

**DRAFT CURRICULUM FEEDBACK
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

SUBMISSION on "VALUES"

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Personal details and qualifications.

After teaching in this field for twenty years, I have spent the last ten years researching and studying values education and gaining academic qualifications related to this issue. B.A. (2000) majoring in world religions with philosophy and ethics. Graduate Diploma in Subject Studies for Teachers, (Christian Education)(2005), and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (2005), social studies papers. After I had completed a B.A. I wanted to do an M.Ed. concentrating on values education, but none of the University Colleges of Education I approached, Massey, Waikato or Auckland, had courses in this field or people who would supervise an M.Ed. in this field. The situation had not changed in 2006. I settled for a Post Grad. Dip. Ed. taking the four papers required at Master's level and choosing those with a significant values content. "Current issues in the teaching of Social Studies," "Ethics in Education," "Curriculum Design" and "Environmental Education." I have had articles published in the *N.Z. Journal of Social Studies* and the *New Zealand Principal*. I have also had considerable practical experience in business, farming, sport, youth work and local body and national government. The final comment in a 1995 Australian report into civics and citizenship education stated¹ "Given the research reported here, it is clear that an important context for developing those principles, will be to work with teachers experienced, not only in classrooms, but also in the arena of active citizenship itself." so I believe I am more qualified than many to make an informed submission on this subject.

Main comment on the "values" component of the Draft Curriculum

There will be little argument about the abstract values outlined in the draft curriculum, because most schools and teachers already promote them. The difficulties lie in achieving the stated expected outcomes. The problems lie in the details and the relevant details are missing. The purpose here is not merely to point out the problems for teachers, but also to offer a solution.

What are teachers expected to achieve?

"Through their learning experiences students will develop their ability to" –

- Express their own values:
- Explore with empathy the values of others:
- Critically analyse values and actions based on them:
- Discuss disagreements that arise from differences in values and negotiate solutions:
- Make ethical judgements and decisions and act on them.

Teachers will not be dealing with broad abstract values, but with real situations, and the problems can only be seen when practical examples of situations are used.

1. Students will develop their ability to express their own values.

There could be a considerable difference between the values of a child from a well-off family in a high-decile school and those of a child under the supervision of CYFS, and who has been passed from one bad situation to another. Not that having a high IQ and a high income necessarily means having a high level of ethical reasoning. The amount of white-collar crime amongst the well-educated indicates that point. Year 7 and 8 students at a high decile school at which I taught some years ago, felt that the measure of

¹ ACSA Teaching Resource No 8

right and wrong in sport was whether you could “get away with it.” Cheating was O.K. as long as the ref. didn’t see. Research at a Christchurch College of Education School of Business (2002) found that 80% of students admitted cheating, including copying in tests or falsifying research results.² Obviously they had no difficulty in expressing their own values, and had been through our education system, but the values they were expressing were not those most schools or teachers would have modelled, promoted or considered to be ethical. This leads on to the next outcome –

2. Students will develop their ability to explore with empathy the values of others.

Does this mean that the 20% whose values were more ethical than those of the 80% shown above, should accept unethical values without question – even sympathise with them? Does this mean that a teacher should not comment adversely on unethical values, or on values that involve cruelty to humans or animals, or could harm the environment? We are now a multicultural country with immigrants from countries where democracy is unknown and where bribery is a way of life. Some cultures believe in giving preference to family members – even with public money. Is that a cultural value or is it nepotism? *Diversity* is one of the broad values students should be supported to value, but just how far? Tolerance and cultural safety are included in diversity, but just how tolerant should we be – and of what? When it comes down to cases like these, specific issues are no clearer.

3. Students are to develop their ability to critically analyse values and values based actions, but how are they going to do this? On what grounds and by what standards?

The broad values of diversity and respect include respect for others’ values, personhood and rights. Critically analysing the values of someone else might affect that person’s self-esteem and their freedom – also their sense of inclusion. Should students at all levels have the freedom to critically analyse another student’s values, or their family’s values, or should there be some consistent formula by which to analyse all values? In class discussions it is important that personal situations should be avoided. Hypothetical situations, literature, events in the news, films, or popular songs can be critically analysed in class, a system which allows students to express their opinions freely, but does not publicly involve any person present. Even then a consistent method of critical analysis needs to be followed, or a great deal of time will be wasted and little useful education will result.

4. Students are to develop their ability to discuss and negotiate values differences.

This could be fairly harmless where non-ethical values are concerned, because non-ethical values are usually personal preferences, not strictly values. The range of values types specified in the Draft Curriculum are aesthetic, moral, social, cultural, and economic, but there is an ethical component to all of these values as soon as they affect other people or the environment.

Aesthetic values such as music or art would only have an ethical content if they harmed or offended other people. There could be negotiation around what art should be hung on the wall, or what music should be played or studied, but a teacher might reasonably be expected to try to raise the level of a class’s appreciation of art or music by exposing them to what, over time, has been generally considered to be great art or great music. *Excellence* is one of the stated values, and perseverance in the face of difficulties. It is acceptable to strive and achieve. Should we not also value excellence in ethical reasoning and teach students how to aim for it? This leads on to the next requirement.

5. Students will develop their ability to make ethical judgements and decisions and act on them – but how?

The eight broad stated values as we have seen, still leave room for contradiction and argument. Look at some more examples.

² Daniels, C., (2002). High level of tertiary cheating shocks researchers. *N.Z.Herald* 23.9.’02

The value of *integrity* includes honesty, “doing right” and “being ethical,” - but does “doing right” and “being ethical” mean the same to everyone. It depends on their values of course, and if we have to respect other people’s values and beliefs, in some cases there may be no agreement on what “being ethical” or “doing right” actually mean. Honesty, responsibility and moral courage are included as associated notions. Is honesty open to negotiation? Moral courage might mean that a teacher could feel obliged to speak out for an opinion that might not be ethical, or acceptable to parents or policy of a school, but it would have to be respected. There is also a need to be able to distinguish opinion from empirical evidence, and myth or tradition from documented facts.

As another example look at the value of *equity*. The associated notions include fairness, social justice and equal opportunity. Suppose, in a group activity such as a project, a few students do most of the work, while others, though they have had equal opportunity, choose to do very little. Is it fair that everyone in the group should receive an equal reward? Would the teacher be demonstrating the value of *equity* if he/she rewarded or commended only those who had worked hard? Would the hard-working ones have, been treated unfairly if the others had been given the same reward? What would students have actually learned from this? Does social justice mean equal rewards for unequal work? How would justice really have been done, and seen to have been done?

Thinking is one of the key competencies. Back in the 1970s, Ivan Snook, Emeritus Professor of Education at Massey University and still an authority in the field of moral education, wrote that moral education is not a matter of just handing on the existing values of society. Students would not be taught that a particular action is right or wrong but would learn the criteria by which a moral decision on such a matter could be made.³ “The tools for making enlightened decisions” he wrote, “are moral principles, logical thought, empirical evidence, and a readiness to do a lot of hard thinking in place of emotional outbursts and slogans.”⁴ - and that is what will be recommended here.

It is obvious that the stated broad values and their associated notions will not provide the means for teachers to achieve the desired outcomes, so perhaps we could look at another of the stated values in order to find a solution.

Inquiry - Creative, critical and reflective thinking.

What has been offered so far for “values” in the draft curriculum, is basically ethical relativity, i.e. there are values that are broadly acceptable and should be threaded through the whole curriculum, but on the other hand, schools and teachers must also respect the views, beliefs and cultures of others - and be tolerant of them. Ethical relativity however fails at the intersection of cultures,⁵ and we are now a multicultural country. We can appreciate and encourage diversity in culture where non-ethical values, customs or beliefs are concerned, but not where these affect other people or the environment. Generally accepted ethical principles however, can allow us to examine the values of all our cultures or ethnic groups with *equity*. They allow us to critically analyse values and make consistent ethical judgements. They are embodied in the eight broad values specified in the curriculum, and they are simple for students from level 1 up to understand, and for teachers to put into practice.

To understand any concept well it needs to be first reduced to its basic components or principles, and the basic principles for ethical reasoning and living are wisdom, justice, truth and love.

Suggested method for values “education,” and for achieving required outcomes -

Starting at level 1 - this means discussion of relevant issues using basic ethical principles.

Wisdom – We should be sensible

Justice – We should be fair

³ Snook, I., (1973). Moral Education, in D’Cruz & Sheehan, (Eds) *Concepts of Education: Philosophical studies*, Melbourne: Mercy Teacher’s College pp55-64.

⁴ Snook, I., (1973). *Moral values and the New Zealand School*. Education No6. Dept of Education Wellington.

⁵ Hinman, L., (1998). *Ethics: A pluralistic approach to moral theory*. (2nd ed.) USA: Harcourt Brice.

Truth – We should be honest

Love – We should be kind

There are also two checks and balances for our reasoning

The Golden Rule – How would I feel if I were to be treated that way?

The Goal – a better world – Is this going to make the world a better or happier place- at home – at school – in the community – in the environment – in our nation – globally?

There is no difference or need for a separate ethic for any age, gender, ethnic or socio-economic group.

This simple system can be the basis for all ethical reasoning in all learning areas, and right throughout the social inquiry process. It provides a consistent method for schools and teachers to achieve the specified outcomes.

For different levels -

The simple principles can be expanded to suit different levels and relevant situations –

Wisdom – Is this reasonable? Will it work in practice? What are the long-term consequences likely to be? On yourself? Your family? Other people? Your school? Your community? The environment? The whole country? – The world? Will it maximise the good and minimise the harm?

Justice – Is any person or group being treated any better or any worse than any other? Yourself? Your family? Your religion? Your ethnic group? Can you justify any reason why allowances should be made? Would giving “justice” for one mean causing injustice for another? Is there a fair compromise?

Truth - Do we have all the evidence? Is it factual or is it opinion? Is it myth or is it based on recorded history? Who has supplied the evidence? What are their motives? Can we trust everyone to tell the truth? What is their past record? Is anyone trying to deceive anyone else? If so for what purpose? Is anyone pushing a particular ideology at the expense of the truth? Have you examined your own actions and motives? Is any person or group using power for their own ends?

Love – (aroha) Is everyone being treated with respect and caring? Is any person or group *using* any other person or group for their own ends? Do you think any person or group deserves special treatment? Should an exception be made for them?

The Golden Rule - How would you feel if you were on the receiving end? How do you think other people are feeling? (**He tangata-he tangata- he tangata.**)

The Goal – a better world. Is this action going to contribute to a better or happier world? At home? At school? In the community? In the work-place? In the environment? In our nation? Globally?

The last ability that “values in the curriculum” requires, is that students should become able to make ethical judgements and decisions and act on them

Open-ended discussion is not sufficient here. It is a form of ethical relativity that fails at the intersection of cultures. All the relativist can do is to take sides according to ethnic preference or assert that each side has its own legitimate point of view.⁶ In New Zealand we all live a relatively similar westernised style of life. We live under the same governmental and economic systems. In real life we have to make decisions and act on them – and most actions affect other people. The draft curriculum *requires* that students develop their ability to make ethical decisions and act on them. Regular discussions of situations relevant to age and interests, and using ethical principles as the basis for ethical reasoning provide the essential ingredient for developing any skill, i.e. practice, practice, practice.

The draft curriculum does not separate “values” as a specific learning area, but states that they should be evident in the school’s philosophy, structures, curriculum, classrooms, and relationships. It is understandable that teachers do not want more in the curriculum, but the natural home for values education is in Social Studies, though they permeate the whole curriculum. Students are exposed to as

⁶ Windschuttle, K., (1996). *The killing of history: How literary critics and social theorists are murdering our past*. San Francisco: Encounter books. P309.

many “values” outside school as they are in it and these values can be just as catching, if not more so. Values promoted or modelled in schools can be seen as no more than school rules – to be left behind at the school gates. A teacher’s idea of values education is “very sketchy” if he/she relies on teaching by example rather than by discussion of what ethical decisions are, and by what important ethical principles we are guided when we make them.⁷ Half an hour per week of social studies time could be usefully employed in such discussions, and could prove very enjoyable and of more educational value for teacher and pupils, than many other social studies activities. Some schools already have “Philosophy for children” discussion classes.

No assessment would be required, because it is impossible to assess fairly. Some students will say or do inside schools what they know will please teachers or other popular students. Only their future lives will prove whether students (and teachers) choose to put ethical reasoning into action – at home - at work – in the community – in the environment - nationally and even globally.

Finally, the report commissioned by the Ministry and paid for by the public, stated “There needs to be strong resource and professional development support to assist schools and teachers develop programmes and practices that will support community values.”⁸

As projects in two of the academic papers I had recently done, I had produced programmes for values education. Therefore, when the report was published, over a year ago, I wrote to the Ministry asking where the required resource support was to come from, and if they would be interested in resources private individuals had produced. I was told that the Ministry did not recommend any particular resources, and to take my material to an educational publisher. This means in effect, that educational publishers will be allowed to decide what resource support is going to be available for schools and teachers to choose from. Since then, I have written to politicians, as well as educational publishers. The publisher, though interested, sent a sample of my resource material to a teacher for comment. This person took the time to look at it and make some helpful comments, but referred me, full circle, back to the original report, the fact that there was to be no direct teaching of values, and as the Draft Curriculum now confirms, “values should be evident in the school’s philosophy, structures, curriculum, classrooms and relationships.”

Because there has been very little actual teaching *about* values in teacher training, it is not surprising that many people hold to the theory that “Values are caught, not taught,” but that is not enough in today’s society. It will not be possible to achieve the outcomes for “values,” stated in the Draft Curriculum, unless teachers are given the tools and space to achieve them. This is very disappointing, because a great deal could have been done in the field of values and citizenship education, especially for those whose home cultural capital is of a very low level, and for the future of our now multi-cultural country. It is particularly disappointing to find, that, though *responsibility and accountability* are included in the broad abstract value of *integrity* that schools and teachers are expected to model and promote, most of those in positions of more power, whom I have approached on this subject, have been able to pass the responsibility for providing the strong resource and professional development support required by the report, on to someone else. Who is going to be accountable for seeing that this support is available?

Conclusion –

The outcomes required by the Draft Curriculum for “Values” will be impossible for schools and teachers to achieve because the proposed curriculum does not give them the tools or space to achieve them. It is recommended here that consistent ethical principles should be used - in the social inquiry process, throughout the curriculum, and in all schools and communities – to provide the tools with which to critically analyse all values, including our own.

⁷ Wringe, D. (1990). In *Philosophy and the teacher*. D.I. Lloyd (Ed.) p17.

⁸ *Values in the N.Z. Curriculum*, C. Other Key findings and Recommendations.