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Teacher Values and Relationship: Factors in Values Education

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Abstract: Intrigued by the notion that effective teaching is as much about relationship as it is about 'technical' proficiency, the author examines the values of teachers that inform classroom relationships, and poses the question as to whether there are particular teacher values that are necessary for quality values education. This question is addressed by focusing on the teaching strategies involved in the major approaches to values education, and by deducing the teacher values necessary for effective teaching. The implications for the pedagogy of teacher education are briefly discussed.

Introduction

The *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005) refuelled the continuing debate on how best to teach values in schools. By 2005 this resurgence of interest was already in evidence throughout the Australian states (the Queensland Department of Education's *Strategic Plan for 2004-2008*; South Australia's *Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework*; Western Australia's *Curriculum Framework*; Victoria's *Essential Learning Standards*; and *New South Wales's Values in NSW Public Schools (2004)*). However one consistently overlooked factor in the values education debate is the impact of the teacher's own personal values, and the way these values are expressed in classroom teaching.

In 1971, Postman and Weingartner, in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, argued facetiously that all prospective teachers should have to undergo psychotherapy in their teacher education, and more 'subversively,' that they should have to prove that they have experienced at least one loving relationship with another human being. While the reader appreciates the humour of these mocking claims, they do raise the question as to whether teacher education should focus almost exclusively on the technical skills of teaching at the expense of teaching about relationship. Such a task is certainly problematic as it implies provision for a teacher's personal as well as professional development, and involves a consideration of the values that inform the teacher's practice.

Addressing the problem of determining the impact of teacher values on teaching in general and values education in particular involves seeking answers to two related questions:

- Is effective teaching the expression of a general set of teacher personal values that inform teacher behaviours and relationships with students?
- Are there specific teacher values that inform quality values education?

Before focusing on these questions it is necessary to establish that teaching is values-laden. In one sense teachers are inevitably social and moral educators. Whatever institutional restraints exist within a school, teachers are faced with taking

positions on a variety of social and emotional issues, and are therefore developing values that are informed by these challenges. More generally, a teacher's selection of subject content, and his/her choice of strategies and structures to impart that content are values-laden. For instance, deciding between a transmission model of teaching involving teacher presentation, and a collaborative approach involving students more proactively, both reflects teacher values and sends significant messages about the teacher's values to students. The research of Halstead and Xiao (2010) on the impact of the hidden curriculum on values education, underlines the students' constant learning of values that may not be those that are explicitly taught. The authors give the example of students learning when it is appropriate to disobey certain rules, and how tolerance may be learned after reflection on a teacher's dominating behaviour.

Just as teachers bring and develop a variety of professional and personal values to classroom relationships, the students also bring a variety of values from the home. These will include varying expressions of tolerance, respect for others, social conscience and personal responsibility. So relationship is a dynamic process that is informed by the values of both students and teacher (see Adelbjarnardottir 2010; Brophy and Good 1974).

Desirable Teacher Values That Inform Teaching

The dangers in deriving an ideal set of teacher values for effective teaching include the tendency to confuse personality with 'character' (values), and personal values with professional values. One attractive image is that of the teacher who is approachable, charming, enthusiastic and possessing a strong sense of humour. It may well be however that some students prefer a teacher who exhibits the opposite, that is, one who is distant, phlegmatic and humourless, as this teacher may produce better results. Carr (2010, 64-5) argues that while certain desirable qualities (like enthusiasm and charm) may contribute to professional expertise, such personality traits are only 'contingently contributory.' While the expression of professional behaviours is dependent on certain personal values, it is the context-sensitive expression of these values that has relevance for classrooms.

There is no lack of literature that examines desirable teacher behaviour, and therefore implicitly, teacher values. There is also a growing awareness of the importance of relationship to effective teaching and learning. For instance, impelled by the belief that 'attention to pedagogical relationships is long overdue,' Bingham and Sidorkan (2004, 40) edit a variety of contributions that explore the significance of 'relation' in education, focusing not so much on educational process as on human relationships.

Tirri's (2010) recent research on teacher values that inform professional ethics and relationship identifies caring and respect, professionalism and commitment, and cooperation. For Tirri (2010, 156), caring and respect are the most 'evident emotional expressions' apparent in meeting the needs of individual students. Clement (2010, 43) unravels student perceptions of 'caring teachers' claiming that they

interact democratically and encourage reciprocity in communication, deal with students equitably and respect them as persons, account for individual differences when formulating expectations, offer constructive feedback, give appropriate support and feedback, have high expectations of students, and model motivation in regard to their own work.

Professionalism and commitment are apparent in the planning for, and the demonstrable support given to students, and cooperation is evidenced in promoting caring and respect for each other and working as co-learners in the classroom.

Two of the arguably more enduring profiles of teacher qualities/values that are desirable in establishing teacher-student relationships to optimise learning are those of Carl Rogers (1969) and Paulo Freire (1998). Those of the former present an ideal of the teacher and human being as emotionally and psychologically stable, and are described by the author as follows:

- Realness. This involves the teacher ‘being herself/himself ‘ without pretence or assuming different classroom persona: ‘she/he can be enthusiastic, bored, interested, angry, sensitive and sympathetic...because she/he accepts these feelings as her/his own, she/he has no need to impose them’.
- Prizing, Accepting, Trust. This involves the teacher acknowledging individual students, and caring for them in such a way that their feelings and opinions are affirmed. It includes accepting the students’ ‘occasional apathy’ and ‘erratic desires’ as well as their disciplined efforts.
- Empathic Understanding. This involves the teacher demonstrating a sensitive understanding of how the student thinks and feels about learning. In his endorsement of context as a major requisite for learning, Rogers (1969) adopts the student voice: ‘At last someone understands how it feels to be me without wanting to analyse me or judge me. Now I can grow and learn.’
- The Fully Functioning Person. This involves teachers in ‘the process of being and becoming themselves’ by being open to their feelings and evidence from all sources, and by discovering that they are ‘soundly and realistically social’.

These teachers are emotionally secure and have no need to be defensive.

Freire’s (1998) ‘Indispensable Qualities of Progressive Teachers’ also portray the essentially ‘human’ and emotionally responsive teacher:

- Humility – knowing our own limitations, and embracing a democratic rather than an authoritarian classroom.
- Lovingness – loving both students and teaching, and practising ‘armed love’ (fighting for what is right).
- Courage – overcoming one’s own fears.
- Tolerance – respecting difference but not ‘acquiescing to the intolerable.’ (p.42).
- Decisiveness – making often-difficult choices for the best, yet being careful not to ‘nullify oneself in the name of being democratic.’ (p.42).
- Living the tension between patience and impatience – preserving the tension between the two yet never surrendering to either.
- Joy of living – committing to both teaching in particular, and life in general.

While the teacher values of Rogers (1969) and Freire (1998) are arguably enduring, if challenging to teach (realness, lovingness, humility, the fully functioning person, and the joy of living), other expressions of ideal teacher values and behaviours inevitably evolve as perceptions of teaching and learning change. Brady (2006) traces an evolution in broad approaches to learning and teaching from traditional to progressive to collaborative, and defines a model of contemporary learning and teaching that is based on social constructivism, and that is expressed by Bruner’s (1996) claim that learning should be participative (students being engaged in their learning), proactive (students taking initiative for their learning), and collaborative (students working with each other and their teacher to promote their learning). Such an active view of learners, coupled with an equally dynamic role for

teachers as co-constructors of knowledge, has arguably changed earlier images of the ideal teacher as the 'fount of all wisdom', the consummate explainer, or one who can 'break down' and present information in such a way that it is palatable for students. It has also had the effect of highlighting the need for teacher tolerance and neutrality in values education, and accenting the need for student participation and pro-action.

Desirable Teacher Values That Inform Values Education

One prima facie solution to the challenge of teaching values education is to focus on the need for teachers to create warm and supportive classroom environments in which students feel free to express their thoughts and feelings or even experience catharsis, and to be tolerant of different student opinions. A more exacting method of determining whether certain values are more important in values education than other areas of learning, is to examine the teaching/learning strategies that teachers must adopt in facilitating each of the major contemporary approaches to values education, and to infer the teacher values that are needed to inform practice.

The author identifies four major and contemporary approaches to values education in Australian schools. They have different theoretical underpinnings that challenge the validity of inferring desirable teacher values from a single approach. The trait approach focuses on developing pre-established values that can be observed in behaviour, through either directed (exhortative) teaching or indirectly through moral biography; values clarification focuses on making students aware of their own values through various clarifying tasks facilitated by teacher questioning; the cognitive developmental approach focuses on improving moral reasoning that can be located at different stage levels, and promoted through guided discussion to resolve conflicts presented in moral dilemmas; and role-play focuses on becoming aware of self and others through briefed, spontaneous verbal exchanges between students that explore solutions to given scenarios. An amplified treatment of each approach follows.

The Trait Approach

The trait approach is based on the view that values education should comprise predetermined traits or qualities that can be taught. Kohlberg (1975, 673) referred to the approach pejoratively as 'the bag of virtues approach'. While often cited desirable virtues include honesty, loyalty, tolerance, trustworthiness, service and compassion, the implicit question is 'what values' and 'determined by whom'. So the approach is based on values absolutism: certain prescribed values are deemed more worthy than others.

The indirect expression that utilises moral biography is the typical expression of the trait approach. Biography provides the raw data for discussion, and the learning principle is that of transfer: if students are impressed by the values by which eminent people lived their lives, they will adopt the values as their own. Proponents claim that a biography need not simply comprise one or a number of desirable behaviours for potential adoption, but that it can be potentially powerful in presenting the feelings and thoughts that guide action in specific contexts.

Conventional practice involves the teacher reading the biography (usually abridged to a page or two), and focusing a discussion on the values demonstrated. Effective teaching involves more than simple deduction of qualities or values. It includes examination of the reasons for, and consequences of action, and the transposition of the demonstrated values into student-centred contexts ('Can you think of ways that you could practise these values in your own life at home or at school?'). Rather than use full biographies or chronologies of a person's life, brief extracts may be presented providing defining moments from speeches or reports that exemplify the desirable values of the lauded character or speaker. These extracts are typically followed by specific questions about the value ('What examples of care and compassion are shown?').

Values Clarification

The approach involves students identifying their values and beliefs 'in an effort to enable them to be more self-directing in life's confusions' (Lipe, undated, 6). This reflection process to clarify the confusion, proponents claim, makes the student more purposeful and productive, less gullible and vulnerable, a better critical thinker, and more socially aware.

Values clarification is based on the notion of values-relativity, that is, in contrast to the trait approach for which values are prescribed (values absolutism), students are encouraged to adopt their own values, providing they are personally meaningful. The approach does not focus on the imposition of a set of prescribed values, but the process of acquiring them.

The strategies may include ranking or rating values statements in particular areas (students ranking or rating on a five point scale); creating a Values Shield (students representing what is meaningful to them by drawing symbols on a cardboard family crest); conducting SWOT analysis (students identifying the relevant Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats relating to an issue or situation); completing unfinished sentences (students finishing a sentence structured by the teacher to elicit a feeling, opinion or value), utilising discussion cards (students discussing issues written, often by themselves, on cards) and 'playing' voting questions (students voting on contentious issues with raised hands for agreement, thumbs down for disagreement, and arms folded for undecided). The variety of possible strategies is virtually unlimited.

The strategies are typically presented to students in small groups, though sometimes they are completed individually or as a whole class. While the students are undertaking the tasks, the teacher visits each group, facilitating by asking questions related to three identified processes (choosing, affirming and acting). For example, for '*choosing*' the teacher might ask 'Did you consider another possible alternative?' and 'Are there some reasons behind your choice?'; for '*affirming*', the teacher might ask 'Would you tell the class how you feel?' and 'Are you willing to stand up and be counted for that?'; and for '*acting*' the teacher might ask 'Have you done anything yet?' and 'How long do you think you will continue?' Once the tasks are completed, student responses are typically shared in discussion with the whole class, though exceptions may be made for very sensitive issues or vulnerable students.

The Cognitive Developmental Approach

This approach is called ‘cognitive’ because it bases values education, like intellectual education, on the active thinking of students about values. It is ‘developmental’ because it views values education as the movement through stages. These stages define ‘what (a person) finds valuable...how he defines the value, and why he finds it valuable, that is, the reasons he gives for valuing it’ (Kohlberg 1975, 672). This distinction between ‘structure’ and content indicates that we are located at a particular stage according to the nature of our reasoning and not its content. For example, two people might justify two completely opposite stances, say for and against euthanasia respectively (different content), and be reasoning at the same stage level (the same ‘structure’). The focus of the cognitive theorists is therefore to improve reasoning and facilitate movement through the six stages identified by Kohlberg (1975) towards moral autonomy, rather than to differentiate between right and wrong decisions.

Kohlberg (1975) claims that the means of promoting development (movement through the stages) is through the provision of conflict, so the classroom strategy involves the presentation of a moral dilemma story, sometimes called ‘unfinished,’ ‘open ended’ or ‘conflict’ story. It is ‘unfinished’ because it presents a student-centred dilemma, and asks how the protagonist should solve the conflict. They have great appeal as a strategy in values education because they are so student-centred, and therefore possess a capacity to engage through discussion.

There is no established classroom procedure apart from teacher direction of the discussion. Teachers facilitate by asking both questions that clarify substantive issues in the dilemma, and questions that are more generic (‘Might there be an alternative? Why do you think that? Can you give another example? What might the consequences of that be?’), ensuring that the conflict is not so great as to be daunting, nor so slight as to be insufficiently challenging. Teachers avoid imposing their personal views and judging the responses of students. To do so would diminish the presence of conflict – the agent of moral growth. They may however ensure that the class is exposed to the opinions of those who are reasoning at the next highest stage, as evidence indicates that when students are exposed to reasoning at one stage above their own stage, they are more influenced by it and prefer it as advice. While teachers may summarise the discussion and delineate suggested solutions, no particular proposal is endorsed as ‘right’.

Role-Playing

Shaftel (1967, 84) provides an early definition of role-play as ‘the opportunity to explore through spontaneous improvisation...typical group problem situations in which individuals are helped to become sensitive to the feelings of the people involved’. Typically, two students selected as the players react spontaneously to each other in dialogue to explore solutions to a presented problem. In assuming the role of another person, students step outside their accustomed role and adopt the role of another person. In this way, they are required to become less egocentric, and as a result, they develop insights into themselves and others. The following six steps in conducting a role-play are derived from the author’s observation and demonstration teaching of over 100 role play lessons:

1. Solution confrontation. The teacher identifies the roles to be played for a nominated solution, and if necessary, clarifies the names of characters and the sequence of events.
2. Briefing. The teacher assists students to enter the role of the character they are to play by questioning the players and class about what each character in turn might be thinking or feeling. ('What might Leif be feeling?' Why might she think that?'). Alternatively the briefing may comprise a statement by the teacher describing the gamut of thoughts and feelings each character might be experiencing, to sensitise the players and audience. For both the questioning and statement forms of briefing, the teacher remains as 'neutral' as possible.
3. Role-play. Fully sensitised to the feelings of the characters involved, the players react spontaneously to each other in dialogue. The exchange is unrehearsed; each player reacts to the unpredictable responses of the other; and this 'transactional' quality of role-play often produces solutions that are not those initially anticipated by the players or class.
4. Debriefing. This is an optional step that is only implemented if the teacher feels a player needs to be extracted from the role. It may take the form of a simple statement ('Remember Erin, you're not Lachlan anymore...his problems aren't really yours'), or teachers may use the nametag technique: removing the nametag of the character's name when the role-play is complete, and throwing it in the bin (psychologically disowning the role).
5. Reflection on transaction. Once the role-play is over, the teacher asks the two players to comment on the transactional nature of the exchange by analysing the thoughts and feelings that the other player evoked, and how these shaped their own reactions. The class may also contribute its perceptions of the interaction, and 'test' them by asking the players questions.
6. Further enactment. The discussion prompts further enactments, sometimes involving the same two characters, but with different players, or involving an exchange between one of the original characters and a third. In the case of the former, a new player may be chosen on the basis that he/she thought an original player was not sufficiently real (too harsh or too lenient).

Following are the necessary teacher qualities/values that may be inferred from a collective implementation of the approaches:

- Challenging egocentrism. It is difficult to overcome egocentrism because teachers and students tend to reason from their own perspective, and exaggerate the extent to which others share their beliefs (the false consensus effect). Teachers need to understand, and lead their students to appreciate that not all communicated views are shared. All of the approaches involve students in adopting multiple perspectives. In role-play, students are forced in spontaneous unrehearsed dialogue to react to responses that may be contrary to their own; moral dilemmas may challenge students with different moral reasoning or opposing moral solutions; moral biographies may produce different interpretations of identified values; and values clarification may involve confronting inter or intra-group opinions. So teachers need to be committed to promoting decentration or the ability to assume multiple perspectives, and observing it in their own practice.
- Demonstrating sensitivity. The affective area involving values education is arguably more emotionally charged than the cognitive domain because it involves students' feelings and values, both of which are informed by often highly variable life experiences. Teachers need to be aware of the potentially

confronting nature of some 'moral' content (moral dilemmas, values clarification tasks and role-plays), and be sensitive to both the vulnerability of students in relation to particular issues, and the cathartic effects of some learning experiences (notably role-play).

- Practising tolerance. All four approaches involve students in suggesting different opinions and solutions, and some of these may challenge conventional wisdom as students test their unformed or half-formed views against those of others. It is essential that teachers are not judgmental about 'dubious' or simplistic opinions but use judicious questioning to direct scrutiny at student reasoning. It is equally important that teachers promote tolerance between students and even encourage them to accept a diversity of opinions.
- Observing neutrality. Teacher neutrality is closely aligned with tolerance, and involves teachers in not betraying their own views lest they 'colour' the views of students. In the discussion of a moral dilemma, it is anathema for teachers to present their own solution, as the effectiveness of the approach depends upon the student experiencing conflict, and the forceful expression of a teacher opinion might be automatically accepted by the student, thereby negating conflict, the very agent of moral growth. In briefing the players who are about to role-play, the teacher needs to explore through questioning or state what the characters might be thinking or feeling by suggesting all possible responses, rather than push students towards a particular solution. So teachers need to understand the importance of process rather than product (individual solutions) in values education approaches, and to be wary of whether their own opinions might be adopted by students without sufficient consideration.
- Scaffolding learning. Teachers need to engage in contingent scaffolding by questioning students about their evolving views. For instance, teachers may facilitate the process of values clarification by asking questions about choosing, affirming and acting upon values; they might ask students how values deduced from moral biography might be transferred or acted upon in their own lives; and they might expose students to higher stage moral reasoning about a moral dilemma and question them about the merits of that reasoning. So teachers need to be committed to a dynamic form of learning in which students are equally as active as the teacher, and operate as co-constructors of knowledge.
- Encouraging student expression. All four approaches are language-rich in that they rely on both teacher questioning, and either full class or small group discussion in resolving or sharing insights. The discussion of moral dilemmas and moral biographies, and the use of role-play are totally based in student talk; and values clarification typically involves minimal written responses prior to discussion. The approaches are also highly emotionally engaging for students. So teachers need to be committed to promoting learning that is participative, collaborative and verbally rich.
- Promoting a supportive context for learning. As all of the approaches involve students in expressing their opinions, some of which are only evolving, it is essential that they can do so in a classroom culture that accepts diversity of views, and that is free from threat and the risk of censure and reprisal. Role-play probably involves the most self-disclosure of the approaches, so students

need palpable support. Teachers need to be committed to the Rogers (1969) notion that warm, supportive contexts are essential to optimise learning.

- Sustaining relationship. While relationship is the result of the above factors (tolerance, sensitivity, student expression, supportive context), it is also sustained by questioning (see Brady 2006), the hallmark of all four approaches. Teachers question to help students deduce and interpret values from moral biographies; to reflect on the process of acquiring values in values clarification; and to promote moral reasoning in moral dilemmas. Questioning demonstrates individual and collective caring for students. So teachers need to be committed both to distributing questions among students and sustaining individual responses as necessary.

Conclusion

While many of the eight identified qualities or teacher values may be *desirable* for teaching in all areas, they are *essential* for teaching values education. It may of course be simplistic to identify only two areas: values education and ‘the rest.’ Curriculum specialists would claim that each discipline has its own procedures of investigation and teaching strategies, and therefore its own requisite teacher values that inform teacher-student relationships.

The eight values for teaching values education might be taught to prospective teachers in the professional studies or education strands of teacher education courses in all subjects that involve promoting an understanding of the strategies necessary to teach values to school students. While subjects involving the social bases of education would seem to be a natural ‘home,’ a broad spectrum of professional studies subjects lends itself to investigating the pedagogy necessary for developing student values. Apart from explicit ‘content’ coverage of the requisite values, teacher educators might include role-plays, and the discussion of dilemmas and case studies in their own teaching of them. Such a focus could be reinforced in practice teaching sessions by incorporating student teaching of the values into the assessments required from cooperating teachers, and ideally, in student teaching self-appraisals.

Apart from certain select values that may relate more specifically to a particular discipline, several of the eight values are particularly important for the teaching of all curriculum areas, and may be taught directly and/or modelled. For instance, contemporary classroom approaches to teaching and learning view knowledge as co-constructed by students and the teacher in an equally active and dialogic relationship that involves the teacher scaffolding by planning activities, and engaging in the more spontaneous contingent interactions with students in collaborative dialogue. This scaffolding is facilitated by strategies that include sustaining student responses, asking open questions, allowing wait time, fostering verbal interaction between students and engaging them in substantive conversation. The teacher educator, in both demonstrating and practising this model, and teaching discipline-specific content, is scaffolding learning, promoting student expression, and sustaining relationship through questioning. Such a model of teaching and learning also requires the demonstration of a supportive context and appropriate sensitivity to student needs.

The more general teacher values that ideally underpin relationship and inform the teaching of values can also be addressed in teacher education. While it may prove difficult to teach all the qualities prized by Rogers (1969) and Freire (1998), other

proposals make a contribution to promoting relationship in both schools and teacher education institutions through either a specific focus on pedagogy or a more general accent on teacher development. An example of the former is the work of Shor (1992) who links pedagogy to empowerment and democracy in claiming that the values that guide education should be participatory, affective (emotional as well as intellectual), problem-posing, situated, multicultural, dialogic, activist, democratic, and 'desocializing' (challenging both existing knowledge, and the experiences that make us what we are).

Gellel (2010) provides a broader program than that involving the eight identified factors, or the pedagogical values reported by Shor (1998). He argues for a more inclusive 'teacher formation' program to address the affective dimension of teaching. It is however consistent with that outlined by the author. The proposed program focuses on:

- Nurturing an appreciation of the teacher's self, including self-esteem, initiative and care for others.
- Encouraging an understanding of the teacher's role and relationships in society, particularly with the local community and parents.
- Focusing on the valuing of people and a commitment to their betterment.
- Fostering a respect for the uniqueness of individuals.
- Promoting an awareness and responsibility for the teacher's role in 'touching' the lives of students.
- Creating a passion for knowledge and an appreciation that such knowledge is not neutral.
- Attaching an increased importance to relationships.
- Developing a respect for the autonomy of individual students.

While implementing the 'programs' advocated by Gellel (2010) and Shor (1998) may require some pedagogical and even structural change to existing teacher education courses, the answer to the two initially posed questions as to whether effective teaching in general, and values education in particular, are, and should ideally be expressions of particular sets of values, is an unequivocal yes.

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