educational practice. This means that pre-service teachers must be encouraged to question whose values and morals are being supported in educational practice, and for what end. While this process may be difficult and confronting for pre-service teachers and teacher educators (Aspin, 1999), values cannot be removed from the teaching process, and therefore the issue must be faced. What is paramount is that the values and morals upheld through education are made transparent, so that they can be critiqued, discarded or retained.

The complexity involved in making sound moral judgements further highlights the need for pre-service teachers to engage in these discussions and debates during their education degrees. Working through complex moral situations with peers in class would allow pre-service teachers to 'try out' a range of responses, and hear different viewpoints from their peers. Sockett (1993) suggested that discussion, debate and analysis on moral issues and educational ethics would encourage pre-service teachers to reflect on their own positions. In doing so, they would develop greater self-awareness and be more likely to be able to encourage their students to undertake self-analysis. Many researchers have identified the importance of reflection in developing pre-service teachers' abilities to be effective and transformative teachers (Day, 1999; Graham & Phelps, 2003; Mason, 2002; Moore, 2000).

While the identification and clarification of values and moral positions is important, this step must be followed by an articulation of the desired behaviours that result from upholding said values (Aspin, 1999). It is important that pre-service teachers consider the behaviours that should follow from certain value positions. Teacher educators must make explicit connections between values and behaviour, emphasising that particular behaviours are clearly right and others are clearly wrong (Totterdell, 2000), and challenge pre-service teachers to act in ways that uphold their espoused beliefs. The process of coming to understand that there is a connection between one's values and how one behaves requires reflection. Unless they take the time to deconstruct their own behaviour, pre-service teachers will be able to espouse a particular belief, yet act in a way that contradicts this position. Revell & Arthur (2007) argue that specific units could be created within education degrees that examined the moral responsibility of teachers to students, parents, colleagues and the community. Doing so would highlight the moral dimensions of teaching for pre-service teachers, and challenge them to consider how they feel about having this moral responsibility.

While some pre-service teachers may feel excited about this, other students may feel overwhelmed by it, or have never considered this factor. Opening up this dialogue between pre-service teachers and teacher educators would allow the latter to share their insights into the ways in which they embrace the moral dimensions of their job. As teacher educators are doing the very thing that pre-service teachers will soon be doing, it could be argued that they have expert knowledge in this area that should be shared (assuming they have done their own reflection in this area). Opening up a conversation on moral responsibility would allow pre-service teachers to identify ways in which teacher educators are modelling morals and values, and encourage them to consider the various ways in which they will teach values and morals to their future students (Benninga, 2003).

University education faculties have within them experienced teachers and other related professionals who have experienced moral dilemmas throughout their careers. Applying these real-life examples to case studies allows pre-service teachers to work in small groups to consider the ethical relationship between teacher and student (Totterdell, 2000) and reflect on moral situations that might arise before they were actually faced with them (Benninga, 2003).

Pre-service teachers could generate strategies to deal with these issues, and also be challenged on their current beliefs. In this way, the delineation of particular behavioural responses could be created, allowing pre-service teachers to consider and critique the standards of behaviour expected of them. In addition, it would enable them to appreciate that moral dilemmas will occur throughout their professional lives and that they must be met head-on. If pre-service teachers feel that they can resolve confidently the kinds of moral concerns that they may face, they are more likely to work with students to resolve the concerns the students have to deal with.

As the values and morals upheld by teachers are negotiated and reinforced by those within the teaching and wider community (Aspin, 1999), universities might call upon well-known moral educators (or other specialists with a moral focus) to give lectures to pre-service teachers (Benninga, 2003; Xiaoman & Culin, 2004). Making space in the curriculum for such educators would send a powerful message to pre-service teachers that the development of their own, and their future students, morals and values is important and valuable. Including lecturers from various areas who would bring with them a range of moral perspectives would allow pre-service teachers to think more widely about values and debate and reflect on these values. Pre-service teachers could then work toward developing an outline of the values they uphold and the things they do in their lives, and that they will do in their future classrooms, to reflect these values.

As the Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers (Queensland College of Teachers, 2006) emphasise that teachers must be aware of their own morals and values, the Standards themselves could be used to encourage the development of this ability. Each of the 10 Standards lists a number of values that teachers who demonstrate the standard will be committed to. Pre-service teachers could be expected to explore and critique these values, and demonstrate through reasoned argument the ways in which these values could be upheld in the classroom. While the values outlined in the Standards make general statements (such as *‘Teachers are committed to believing all students can learn and supporting them to achieve success’*), pre-service teachers could articulate the behaviours that teachers must exhibit to reflect this value in practice. Making explicit statements about teacher behaviour and the aligned value/s would help pre-service teachers to find congruence between their values and their behaviours.

Sockett (1993) reminds us that the teaching of values should be embedded throughout all aspects of a teaching degree so it is seen as integral to good teaching. It is important to acknowledge that education degrees already have a full curriculum, and creating ‘specialist’ units that examine values and morals would mean that other units would have to go. In order to avoid this, and the implication that values and morals can be taught independently, universities need to examine their current units for the purpose of determining where and how they can make the values implicit in the content explicit. As has been argued, every choice a teacher makes in the classroom demonstrates an underlying value (Connors, 2002; Durbridge, 2004; Totterdell, 2000). Teacher educators already have a curriculum full of values and moral-based judgements and beliefs. Shifting their focus slightly to make this somewhat ‘hidden curriculum’ transparent, and a point of discussion and reflection, will help pre-service teachers to identify the ways in which they demonstrate their own values, and the ways in which they can shape the values and moral development of their future students.

Teachers send powerful messages to students through what they do in the classroom, and the kinds of discussions they will and will not engage in. Educating pre-service teachers to incorporate explicitly and examine values and morals at every level would enable them to see that everything they do in the classroom provides an opportunity for the modelling of values. Further, giving pre-service teachers the skills to engage meaningfully with students on important, values-based ideas may offer them the stimulation and connection they crave when



working with children and adolescents (Day, 1994). Thus, making an examination of one's own values and morals, and how to develop values and morals in others, central to education degrees may enable pre-service teachers to be the powerful agents of change that they hope to be for their students, and result in their increased satisfaction with teaching as their chosen profession.

## Conclusion

If universities are to develop teachers who are morally advanced and aware, their programs must encourage pre-service teachers to grapple constantly with values and morals in differing contexts. As teachers desire to make a difference in the lives of students, embedding an explicit examination of values and morals will offer pre-service teachers meaningful ways in which to connect with their future students and the potential for increased job and personal satisfaction.

There are, of course, difficulties with an increased focus on values and moral development, perhaps the most obvious of which is the consideration of whose values we purport to embrace. We will not address this problem by burying our heads in the sand and moving away from teaching values. It is foolish to think this is even an option, as the process of teaching requires a demonstration of our values and beliefs. The Queensland Standards offer teacher educators a place to start for values examination. Encouraging pre-service teachers to explore the values they believe they uphold, and the values they express by their choices and behaviour, allows them to become better informed about their own selves and more skilled at developing these skills in their future students.

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