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**Values education as holistic development for all sectors: Researching for effective pedagogy**

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Abstract

The paper argues that values education has moved from being associated most heavily with the religious agenda of faith schools to being central to updated research insights into effective pedagogy. As such, it represents a vital approach to education in any school setting. The paper draws on an array of values education research and practice in making the case but centres especially on findings from a number of recent publicly funded projects in Australia with which the authors have been associated. Of special importance is evidence from the *Values Education Good Practice Schools Project* and the *Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience* that provide both anecdotal and empirical evidence that high quality values education contributes to holistic educational development, including academic advancement, of students across all school sectors.

Keywords: values education, moral formation, spiritual development, holistic education, faith schools
**Introduction**

Traditionally, values education has been regarded as belonging most comfortably in the province of religion and religious education (see Arthur 2008; Cunningham 2005; Lovat 2009a), a province known more for its faith claims than those able to be tested empirically. Hence, for much of the twentieth century, values education was subject to debate around its appropriateness beyond the faith school, as well as its potential for having its claims tested in any methodological way acceptable beyond the realms of faith. Furthermore, the form of secularism that prevailed at the time was less than conducive to matters of religion and faith, and to any attached claims that could not pass the empirical test. Hence, values themselves came to be seen as part of the private domain while public settings should most properly pursue a rigorous values neutrality ethos in the interests of preserving the freedom and rights of their citizens. In the government school, religious and values neutrality was often held to be for the overall betterment of its students, including for their academic attainment (Lovat & Clement 2008c; Lovat & Toomey 2009).

In contrast, there is now a renewed realization that values are among the underlying drivers of holistic development and achievement at school and so are endemic to education in general and to all educational systems. Recent research by Davidson, Lickona and Khmelkov (2008) has identified that values are elemental to human flourishing, and so are fundamental to students’ wellbeing in a school environment, irrespective of their placement in faith or government school sectors. Values education therefore presents as an important element in the pedagogical
infrastructure of all schools. This having been said, there is nonetheless an important tradition of values-related pedagogy and values education in the faith school setting, including a research tradition about them that needs to be brought forward to the wider educational community at this time. An ancillary benefit of this might be in better understanding of the importance played by the faith school sector in enhancing our knowledge of effective pedagogy.

**Values and effective teaching**

Research into faith schools has suggested that the values agenda played a positive role in overall student wellbeing and success (e.g. Bryk et al. 1993; Coleman et al. 1982; Hill et al. 1990; Lee & Bryk 1989). Testing across a range of measures, this research demonstrated that wherever values constituted a dimension of educational intentions, the result was that enhanced student satisfaction and greater academic focus followed. Even after controlling for the external differences between government and faith schooling, the values agenda appeared to be instrumental in the faith school’s demonstrated greater success around such results. This evidence has steadily compelled a re-evaluation of the factors bearing on student progress through school, including revising thought about the appropriateness of the values neutrality thesis in the learning environment. Hence, new questions were posed about the relationship between values and the nature of the type of teaching that has potential to facilitate student progress, even in the face of the erstwhile allegedly intractable barriers to learning, such as issues of intelligence quotients and student heritage. In response to these questions, new answers have evolved around
the importance of the nexus between effective teaching and the incorporation of explicit forms of values education (Clement 2009; Hawkes 2009; Lovat and Clement, 2008b). At the same time, these answers have issued in renewed recognition of the pedagogically bereft nature of so-called ‘values-neutrality’ in education and, in turn, a fresh charter for values education that goes well beyond its earlier construct as an artefact of religion.

As a result of the reassessment of the role of values in student wellbeing and progress at school, renewed optimism is emerging that effective teaching can impact positively on student attainment in ways that supersede the influences of heritage and intelligence. Influential in forging this new optimism was the Carnegie Corporation’s Task Force on Learning (Carnegie Corporation 1996). Carnegie proposed a broader definition of learning that went beyond conventional thinking around the centrality of cognition and intelligence to deal with the importance of affect, including the crucial role in learning played by the likes of social, emotional, moral and spiritual development. Informed by the most recent developments in the neurosciences (Bruer 1999), the report emphasized the importance of a stimulating environment and practical experience in achieving effective learning because such learning engaged the whole person, rather than merely a disjoined intelligence. Learning was therefore understood to be a dynamic process requiring forms of deep intellectual engagement aimed at wider facets of development concerned with communicative capacity, empathy and self-reflection (Lovat 2007). Schools, rather than students, were said to fail when this whole-person learning was reduced to an obsession with low-level cognitive learning in a context offering little in the way of
social, emotional, moral and spiritual support and modelling. In many ways, Carnegie established the charter and inspiration for what has popularly become known as ‘effective teaching’ (or ‘quality teaching’).

Linda Darling-Hammond, a member of the Carnegie Task Force, engaged in further research which established that effective teaching, as defined, was able to break through many of the traditional obstacles of learning, at the same time uncovering the enduring and debilitating impact of ‘ineffective teaching’ (Darling-Hammond 1996; 1998; 2000; Darling-Hammond & Youngs 2002; Fallon 2003; Jordan et al. 1997; Sanders & Rivers 1996). Adding to these insights between the dynamic interrelationship between the learner and the demeanour of the learning environment was the grounded and empirical work done by Newmann and Associates around ‘pedagogical dynamics’ (Newmann 1991; Newmann & Associates 1996; Newmann et al. 1996; Newmann & Wehlage 1993; 1995). According to their work, student achievement was shown to rest heavily on the positive interaction between the teacher and student, the pedagogical craft employed by the teacher, the organization of the school around the needs of the student, and wider community support for the school. In other words, dynamic and ‘authentic’ learning required high calibre pedagogy, as defined, supported by a ‘trusting, supportive ambience’. Hence, the nexus between effective teaching and the values agenda was made even more explicit, regardless of the school sector, faith or government, in which it functions. Again, however, it was in the faith sector that these effects were initially demonstrated and this underlines a little recognized contribution wrought by the sector to contemporaneous pedagogical understanding.
Faith schooling, values and student success

Supporting evidence for the positive effects on student learning and wellbeing in faith schools was supplied by a number of studies across the world. Using data from the 1992 National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS) in the USA, Jeyenes (2002; 2003) determined that Grade 12 students from faith schools had an academic advantage, even after controlling for socio-economic status (SES). This was attributed to five traits: school atmosphere, including teacher interest in students; racial harmony or friendliness; level of school discipline; presence or absence of school violence; and, the average daily amount of time spent on homework. Furthermore, students from faith schools displayed a greater likelihood that they engaged in more demanding academic courses, demonstrated a higher level of diligence, had good work habits, and were punctual in handing in their work.

Many of the published research studies on religious schooling in Western societies have focussed on the Catholic school system. Consistent academic achievement of students in Catholic schools across social groupings provided incentive for this research into the effects of such schooling on student performance (Lee & Bryk 1988; 1989). According to observations of Catholic schools made by Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) and Hill, Foster, and Gendler (1990), significant in contributing to the achievement of students was the relationship between students, and caring, dedicated teachers who considered it part of their mission to model positive values to students and to take an interest in their lives (cf. Arthur 2005). The strong
overtone of values characterizing the Catholic school system was borne out and reflected in other studies of non-Catholic faith schools (e.g. Hawkes 2005; Hunt 2004). These observations were supported by the research of Pugh and Telhaj (2008), in Belgium, who concluded that student attainment in faith schools was owing to the ready availability of social capital, or what Bryk and Schneider (2002, 2003) described as ‘relational trust’, that seemed to be more of a feature of faith schools than of schools in general. Another dimension was made evident by Hill, Foster and Gendler’s (1990) study of thirteen inner-city high schools in socially disadvantaged areas of New York and Washington, DC. They found that, among low income youth, the highest number of graduates and the highest test scores came from Catholic high schools, followed by special public schools. Both types of schools were more successful than zoned (comprehensive public) schools. To explain the superior results of Catholic and special purpose public schools, Hill et al. formulated the notion of ‘focus schools’ in order to indicate that these schools had a coherent mission and enjoyed the institutional freedom, organizational capacity and ability to structure themselves towards the benefit of student wellbeing and achievement.

In summary, research identifying the positive effects of faith schooling on student achievement contributes key insights into the interdependence between effective teaching and values. The studies cited above, particularly those of Hill, Foster and Gendler (1990), Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) and Pugh and Telhaj (2008), indicate that consistent provision of a trusting and caring environment, together with positive relationships between students and their teachers, and a commitment to meeting the needs of individual students, impact significantly on student attainment
and constitute an especially positive enhancement of the stated impact of effective teaching in reducing the debilitating effects of social disadvantage. Furthermore, such studies of faith schooling demonstrate the importance of schools having the freedom and capacity to structure schooling for the benefit of student success. Care and trust emerge as essential features in building student confidence in their own potential to develop across all measures of human development, and the modelling of values, together with the explicit attention given to values education, seem to constitute the key ingredients of the observed greater success of the faith school over the government school. In other words, the success is not so dependent on the religious jurisdiction *per se*, but rather on the greater freedom that has been enjoyed by the faith school to construct a values-laden learning environment and to engage in explicit values-laden pedagogy, referred to by Hawkes (2009) as ‘values-based education’, and now known to be essential to effective teaching. By these insights, it is clear that there is no essential reason why the same levels of student success as demonstrated in these studies cannot be enjoyed across all school sectors. Clear evidence that values based-education impels transformative change at student, teacher and school levels, as well as across the school sectors, is provided by the recent Australian experience of values education.

**Values education good practice schools (VEGPSP)**

In Australia, recent dialogue around values education has been prompted and shaped largely by the Australian Government’s initiative in developing a National Framework (Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training [AGDEST] 2005) that has funded a number of key projects. Among these is the two-
stage *Values Education Good Practice Schools Project* (VEGPSP) which has clearly thrust the values education agenda into mainstream schooling irrespective of the schools belonging to government or faith sectors. While the Australian Government does not directly fund the State and Territory based school systems, the resourcing of VEGPSP made it attractive for schools and systems to buy into values education in more explicit ways than had been common. In a competitive process, 316 schools were funded across a total time span of three years to initiate or develop further an extant values education project.

The schools, from across all sectors but with a clear preponderance of government schools, assembled themselves into 51 clusters, with each cluster responsible for a project that followed the broad values education guidelines spelled out in the National Framework. These broad guidelines included a statement of core values around personal integrity and social cohesion but, moreover, were explicit about the inherent role of values education as a constituent part of ‘good practice pedagogy’. The successful projects therefore had to demonstrate not only their internal consistency with the core values but, moreover, that they were based on and in turn had potential to enhance good practice pedagogy. In a word, the connection was made explicit between values education and the wider educational agenda so that projects, even in faith schools, could not rely on narrow or marginal parameters but had rather to be firmly embedded in updated pedagogical and mainstream educational thought. Each project had a practice and research component built in, with the latter monitored by a network of university-based researchers. The results from the research component became the focus of a separately commissioned and
more rigorous Australian Government funded project, titled, *Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience* *(T&M)*

The results of VEGPSP, including the research results, are now the subject of two government reports (AGDEST 2006; AGDEEWR, 2008), while the results of T&M constitute a third government report (Lovat et al. 2009a). They are also available through the more detailed case studies of selected clusters and/or schools that appear in Lovat and Toomey (2009), Lovat et al. (2009b) and Chapman et al. (2007).

The Executive Summary of the VEGPSP Stage 1 Report (AGDEST 2006) identified six indicators of educational impacts affected by good practice values education across all schools:

Good practice values education can:

1. lead to changes in teacher professional practice in classrooms and, in particular, in the way teachers relate to and communicate with their students;
2. produce calmer and more focused classroom activity;
3. enable students to become better self-managers;
4. help students develop greater capacities for reflection;
5. increase teachers’ levels of confidence in their approaches to their work and their sense of professional fulfilment;
6. produce strong positive relationships between students and between students and teachers. *(AGDEST 2006, p. 2)*
The report noted that although the incidence and impact of these indicators varied among the participating schools and clusters, depending upon the particular program being trialled, the significant role of teachers was evidenced by the fact that this factor received explicit mention in three of the six good practice indicators and, furthermore, that it was inferred in a fourth indicator. This coincides with the evidence in the literature relating to the key role of teachers in effectively implementing and sustaining the kind of values education that brings about positive changes in classroom climate, as well as student pro-social behaviour and attitude towards and engagement in schoolwork (e.g. Hawkes 2005; 2008; 2009; Solomon et al. 2000).

**Changes in teacher perceptions**

Values education proved to be a catalyst for changes in teacher perception of the role of values education in affecting classroom practice and management, and brought changes in the ways that teachers related to students. For teachers in both faith and government schools, it has meant a conscious reflection on the place of values in the curriculum and a growing belief that the greatest effect comes from explicit structures that model to and engage students in transaction of academic content related to values, rather than their being assigned merely to the implicit, or hidden curriculum. Teachers from faith schools identified the values endemic to their system (Chapman et al. 2007). At another school, values became basic to a whole-school approach rather than being assigned to the hidden curriculum (AGDEST 2006, p. 29).
Teachers deliberately changed their approach to classroom management with a move from centralized rules to student-based agreements that granted them a greater level of responsibility over their own management. Classroom management practices changed, moving from a rule based approach to one in which agreements were central (AGDEST 2006, pp. 178-179). Implementation by teachers of classroom management strategies gained through professional development led to changes in student behaviour (p. 179). Changes in teacher behaviour effected changes in student behaviour, thus demonstrating the powerful effects of the ambience of the learning environment and teacher modelling on student behaviour. One cluster of schools reported that changes in teacher behaviours had a “ripple down effect” into student behaviours (p. 178). The responses demonstrated that effective values education requires and contributes to conceptual and practical changes by teachers concerning their role in providing a learning environment where the potential for student learning is optimized.

Likewise, in VEGPSP—Stage 2, teacher change was observed to be the key to the success of values education. That is, when teachers took values to the heart of their own teaching practice, observable changes in student behaviour followed:

*We observed that those teachers whose classrooms were characterised by an inclusive culture of caring and respect and where character development played an important and quite often explicit role in the daily learning of students were those same teachers who also demonstrated a high level of*
personal development, self-awareness of, and commitment to their own values and beliefs. (AGDEEWR 2008, p. 39)

One of the university associates summarized the pivotal role of the teacher in effecting changes in this way:

It was ... observed (within the school) that where teachers were seeing the importance of establishing relationships and of respecting their students – this was reflected in the behaviour of their students.

... Where teachers are embracing values education as something that is important and to be embedded in practice – their pedagogy is enhanced. Where teachers perceive that the problem lies with the students (a deficit approach), the quality of teaching does not improve. (AGDEEWR, 2008, pp. 81-82)

Thus, reports from VEGPSP—Stages 1 and 2 - indicate that values education provided an opportunity and impetus for change in teacher classroom practice that followed the conscious decision of teachers to build their practice around the values they desired to teach.

**Changes in school culture and classroom ambience**

The evidence from VEGPSP suggests that values education has the power to produce changes in classroom ambience and to effect positive influence on school culture
more generally. Values education offered a licence for engagement in dialogue around values and ultimately for a common language to develop between staff and students by which improved relationships, behaviour and addressing of difficult issues could be brokered. The ‘ripple’ effect of values education, mentioned above, was observed across all sectors, and served as a catalyst for a positive change in the demeanour of the whole school. Values education had a ripple effect in bringing changes across the school community with values being part of the community’s dialogue (AGDEST 2006, p. 70). Pupil behaviour was changed as the ripple effect of values education became evident in respectful listening on the part of students (p. 116). Values taken to the core rippled out to beliefs, structures, policies, and pedagogies affecting student wellbeing and learning (pp. 136-137). Genuine changes occurred in student behaviour resulted in improvement in the classroom climate by making it more pleasant for both students and teachers:

*We also found that by creating an environment where these values were constantly shaping classroom activity, student learning was improving, teachers and students were happier, and school was calmer.* (AGDEST, 2006 p. 120)

*The overall feeling in the class is calmer and more cohesive.* (p. 127)

Improvements in student behaviour as a result of increased sensitivity to values and the way these are translated into relationships meant that playground and
classroom climate improved with the consequence for the need for fewer interventions by teachers regarding behaviour:

*Kids with less pushing and shoving and more inclusion in the playground ... students were reconciling their differences and we had felt the calm come over the school community.* (AGDEST, 2006, p. 184)

*Teaching staff are reporting fewer classroom management problems as the students seem to have increased awareness of their conduct and a commitment to uphold commonly agreed values.* (p. 60)

By raising the levels of ‘relational trust’ (see Bryk & Schneider 2002; 2003) between school staff, students and parents, values education brought changes to student behaviour as shown by documented reports of behaviour: “School is ‘a much better place to be.’” Other evidence of change relates to a rise in the measures of parental satisfaction with the school (AGDEST 2006, p. 41). Changes in student attitude and behaviour became tangible in greater levels of involvement in school justice programs, and observations of greater expending of effort on the part of students to befriend or to give assistance to other students:

*Students ... actively participating in donating money to charities and many students have become involved in the school's Social Justice or CARE programme* (AGDEST 2006, p. 108)
In real terms its success is there to be seen each day in the play of our students; in imaginative narratives, in turn-taking, in the willingness of “popular” children to include socially “awkward” children in their games and at their lunch table; in the “sacrifice” of playtime by senior students as they escort younger, injured children to the office for the ubiquitous ice pack and in the shared problem-solving it takes to find a lost hat, shoe or lunchbox. (Hill & Vick 2009, p.89)

These calming effects in the classroom, positively impacted on student behaviour and so improved relationships between teacher and students were also evident in VEGSPSP—Stage 2.

These included focused classroom activity, calmer classrooms with students going about their work purposefully, and more respectful behaviour between students. Teachers and students also reported improved relationships between the two groups. Other reports included improved student attendance, fewer reportable behaviour incidents and the observation that students appeared happier. (AGDEEWR 2008, p. 27)

Teachers reported calmer school environments, where a clear and shared set of school values, collectively developed, helped to focus teachers and students on behaviours that upheld those values. (p. 40)
Schools observed advancement of conflict management skills as evidenced by reports of “less fighting and bad behaviour” and “that students began developing the ability to talk through their differences in a more respectful way” (AGDEEWR 2008, p.77). Students had an improved ability “to discuss values” and were “empowered to behave in socially acceptable ways”. As a result of a positive atmosphere filtering through the school, there was an attitudinal change in “students who previously did not believe they could achieve…with success building success” (p. 40).

**Development of student agency**

Changes in teacher attitude and practice would seem to have been matched by the kind of enhanced student agency that saw students empowered to take, and taking, greater responsibility for their own learning (see indicator 3 above). The VEGPSP—Stage 2 noted that student agency was advance by pedagogies that engaged students at intellectual depth and involved them in real-world learning:

*Effective pedagogies in values education built around a values-rich content, develop students’ higher order thinking skills, and provide opportunities for real-world learning and for students to exercise their agency.* (AGDEEWR 2008, p. 42)

This was particularly evident when student action teams (SATs) were adopted by both faith and government schools as the instrument by which values education was pursued. Teachers learned to trust and respect students as learners as they observed
students taking control of their own learning and this, in turn, led them to reassess their roles as teachers and, subsequently, the way they related to students. As noted above, changes in student engagement in learning were made possible because teachers felt renewed confidence to change their teaching practices to ones that were more sensitive to the relational dynamics in teaching and learning. Teachers engaged in dialogue with students and offered support as needed, so empowering students rather than attempting to control the learning situation. It meant that teachers had to allow students to make less-than-perfect decisions and to use negative feedback as a means of improvement (AGDEST, 2006; AGDEEW, 2008; Chapman et al. 2007; Chapman et al. 2009):

*Positive feedback from peers and staff to the Forum Leaders saw the self-esteem of the Leaders grow as they came to know themselves better and became more aware of the capacities they possessed.* (AGDEST 2006, p. 208)

*To allow the students to lead the project and let them take us on a journey that has opened our minds, eyes and hearts has been awesome.* (p. 65).

Many of the values education programmes employed by the schools had reflective practices embedded in them (see indicator 4, above). An example of this is provided by Netherwood et al. (2009) where reflective practices were effected through writing activities, group sharing, or through projects where students juxtaposed sets of alternative information. The latter occurred in the mapping exercises when
students were faced with the different ways in which various cultures use and view their special places. Active student participation and reflection was paramount:

*The project ... was premised on the need to start by giving children ‘a voice’ and listening to what they say and how they say it.* (p.107)

Student agency is also furthered through teaching strategies such as Socratic circles that engage students at intellectual depth and promote cognitive growth (e.g. Polite & Adams 1997). Such dialogical methodologies increase student communicative competence and their ability to negotiate when confronted with different ideologies:

*Finally, students overwhelmingly report that their confidence in speaking publicly was increased by their participation in Socratic circles methodology. It would therefore seem that the Socratic circles technique plays a role in improving students’ communicative abilities as well as deepening their understanding of different world views and different values perspectives.*

(AGDEEWR 2009, p. 121)

**Student capacity for reflection**

Reports from various clusters participating in the VEGPSP note an increase in student propensity for reflection on their own behaviour:

*Children appear to be more reflective in their actions.* (AGDEST 2006, p.139)
Staff across the schools have commented on the fact they have seen … reflection on students’ own behaviour and that of others. (p. 116)

The VEGPSP—Stage 2 Final Report (AGDEEWR 2008) indicates that student capacity for reflection is heightened through quality pedagogy that is open-ended, values explicit and student centred, and furthermore engages students in a way that their learning is relevant to their lives and allows the transfer of what they learn to their life situation.

The pedagogies engage students in real-life learning, offer opportunity for real practice, provide safe structures for taking risks, and encourage personal reflection and action. (p. 26)

Educators have characterised ‘taking action’ as moving from cognitive understandings of values towards manifesting values in personal and prosocial behaviours. Students live and practise the values rather than simply knowing about them. (p. 27)

Reported changes in student learning

The data reported from VEGPSP—Stage 1 did not include any direct statistical measures of the impact of values education on student academic achievement but it did provide much in the way of testimonial evidence concerned with the impact on student engagement and motivation regarding learning, or what came to be known in later studies as ‘academic diligence’. The research report, Project to Test and
Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience (Lovat et al. 2009a), noted the positive effect of values education on student academic diligence:

There was substantial quantitative and qualitative evidence suggesting that there were observable and measurable improvements in students’ academic diligence, including increased attentiveness, a greater capacity to work independently as well as more cooperatively, greater care and effort being invested in schoolwork and students assuming more responsibility for their own learning as well as classroom ‘chores’. (p. 6)

Several of the clusters report a perceived link between values education and student learning. One cluster reported that engagement in restorative practices led to improved teaching and learning (AGDEST 2006, p.127). Other clusters report an improvement in student learning as the values agenda was implemented:

The values education programme in use has meant:

- more effective cooperation among students as they go about learning or sharing learning;
- teachers focusing more on guiding and acknowledging students’ initiative – ‘getting kids to want to learn’;
- a safer, more secure learning environment;
- better quality strategies used and students taught to articulate these;
• the creation of a ‘learning community’ which links learning and relationships in powerful ways. (AGDEST 2006, p. 43)

Student learning has ‘shown an improvement’, particularly as ‘students improve their behaviour and display their values’. (p. 192)

In like manner, the VEGPSP—Stage 2 Final Report also acknowledges the beneficial effects of values education on student learning with increased student engagement and motivation when students perceived learning to be relevant to their lives:

Teachers reported that students connected more successfully with their learning when it was authentic and when they felt that it was relevant to their lives. (AGDEEWR, 2008, p. 27)

One cluster of secondary schools reported data that provided quantitative data of improvement in reading and writing for Years 7 to 9 with these results being contrary to the general trend across the system:

Performance of students on the ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) provided quantitative evidence of improvement in literacy. One of the most difficult areas to improve student performance is from Year 7 to Year 9 yet our data for students in reading and writing shows definite improvement and is evidence of the value added that has occurred for students as they moved from Year 7 to Year 9 compared to the system data. (AGDEEWR, 2008, p. 47)
The evidence presented in the VEGPSP reports (AGDEST 2006; AGDEEWR 2008; Lovat et al. 2009a) suggests a positive relationship between student academic achievement and implantation of high quality values education. Such findings are consistent with a range of international literature which suggests that establishing a clear, direct and quantifiable link between values education and student academic achievement could prove to be elusive owing to the fact that the impact of values education is mediated through a wide range of factors which, in turn, influence student motivation and engagement in learning (see Lovat et al. 2009b).

Testing and measuring the impact of values education (T&M)

Across the three years in which the VEGPSP project rolled out, the nature of the evidence shifted steadily from being purely qualitative to having a quantitative edge, albeit lacking formal instrumentation and measurement. These latter were brought to bear in the Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience (Lovat et al., 2009). In this study, there was interest in all of the claims being made around student effects, with a dedicated focus on a range of factors which have been identified as mediating variables in facilitating student motivation and academic improvement. These include teacher-student relationships and inter-personal interactions in the classroom and school (Davis, 2006). Deeper learning has been shown to occur when an individual engages in social discourse with peers or more knowledgeable others. Hence, evidence abounds that classroom contexts that optimize student learning are characterized by an emphasis on social skills, such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control (Brock et al., 2008). According to Deci et al. (1991), “The highest quality of conceptual learning seems to occur under the same motivational conditions that promote personal growth and adjustment.” (p. 326)
A mixed methods approach was adopted in the study in order to measure some of the inter-personal and social factors associated with student motivation and achievement. As noted by Gläser-Zikuda & Järvela (2007), multidimensional methods are required to provide insight into the multiple perspectives operating in classrooms and to examine the complex effects of social contexts on student learning and educational outcomes. The mixed methods approach employed was a sequential explanatory design (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). In this study, quantitative data were collected over two time-periods and analysed. Qualitative data were collected during the second phase and were analysed separately to help explain and elaborate on the quantitative results. The qualitative data helped to refine and explain the statistical results by incorporating more detailed information from the perspectives of the research participants. Hammersley (2008) describes this kind of integration of qualitative and quantitative data as a process of ‘indefinite triangulation’, which serves to both illuminate different aspects of a phenomenon and also validate the interpretation of the research findings.

Student, staff and parent pre and post surveys were administered in order to obtain quantitative and qualitative data about the effects of the values education program on student behaviour and engagement as well as classroom and school ambience. The results of the analysis of the teacher surveys revealed that teachers perceived statistically significant improvements on the three aspects of student behaviour that were assessed. These included academic engagement, inclusive behaviour and responsible behaviour. The qualitative data also supported this view, with many comments from both students and teachers indicating that improved interactions between students had led to more harmonious and productive learning environments in which students were demonstrating greater kindness to each other and taking more care and pride in their work. The teachers observed that giving students more control over routine tasks added to their sense of competence and this appeared to lead to more independent learning and increased intrinsic motivation. The teachers reported that students were putting greater effort into their work and “striving for quality”, “striving to achieve their best” and even “striving for perfection”.
As noted in a number of other studies (e.g. Benninga et al., 2003), it seems that the ambience, relationships and discourse germane to values education have potential to impact positively on students’ academic work habits, without any other explicit contaminating factor being obvious. The report states:

Thus, there was substantial quantitative and qualitative evidence suggesting that there were observable and measurable improvements in students’ academic diligence, including increased attentiveness, a greater capacity to work independently as well as more cooperatively, greater care and effort being invested in schoolwork and students assuming more responsibility for their own learning as well as classroom ‘chores’. (Lovat et al., 2009, p. 6)

The study also provided confirming evidence around the many testimonial claims made in earlier studies. For example, evidence was elicited of a “… ‘calmer’ environment with less conflict …” (p. 8); “… rise in levels of politeness and courtesy, open friendliness, better manners, offers of help, and students being more kind and considerate … a greater respect for each other’s position” (p. 9); and of “… the creation of a safer and more caring school community.” (p. 10)

**Conclusion**

The *National Framework in Values Education*, and especially VEGPSP and the subsequent T&M study, has provoked much reflection on the role of values education in school education, not so much for its moral impact, in the narrower sense, but for its holistic developmental impact (cf. Brown 2007; Lovat & Clement 2008b; 2008c). As a result, all school sectors have been served notice that values education can no longer be considered to be optional, peripheral or tied merely to a religious or narrow moral agenda. Least of all can it be regarded any longer as the exclusive domain of any particular school sector. Rather, the reflections recorded in
the reports and case studies of VEGPSP and the data emanating from T&M draw attention to the need to recognize the place of intentional and explicit values education as a vital and essential component of education across all sectors and to consider carefully and directly the implications for pedagogy in general. Moreover, the documentation pertaining to the implementation of values education demonstrates that it requires more than a ‘skin deep’ approach, but rather levels of engagement that are characterized by the traits of effective teaching, namely, intellectual depth, communicative capacity, empathic character, reflection, self-management and self-knowing (Lovat 2009b). Good practice values education is evidenced by such educational properties as the professional development of staff, an explicit recognition of the values embedded in existing curricula, a whole school approach, positive and focussed school leadership, and the modelling of behaviours, values and communicative capacity (AGDEST 2006; AGDEEWR 2008; Lovat et al. 2009a).

The analysis of the data available to this point in time suggests that values education has potential to have a positive effect on student and teacher agency. As teachers are equipped with a deeper understanding of their role and a wider range of pedagogical skills in order to attain them, their sense of self-efficacy can be enhanced by being engaged in the modelling and explicit transaction about values that are implied by an effective values education program. Likewise, as students are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning, their perception of their agency in learning grows and, in turn, motivates them to engage more deeply in the learning process. Values education can provide the opportunity for a deepening of
both student and teacher reflection, with the result that the quality of the school ethos and the classroom climate are transformed by more supportive and caring relationships between teachers and students, and students and teachers, in line with the findings of Newmann and Associates (1996) regarding the ambience of the learning environment and of Bryk and Schneider (2002) concerned with the dynamic of relational trust. The positive impact of values education on student engagement and motivation in learning (and potentially academic achievement) is consistent with studies of the impact of values education in other countries (e.g. Benninga et al. 2003; 2006; Berkowitz et al. 2008; Bryk et al. 1993; Hawkes 2009). Results around values education research also demonstrate that effective learning rests on holistic development, in which all developmental measures, intellectual, social, emotional, moral and spiritual, are attended to as part of a holistic pedagogy.

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