

Part I: School Curriculum and its Environment

Chapter 1: Education for Being: A Possible Path for a Better Future for All

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Introduction

This chapter argues that “education for being” through the learning and teaching of values can contribute to the promotion of cultures of peace and nation building. With the current escalating rate of change at all levels of life that is apparently inherent in modernization and globalization, the world has witnessed an increasing number of conflicts and violence in most parts of the globe; the Pacific region has been no exception. A cause for this situation could be the heavy emphasis, in all education systems, on the *having* mode of education. In this regard, the paper advocates the reorientation and strengthening of the school curriculum so that equal emphasis is also placed on the *being* mode of education, focusing on learning and teaching of values. The reclamation of and emphasis on values education in all aspects of learning and living is advocated as a necessary step forward in the direction of creating peace and harmony at all levels of life in pluralistic societies.

Manifold change through the forces of globalization has now become a fact of life for people the world over; even people in remotest areas cannot escape at least some of its effects. All spheres of life and work undergo many transformations in contemporary times with great rapidity. Information communications technology (ICT), cultural productions and climate change are some of the glaring ones having varying impacts on the lives of people in all corners of the world (Urry, 2002). Some of these changes are beneficial whereas others, such as the proliferation of nuclear arms and the flood of porno-violence that surrounds us with depictions of violent and dehumanizing acts, are detrimental to human beings (Huggins & Kester, 2008; Robinson, 2003; Toh, 2009). Socialization, mass media, movies and internet are some of the powerful influences that continually bombard people, effecting positive and negative changes in people’s lives. In the process of negative change, people tend to lose sight of what is good for humanity. Such negative changes do not augur well for the shaping of human characteristics and qualities. Undesirable changes lead to

behaviour of other peoples. However, if peoples of diverse cultures and traditions are to live together peacefully, then definitely some useful educational strategies and interventions such as emphasis on the *being* mode of education can contribute positively towards building lasting peaceful co-existence of all communities and societies (Delors, 1996; Jarvis, 1992; Marcel, 1976; Subramani, 1989; Toh, 2001).

This paper, firstly, provides some commentaries derived from both local and international literature relating to escalating problems affecting humanity. The paper then discusses how education in the *being* mode has great potential to bring about positive transformations in people's perceptions, thereby contributing towards a sustainable and peaceful co-existence of pluralistic societies. Finally, the paper offers some suggestions on the use of an integrated approach as a suitable school-wide strategy towards effectively building peace and harmony at all levels of life in pluralistic societies.

Background Literature

What kind of future would we like to live in? How can we build that future? These two questions are important enough to warrant reflection and serious rethought from everyone about where to from here. With reference to education, Campbell and Baikaloff (2006) characterize the school curriculum as ultimately determining the kind of future we would like to build for ourselves. For instance, if we want mathematicians, then we should have in place a good mathematics curriculum that can produce mathematicians with suitable knowledge and skills. In the same vein, if we want well-rounded people, then we must incorporate various aspects of education for *being* into the school curriculum and at the same time emphasize it. As human beings, we would genuinely like a good future for ourselves and for our children; as such, we must put in place a curriculum that fosters peaceful personal behaviours and choices. No human being, for that matter, would choose to go through any kind of pain and suffering. However, in recent decades the world has witnessed calamities of all types, including the 9/11 disaster, global warming, nuclear threats, civil wars and even small 'wars' such as physical violence in schools and violence against women and children (Huggins & Kester, 2008). It is as though knowledge and technology deliver to preconceived opinions, stereotypes and prejudices the means to express negativity about others through aggression and conflicts and in doing so inflict pain on others. This is an example of threat to human existence. Instead of engaging in constructive talk and dialogue, people resort to fighting to resolve tensions and conflicts. In the process many innocent lives are severely affected.

Furthermore, in the real world that people have created, however, people who have amassed possessions such as properties and wealth tend to be accorded or to arrogate to themselves high status in society. The rightness of this view of life has become deeply ingrained in human lives. In contemporary societies, capitalist economics and material wealth and goods are emphasized and lauded. In the process of globalization "not everyone has an equal stake in the success of the new economic order" and inequities persist between and within nations (Ball,

worse for all. This world view is supported by the sort of education that promotes the lower-level needs and not the higher-level needs of human existence (Maslow, 1968). This sort of education could be a contributing factor towards reproduction and legitimation of a society that is entrenched in inequalities in many dimensions of life such as along ethnic and religious lines. Saying this is in no way a total rejection of education based on the *having* needs of human existence. Indeed, such education is vital for human survival and continuity. But now it appears that the *having* need is overemphasized at the expense of the *being* need which to a large extent appears to be neglected.

In light of the undesirable developments in contemporary societies, education on the *being* mode deserves greater or equal attention now than ever before. Erich Fromm (1981 cited in Jarvis, 1992: 143) lucidly explains the difference between the *having* and *being* modes of human existence:

In the *having* mode of existence my relationship to the world is one of possessing and owning, one in which I want to make everybody and everything, including myself, my property... In the *being* mode of existence, we must identify two forms of being. One is in contrast to having ... and means aliveness and authentic relatedness to the world. The other form of being is in contrast to appearing and refers to the true nature, the true reality of a person or a thing in contrast to deceptive appearances.

This explanation easily leads to the deduction that human life can be threatened if education based on the *having* mode of society continues to receive a heavy emphasis and recognition; certainly, it will, at the very least, lead to lopsided personal development. Such a personal development may be a contributing factor towards undesirable actions of people.

For example, in the Fiji schools, there is a heavy emphasis on academic education (Fiji Islands Education Commission, 2000; Muralidhar, 1994; UNESCO, 1992). This heavy emphasis on the *having* mode of education that is, learning content knowledge within the school curriculum is a cause of grave concern. Muralidhar (1994) has aptly pointed out the dangers of overemphasizing the academic education, [it] "may help us to compete more effectively in the job market, [but] it does not feed the human spirit, it does not make us whole individuals" (p. 79). Likewise, Smyth (2001) characterizes this type of education as an 'enterprise culture' and "deflecting attention away from social issues in schooling" (p. 125). Continuation of the application of educational curricula with a strong emphasis on *having* mode will surely lead to lopsided development of individuals. In view of the undesirable things happening around us, revisiting our school curricula would be a worthwhile undertaking. In doing so incorporation and at the same time promotion of higher-levels of human existence should receive due recognition, that is, the *being* mode of education. As far back as the 1960s, Peters (1965) expressed similar sentiments about education providing "touch of eternity under which endurance can pass into dignified, wry acceptance, and animal enjoyment into a quality of living" (p. 110). It is through a process of reconceptualising the curriculum that

the *being* modes of education. This education will then have the potential to provide better enrichment to all dimensions of human life as it will contribute significantly to a more holistic education and an education that matters.

Dramatic increases in the world today in social problems such as juvenile delinquency, government corruption, white collar crime, civil wars and a host of others are contributing towards the weakening of social institutions for looking after its members (Cummings, 2001). For instance, in our local context, the daily newspapers highlight not only cases of corruption but also other forms of crime such as robbery with violence, rape, discrimination against women, domestic violence and drug abuse. An increasing rate of drug and substance use and abuse among school children is of major concern to all key stakeholders in education and in particular, to teachers and parents (Lingam, 2004). The use of volatile substances by school children was widely publicized in the newspapers when glue-sniffing was found to be a popular and growing practice in schools. The effects of abuse of substances like glue, petrol, marijuana and other illicit drugs and substances, not to mention the 'legal' ones like tobacco and alcohol, are harmful and can have far reaching effects on an individual's life. All these may be happening because of the lack, both at home and at school, of education in the *being* mode.

Also, in most contexts in the contemporary world, ethnic conflicts are becoming a common sight. All too often the human commonalities are lost sight of against personal aggrandizement. These common features and similarities should in fact be used as a means of enrichment of different people's cultures, religions, traditions and ethnicity—the intricate tapestry of human life. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (n.d) has pointed out, "We live in a world of great diversity, but a diversity based on shared values of tolerance and freedom; a world which is defined by its tolerance of dissent, its celebration of cultural diversity, its insistence on fundamental, universal human rights, and its belief in the right of people everywhere to have a say in how they are governed". Towards this end, people need to transform their own world views by integrating other perspectives into their own ways of thinking, to avoid any undesirable clashes. But schools as an important agent continue to place a heavy, almost crushing, emphasis on children's academic achievement and acquiring of credentials.

Furthermore, Kofi Annan (n. d) stated that "a pluralistic view of human identity helps to illustrate how universality and particularity coexist at all times. Every person or social group reflects a multiplicity of traditions and cultures. For this reason, all individuals differ in some respects, but in other regards have much in common". If people realize that there are numerous common elements in all cultures then this could be effectively used to promote unity in diversity. After all, only one species out of fifty billion has evolved to the human form. Considering this, the promotion of unity in diversity and other suitable values such as caring, sharing, sustainability and justice will not be a difficult task but one that could be easily achievable. The encouragement and promotion of such core human values has enormous potential to help prevent fractured relationships, reducing misunderstandings and mistrust amongst the different communities that exist in all jurisdictions. Not only will it help people of different cultures and

breed cultures of conflict, war and violence and further fragment and divide people. Preferably such a constructive intervention as emphasis on the *being* mode of education should start formally at the pre-school level as it has the potential to bring about positive transformations in people's lives for the good of all humankind (Johansson, 2006). As aptly stated by a well-known Buddhist teacher, Thich Nat Hanh, that we are never just 'being' but always 'inter-being' (Toh, 2001). In light of this metaphor, a sound understanding of the multiple dimensions of people together with establishing suitable interpersonal and social relationships would be a positive way of building a culture of peace in all societies and nations.

Reorient School Curriculum: Emphasis on the Being Mode

The problems mentioned in the previous section, clearly discerned towards the end of the last century, prompted the redefinition of the philosophy of education "so that it focuses on the primacy of the human individual" (UNESCO, 1993: 4). In this regard, UNESCO has played a crucial role since the historic 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms adopted at its 18th General Conference. There have also been other UNESCO-led declarations, including the 1995 Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy as well as the United Nations decades like the International Decade for Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of (2001–2010). All these actions clearly illustrate the advocacy for building a culture of peace in all spheres of life, including local and global levels.

Education can still play a very important role in addressing some of the issues confronting our communities provided we emphasize the *being* mode of education. Generally speaking, at the moment education systems overstress hierarchical, over-competitive and examination-centred structures and methodologies. This type of education may be a contributing factor to most of the divisions in the society as well as creations of unequal economic, social and political structures (Toh, 2004). Instead education should help humanize social, economic and political structures. As Naidu (2003:1) noted, "a significant force in nation building is a country's educational system". To be exact, it is the school curriculum that has a bearing on the type of future we would like to have for our children (Campbell & Baikaloff, 2006). Apart from the curriculum and the teachers, we all can work together towards achieving this ambitious but achievable goal in the long-term. School curricula should also emphasize appropriate skills, such as skills to determine how one's actions affect other people and their feelings, the ability to recognize and appreciate both the similarities and the differences in other cultures, and to analyse how other viewpoints or ways of living contribute to solving conflicts, inequities and other local, regional and international problems. As mentioned earlier, the foundation for awareness on these matters is best laid when children are in their formative stage of development (Johansson, 2006). This is because what a child learns from his childhood days shapes his/her future.

One of the components of the *being* mode of education which is universal in application and could be effectively taught in schools and beyond is values education. Through values education we can achieve goals such as healthy and just democracy, productive economy and sustainable development (White, 2004). The concept of values is not easy to define. Generally, people tend to confuse values with beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and skills. Lemin, Potts, and Welsford (1994, p. 1) describe values in the following way, "Values are determined by beliefs we hold. They are ideas about what someone or a group thinks is important in life and they play a very important part in life and they play an important part in our decision-making. We express our values in the way we think and act". In fact a value is something that is worthwhile not only to an individual but to all people. Thus, status is given to values and also the meaning values provide to people in their day to day life.

Due to increase in problems affecting people world over, there has been a resurgence of interest in education on the *being* mode, such as character education, values education and citizenship education in schools. Values education programmes are implemented in many schools in overseas countries for the purpose of building a better future for all. Examples include, in the New South Wales context, the production of a Department of Education and Training document entitled *The Values We Teach*; the moral and character education in American Blue Ribbon school (Murphy, 1998); the Miracle School in Gambia; the ethics and moral education in Korea (Byun et al., 1985); and other initiatives in a number of other countries including the Asia-Pacific region. With reference to the goals of Japanese schools, Shimahara and Sakai (1995) highlight phrases such as 'creating children with generous hearts', which they note are quite common. For further examples, in the United States, the Georgia Board of Education formulated and implemented character education based on the teaching of thirty-seven core values (Heslep, 1995). In the same vein, the Virginia Department of Education designed and implemented the moral education program (Heslep, 1995). In other contexts, such as Asia and some parts of the Pacific, values education was revived to contribute towards peace building due to calamities of all sorts (Cummings, Gopinathan, & Tomoda, 1988).

As far back as the 1990s the Government of Fiji (1993) recognised the need for schools to teach values education in schools. The concern for this was based on the lack of suitable values amongst the school children. As such, apart from teaching intellectual skills for the purpose of academic achievement, schools are now required to teach values:

There is increasing concern that students require better citizenship training in schools than is currently available. It would appear that the emphasis placed on intellectual and academic achievements in schools has not been matched by sufficient emphasis on the development of human and moral values. The Ministry is considering ways in which values education and citizenship training can be improved in schools (Government of Fiji, 1993).

schools. The programme was introduced in both primary and secondary schools in 1996 and the teachers were explicitly required to teach the programme. Without any proper training, however, it is not possible for teachers to be fully effective in teaching the programme. It is envisaged that a good values education programme will contribute towards all-round development of a child. The Ministry's vision is of "educating the child holistically for a peaceful and prosperous Fiji" with emphasis on these values: cultural understanding, empathy and tolerance; human rights, human dignity and responsibility; safety and security for all; honesty, fairness and respect for truth and justice; civic pride; integrity; environmental sustainability; peace and prosperity; flexibility; life-long education; compassion; sense of family and community; faith; and creativity.

The Fiji Government's recent document (2008) the *People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress*, outlines the values thought appropriate for the people of Fiji to uphold for a better Fiji for all, today and in future. These values also need to be given due attention in all schools, so that children develop values beyond those positions based only on narrow communal considerations. Apart from human values, it is good to see that the Government of Fiji wishes also to teach children the values involved in maintaining and restoring nature and the natural environment. The inclusion of values relating to the environment is timely. The degree of ecological and social destruction we have already inflicted on our habitat is indicative of the importance of teaching about our dependence on the environment and the need to live in it with an appreciative eye to the sustainability of our use of it (Huggins & Kester, 2008).

The values emphasized transcend all boundaries—geographical, religious and ethnic; their teaching would be appropriate towards building peaceful co-existence of Fiji's pluralistic society and for individual, national and global well-being. Apart from UNESCO, other organizations such as the Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APINEV) and Sathya Sai Organization are working assiduously to promote universally shared values. The values these organizations promote and their adoption and integration in people's lives would be a giant step in the right direction for all people to lead a good life. But unfortunately, the status given to values education in schools is thus far minimal and superficial.

Apart from the central authority, other agencies and institutions such as the family, religious organizations and the community expect teachers to hold desirable values, as people have high regard for teachers, especially in the small islands states of the Pacific, where they are generally looked up to as a major and reliable source of knowledge. Thus, for the good of the profession, values education must also be taught to teachers, as something they live, not just something they teach about, so that they take a professional approach to their day-to-day work at school with children, colleagues and other agencies. The teaching and learning of values could contribute enormously towards securing a better life and peaceful living for all citizens. However, to translate this vision into reality, professional preparation of teachers is a vital part of the equation, as suggested in the literature (Davies, Gregory, & Riley, 1999).

Teacher Preparation

Teachers in all corners of the earth are the frontline workers in the field of education who can make a difference in the lives of the people. Parents and other stakeholders place on them the responsibility of preparing our children for the future. In this regard, it is always fitting to recognize the important work they carry out for the good of all. For better delivery of service they need to be well prepared and supported in their work by all. Unless they are well prepared for values education or for teaching any subject, it is likely to fail.

One of the constraints to implementing activities relating to the *being* mode of education is the lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills of teachers (APCEIU, 2008). As a result the most common pedagogy employed by the teachers is the 'banking' approach which does not augur well with values teaching and learning. The teaching and learning of values is different from the traditional teaching of subject matter knowledge. In fact, the teaching and learning of values is more difficult. Training of teachers will surely enable them to teach innovatively and create better learning and teaching atmosphere in the classroom. With suitable pedagogical skills, teachers are likely to integrate important aspects of education on the *being* mode in the curriculum and effectively teach them. The use of strategies such as observation, recognition, discussion, situational analysis and critical thinking are considered suitable for effective teaching and learning of values. They could then better translate values into practical classroom experiences. The crucial role of teachers in educating children to create positive societal transformation is considered more important now than any other time in history (Fien, 2003; Huggins & Kester, 2008). However, without any professional preparation their capacity will be limited in using suitable pedagogical principles of teaching and learning in values education.

Due to the resurgence of values education in schools, values education is taking a pivotal role in teacher preparation programmes and also in the agendas of international organisations. This is a positive move as it will allow teachers, teacher educators and educational leaders to be critically aware of values and their place in a holistic education and to use a balanced approach to teaching and learning of values. In recognising the critical role played by teachers in the field of education for enhancing the promotion of the *being* mode of education, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) has been organising and conducting training programmes for teachers and other educational workers since 2001. These training programmes are conducted in Korea UNESCO Peace Centre in Incheon. APCEIU is continuing its worthy commitment in capacity-building in the Asia-Pacific region. The author attended the 9th Asia-Pacific Training Workshop organised for teacher educators in the region which covered issues such as intercultural understanding, human rights, peace, and culture of non-violence. This was a useful training programme as it provided teacher educators better and broader perspectives, relevant knowledge and skills to develop their capacity to design and implement training programmes on varying issues relating to the *being* mode of education in their contexts. Likewise, the School of Education at the University of the South Pacific initiated

values, and learning for living. Basically, the course was designed to prepare teachers professionally for the teaching of values education in schools (Lingam, 2004). The course aimed to help teachers improve their inner self so that they demonstrate suitable values themselves in their personal and professional lives before they try to teach values in order to positively transform others. It also aimed to equip teachers with appropriate pedagogical practices so that they can effectively teach and nourish suitable values formation in the children. Apart from teaching, the course expected to provide teachers with opportunities to design and organize cultural events such as festivals, as these events can help provide increased exposure to and enhanced knowledge of different cultural and religious value systems. Moreover, as part of teachers extended professional responsibilities, they could reach out to communities for the purpose of creating awareness on varying aspects relating to the *being* mode of education in the communities served by the schools. A substantive partnership with other stakeholders such as religious leaders can yield greater benefits to all. Also, teachers could involve the parents and other stakeholders in values education especially when sharing and agreeing on desirable values that need to be taught and learnt in schools. This would demonstrate that not only the school but the school's immediate community and beyond could play a role in values education. Education for being, such as in the teaching and learning of values like mutual understanding, tolerance, respect and love, are some of the universal values that need to be encouraged and promoted in all communities. After all, we are humanity evolving from the same root despite the different routes we have taken to reach different parts of the world.

Integrated Approach of Delivery

Education on the *being* mode, such as values education, cannot be assigned a 30-minute time slot in the master timetable and taught accordingly. The nature of values education is such as that it merits emphasis throughout the day. Bearing in mind, too, the expansion of school curricula, the tradition of allocating certain fixed amounts of time for teaching may not be possible in future. Rather, when teaching any subject, suitable values can be identified and embedded in the lessons and taught. In some cases, certain values can be taught in more than one area of the school curriculum. For instance, the concept of equity (in which justice and fair play are important values) can be taught such as in mathematics, social studies, literature and even in co-curricular areas. This approach depends on the ingenuity of the teachers in identifying the values ingrained in the school curriculum and teaching them. Even when children are engaged in co-curricular activities, suitable values can be incorporated and taught accordingly. In doing so, that is, by teaching values across the curriculum, we demonstrate that values should not become compartmentalized along subject lines (Burnett & Velayutham, 2008). Teaching values across the curriculum will show the interconnections and interrelationships among them whilst at the same time illustrate how values permeate in real life situations. An integrated approach is a preferred way to teach values and this will require teachers to possess certain competencies and positive attitudes. The author of this paper has been involved in the design and delivery of such a course for teachers in the Pacific region.

the same time give to the teaching and learning of values the importance and emphasis that it rightly deserves.

Concluding Reflection

To make a significant difference in the lives of future generations and to shape a more values-oriented globalisation, schools should take a leading role in teaching and promoting education on the *being* mode, rather than assuming that children will learn and acquire suitable values as they go through in life. In addition, a substantive partnership with other agencies can help teachers reach better decisions on the agreed values that need to be taught and learned. As professionals in the school, teachers can mediate the world and screen out undesirable influences to better prepare children for life and work, by shaping their emotional and intellectual development in the ethos of 'good values'. Through the effective teaching and learning of values teachers can positively transform both the learners and the society as a whole. This may appear to be an ambitious and idealistic goal, but it is one that is achievable through shared responsibility. One thing is sure: if we are not proactive about monitoring and guiding the values children absorb, they will find a host of other values streamed at them from social life and the media; abhorrent as this may be, values absorption will happen anyway. This is a high price to pay for sitting back and allowing things to take their course. Education for *being*, such as through values education, is an essential long-term investment in sustainable and peaceful co-existence of plural societies world over.

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