

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

VALUES EDUCATION: TOWARDS A MORE COMPASSIONATE SOCIETY

PROFESSOR TERRY LOVAT

PRO-VICE CHANCELLOR, EDUCATION AND ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE, N.S.W

We all are learning all our lives, and professors are no different. I was instructed rather well by a very compassionate but direct email interchange with Carole de Fraga after the Values Education Forum and another event in Melbourne that Carole had attended, where she pointed out, quite rightly, the lack of direct discourse about animal care and compassion. And I've had conversations with a number of people since. It certainly is lacking and, as I think both Joy Verrinder's and Nichola Kriek's presentations today showed, it's inappropriately lacking, because there's more concern and reference to animal care in what teachers do than is currently in the rhetoric of the values education program or programs as they're rolling out through the various states and territories.

One of the issues we have in Australia, as you would know, is that a Federal Government - and the Values Education Good Practice Schools project, for instance, is a Federal Government initiative, - only has so much power to influence what happens in the various states and territories. So things do tend to happen a little bit unevenly and, in educational matters, you can never turn your back on any corner of education.

Certainly the whole issue of animal compassion, compassion towards animals, and as was rightly pointed out today, the enhanced use of animal reference and pedagogical matters, is something that I'll certainly be attending to, to the extent that I've got any influence over things.

So thanks, Carole, and to your association, for stretching our thinking about these sorts of things.

Today I'm not going to make direct reference to that issue, though. I mean, I'd risk, I think, being trite about something that, like all of these things, needs to be thought through for its consequences. One of the examples that hit me today, as I was sitting watching Joy's presentation, is one of the obvious things you might do, as you became conscientised to this issue is to bring more animals into the classroom. This obviously works very well in terms of

the kids' attention and interest, etc. However, does it position animals as you would want to have them positioned? As some of the children in the survey said, "What happens to them overnight? What happens to them when there's a storm?" All of these sorts of things. It's not a matter to be dealt with in a trite fashion.

What I am going to talk about that I think is highly relevant, certainly to the two earlier presentations that I saw, is about the capacity of schools and teachers to make a difference around this and other issues, all sorts of learning issues ranging from the academic through to issues of personal, social, moral development, etc. In many ways, that's what the modern, if you like, values education program, values education debate, is refocusing our attention on.

I often say to people, my own approach to values education, how I see values education, is not so much from an 'old' – and by 'old' I don't mean discredited, but I mean, just being around for a long time – 'moral education' approach, which tends to say that schools and teachers should include matters of morality, moral inculcation and moral formation in their role. This is part of what a school is. It's part of a teacher's vocation, etc.

I have no issue with that at all. I believe that personally. But that is an old debate that, rightly or wrongly, tends often to fall between the stools of private religious education at one end and public education as it developed, certainly in Australia, at the other end. And sometimes we can get caught in the middle of that debate and perhaps miss some more important points that are coming through to us in modern research.

It's simply about what works, and how teachers might best construct their roles, how they might go about best relating with their students, what sorts of things they should be paying attention to, and how they should be paying attention to them. So what I tend to say is, my own approach to values education is not really the old moral education approach so much as a new, if you like, pedagogical approach.

I think what we've learnt about what works best in schools, and in terms of how teachers construct their roles, what works best for students doing well in that broader sense of partly academic, but also personal, social, moral, emotional, spiritual development, has so much to do with values modelling and values transaction, that if you take the values component out of teaching, you've lost the key for students doing well. In a nutshell, that's what I believe modern educational research of a certain kind – most of it, interestingly, not even directed towards values education, but just simply trying to work out what does work in schools. That's what it is showing us.

To the point that I've felt justified to say to teachers of all sorts, "Look, whether you think you're into values education or not, whether you see yourself as a values educator or not, whether you have ideological issues with the whole notion of values in schools or not, just put all that aside and look at what the research tells us. And then tell me that you can construct your role meaningfully without the values component being in there.

And I think that's the key to everything that I've heard said today and that I've read about the interests that are represented in the room today. It's not so much a matter of whether we include animals in the classroom or not, or even whether we make explicit reference to animals or not, I mean, that is important, but you could do that until the cows come home, if you'll pardon the pun, and still not achieve — If the pedagogy is wrong, it doesn't matter what you say, what content you use, what references to whatever you make, you won't get the effect. Get the pedagogy right, get the mindset right, get the relationships in the classroom right and, in a sense, everything comes together. That's what the research is telling us.

I'm jumping ahead a little bit, so let me just move through some of this rather quickly. There's a lot of ways that this could be constructed. This is just my reading of some of the history of these things. There was an important event in the early '90s in the US about re-thinking schooling. It was in the early years of Clinton, and a certain frustration, I suppose, that 100 years on or so of public education, in the broader sense – and I don't mean public versus private, I mean just publicly-funded education – been through different trends, different fashions, different moments, poured huge resources, particularly through the Kennedy/Johnson eras, into education, and still this kind of expanding tail, I suppose, of students who fail. So school, you know, quite obviously, had become, in a sense, a place where those who were going to achieve anyway were helped to achieve it better, and those who were, if you like, destined not to achieve, tended not to achieve.

And so, what do we do about this, and what's going wrong? It was a huge kind of a research, etc., kind of a set of symposia that led to a report in 1994 on student achievement in the US. And among a whole lot of other things, uncovered what I think were some fundamental flaws in earlier ideas about the so-called 'limited power' of schooling to make a difference.

Number one of these, probably, being a credo, almost, of educational research of the second half of the 20th Century. That student achievement relied almost solely – if not solely – on heritage.

Perhaps the most noted educational researcher of the 20th Century, a guy called Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist of education, did endless empirical work, endless of what these days would be called evidence-based research. I mean, you couldn't knock it off for its empirical purity. It's just that it missed a whole lot of fairly obvious points, but that's what a lot of evidence-based research does do. It focuses, it drills down so much, and tries to decontaminate everything around it, that it forgets that, once you decontaminate, you've actually, in a way, lost the point.

What he proved he believed passionately – and it's carried in his most famous little epithet: 'Families are the factories of life'. What he was saying was that families are so much the factories of life that school can't really, at the end of the day, make much difference. You know, by the time the school gets the motor car, it's assembled. It might be able to put a nice steering wheel on, or a seat-cover, but basically, the car's there and there's nothing you can do about it.

The Plowden Report in the UK in 1967 tended to prove the same thing, that kids of the achievers achieved, and the kids of the non-achievers didn't achieve. And the British sociologist of education, Christopher Jenks in the 1970s, said fundamentally, what comes out of the school is what goes in. And, in parentheses, don't beat your heads too hard against the wall, you teachers, you systems, parents, politicians – you can't expect that schools are going to be able to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, so let's just accept that, in a sense, schools are destined for those who are going to achieve anyway. They'll be helped to achieve a bit better, and those who aren't, well, let's be compassionate towards them, let's get them out of the firing line, let's give them other things to do, let's try and find them a job quickly, and let's accept that school's not really for them, which mean's learning's not really for them, and the whole kind of cyclical reproduction theory becomes a truism.

It led to a de facto kind of pessimism about the capacity of teachers in schools to actually make much difference at all. I don't think we recognised it as pessimism at the time. We would have seen it as hard evidence-based research findings. We'd have seen the conclusion about what to do with the non-achievers as being based on compassion, you know, we shouldn't set them up for failure, kind of thinking. But in actual fact, what we were doing was reproducing from one generation to the next the same society, with schools playing that kind of sifting role that Durkheim had said, way before, was their great benefit to society. Schools didn't make much difference. They weren't really meant to!

In terms of values, fairly naturally, if you start to believe that sort of stuff, then the idea that schools should get much into the business of values doesn't fit. Values also belong to the

family and even if you thought you should try and do something about values inculcation, values education, well, what's the point? Because the research is telling us you can't even change a student's destiny or stars around basic literacies and numeracies, so what chance would you have around such much more sophisticated matter? So, values neutrality becomes a kind of a credo of the schooling system. Very obviously in the public system, I would suggest, but, having taught across private and public, I think it is there on the private side as well. There's just some nice cosmetics but, at the end of the day, a teacher's mentality was a teacher's mentality.

The important thing that Carnegie did was to say that a lot of the problem here is that we've set kids up to fail. We've set the targets of learning so low and so narrowly around low-level cognitive kind of stuff, that what we've tended to do was to sort of switch off the lights in brains, rather than switch them on.

Now, if kids had an encouraging environment, a stimulating environment from home and elsewhere, those lights would probably stay on, sometimes in spite of the school, let's face it. But for the kids who didn't have that other environment at home and in their peer groups and wherever, what the school tended to do, by concentrating on the low level stuff, the basics, if you like, was they just progressively turned the lights off, and convinced people that this wasn't for them. None of it. Not the academic, not the values inculcation that might be slipping through every now and again as they read a novel, none of it.

What Carnegie did was redefine learning, obviously in terms of intellectual development. But an intellectual development that was as much about communication, people connecting with their worlds and learning to be citizens of their world, to be empowered with the rhetoric of their world. Things like empathic character, connecting, feeling, being conscientised about their world, recognising their capacity to make a difference to some of the issues in their world. But these were as important to the business of learning as anything else.

The business of self-reflection, reflecting generally, encouraging reflection. You know, not giving the answers before the questions had even been formed, which is such an occupational hazard in so much schooling. About self-management, and ultimately about self-knowing. At the end of the day, we have to help people to understand who they are. Because if people don't know who they are, in a sense, they're not sure about much else that's around them.

Jurgen Habermas would say, "There's no knowing without knowing the knower". You're the knower. If you don't know yourself, you don't really know that what you think you know is the

truth, or just an accumulation of biases and bigotries and cultural baggage of all sorts. So, helping people to learn to sort of sift and, in the middle of it, find themselves, is really what learning's about.

This developed a charter for what was described as holistic, or whole person, learning, almost in contra-distinction to the sort of back-to-basics stuff that, every now and again – as at the moment in our fundamentalist era, not only religiously but educationally, we hear from media commentators and politicians looking for a bit of sloganeering for the next election, you know, “We've got to get schools back to basics. Teachers are trying to do too much,” blah-blah-blah. The evidence is contrary to that.

So a raft of research done in the US in the first instance, coming to Australia in the late '90s, people like Fred Newmann, who took up the cudgel, if you like, from Carnegie, and said, “Okay, what sort of pedagogy would we need for this holistic learning?” And through a whole lot of experimentation, came up with five different ‘pedagogical dynamics’. And you see the mix from the obvious sound techniques. After all — by suggesting that teachers should play a bigger role, no-one is suggesting that they shouldn't do the sound techniques, the basic craft, well, that they shouldn't be pedagogical artisans. But Newmann spoke more widely of things like ‘catering for diversity’. Really accepting the notion of difference rather than standardisation, which does tend, often, to control the way systems are directed.

He also spoke of the notion of ‘school coherence’ which when fleshed out became a notion of a school that is there, unapologetically, for the betterment of students. For no other reason. It's not there to play some political role or some religious role or some other role – as schools often do get caught up in. It's there for the betterment of the students, and the students know it. He spoke of teacher professional development. Again, a bit of an obvious one, but one that systems are particularly bad at, all across the world.

And then, finally, this notion of an ‘ambience’. Creation of what he described as a trustful, supportive ambience in the learning site, which is so heavily values-laden. And he said – and this is as a fairly hard-nosed educational researcher – he said his findings suggested that, if you didn't get that last one right, you could almost forget the rest. That a values modelling and a values transaction in the middle of all pedagogy was absolutely essential to any pedagogy, even when it was directed at basic learning of spelling or times tables.

Another researcher, Linda Darling-Hammond, actually went on from there and, in a sense, turned the old Talcott Parsons/Christopher Jencks/Plowden Report sort of thesis on its head, and showed that when this holistic learning was engaged in, these pedagogical dynamics

were engaged in fully and heartfully, that the quality of the learning that came from that could actually overturn all the disadvantage effects of family background, socio-economic status, and even disability of sorts.

Some of the most stunning research – and itself done in a very pure and empirically controlled way, with pre and post-testing and control groups, etc., actually turned on its head earlier research, showing that what Parsons and the others were really seeing was how things for students don't change when teaching, coherence, school ambience and the like don't change. But when they do, huge difference can be made. People can start to learn in whole different ways, not only academically but across the range – personal, social, moral, emotional, spiritual. Something that I think is absolutely fundamental to the issues that have been raised today. It's one thing to say, "This is what schools should do, this is the language that should be used, this is the things that teachers should attend to," but we've got to know whether it can work or not. We've come from an era that's suggested, frankly, it couldn't. I'm suggesting modern research is telling us it can.

I'll just jump through some of this. A little bit of compounding research. And I said before, some of the most interesting research about all of this is actually not coming from my field, values education research, but from people like Ken Rowe, who is one of the directors of ACER, again a very hard-nosed sort of an organisation, and Ken, a pretty hard-nosed researcher, I'm very fond of him. We work out of different paradigms, I'd have to say.

Ken did this massive study of hundreds of thousands of students 'doing well' across Australian schools – public, private, etc. An interesting study, because it was the biggest study that's ever been done on students doing well, believe it or not. So much educational research has been on students not doing well. It's been at the compensatory end, the remedial end. And a little bit at the gifted end. Not much in the middle. The student 'doing well'. Everyone knows they're doing well. It shows in their academic scores, but that's not really the most important thing.

We all use the language. "How's Johnny?" "Yeah, he's doing well at school. You know, he's not Einstein, but he's doing well." It's across the range. School is working for this person. Hundreds of thousands of these sorts of kids. The main question was: "What is it about the school that makes you do well?" 99% of those responses were to do with the teacher – the teacher's relationship, the teacher's influence, etc. Not surprising, Ken said.

But then he started to drill down, to ask the next question. What is it about the teacher? And Ken tells this story against himself. He said, "I was quite convinced," he says, "that we

were going to get a whole lot of responses about content and method. Teachers who know their stuff and who put it across well.” Those responses, when factor analysed, were there, but they were third and fourth in the list. One and two, surprisingly – or maybe not surprisingly – were care and trust. And these were kids of all ages and stages. It was the teacher who they felt cared for them. It was the teacher they could trust, and who trusted them who, interestingly, got the best response about the basics of the job – that is, students doing well.

And just to show you the extent of the research, a very different study done by Bill Louden from the University of Western Australia. You know, a smaller study, but a much more intense one, digging down, going into classrooms, talking with kids, etc. And his conclusion, it's the powerful relationship of an elder with a junior that is the magic in a teacher/student relationship. More than the traditional kind of pedagogical relationship. It's the flesh and blood relationship, in other words, that really counts.

John Hattie from (ex-Harvard) University of Auckland did a big study on teacher expertise. Who do we call the expert teacher? What does it mean? It means a zillion things. But what it never doesn't mean is respect for students. All this values language coming through from studies that were not about values education. It's not about some little side thing that's done on Wednesdays from 1.00 till 1.20! It's about the whole dynamics of what a school's about and what works.

Laurie Brady, the relationship between the teacher and the student. Ruth Deakin Crick from Bristol, the quality of the classroom relationships is what it's really about, what the whole thing's about.

Nell Noddings, any early-childhood trained person will know, was telling us a long time ago that it's the caring relationship that actually precedes the learning relationship.

It's all pretty obvious. I mean, as I said to Ken when he told me about the findings of his study (“Care and trust, care and trust, mate!”): “Ken, I must remember to tell Confucius!” I mean, it's in our tradition. We know it. We know ourselves that nobody functions well in an environment where there's harshness, where there's lack of care, where there's lack of trust, where there's lack of respect. None of us does that.

If we came into this room and we felt everyone was against us or whatever, we'd kind of freeze out. Why were we ever stupid enough to think that kids could learn effectively, could learn, that most complex of functions, in an environment that wasn't characterised by the most positive values both modelled and, what we're discovering latterly, transacted. It's not

just a case of modelling, it's a case of taking these care and trust and respect notions and helping kids themselves to realise why they function better in that sort of environment, and therefore why their lives will be happier and richer when they learn to take those sorts of values into all of their relationships. All of their relationships with their fellow human beings, with the animals in their environment, and with the inanimate environment.

Okay. I think I've probably made the point. What values education does is take us back to a whole lot of basics, real basics that we often forget in the politics of education.

An interesting study in the US, California: a correlation between academic achievement and developing comprehensive values education across 121 primary schools. The results across a three to four year period – there was a steady and progressive correlation between their – if you like – basic skills tests and the implementation of a values education program over that three to four year period.

The bonus that's being delivered through some of the values education research is that it's not only about developing personal, social and moral development conscience, etc, etc – the chestnut areas, if you like, of moral education. But we're actually finding that when you do that, the academic comes to life as well. So it's not a case of values education versus the basics, like the silly Senate Report told us a week or so ago! You know, schools are trying to do too much! Easy, cheap sloganeering for an election. Watch this stuff come out. Both sides. It's not a party political thing, they're both into it.

Simplistic, counter-evidential stuff about what works. What works in schools, the research tells us, is when the whole thing is done well, with a committed teacher who, above all, is into relating to each individual. And transacting on the values of that relationship in an explicit kind of a way.

There's another amazing study in West Kidlington, UK. Neil Hawkes was the Principal. Carole would have seen him at the National Values Education Forum. He created a values school from a most difficult situation, characterised by these things – I'll leave all this with you, anyhow, so you can read up on it.

Again, the evidence tells us that over the 10 to 15 year period that this values education was rolled in, everything has changed. A more emotionally stable school with a more emotionally stable population. Students who have much greater application to learning, more at ease in their relationships, greater self-discipline and improving in academic performance, even by the measures of, – with all respect, probably the stingiest kind of inspectorial system in the

world, in Ofsted.¹ I mean, really lean and mean. And yet, tracking the improvement in everything happening in a school when it becomes a values school in the way it's modelled, what the teachers model, and in what is actually transacted explicitly in the classroom.

Q – Delegate:

Terry, at the other end of the spectrum, those schools that are not values schools, actually are values school, but the values that they're living and breathing are not articulated as what we would call 'good' values. I think every school operates within a values set, whether it's explicit, people understand it or not. Whatever we do, as teachers, it's from a values framework. So those schools that are failing and that are not working well are still working from a values framework that we may not accept.

Yes, or possibly kidding themselves that they can go about the business of education without being explicit, either in the modelling or in the pedagogy. I think that's the issue. And that's why they probably don't get the same effect as these schools. I think we've kidded ourselves, not only in education, but probably generally, that we can sort of achieve some sort of values neutrality. And I mean, in some ways, modern science has pushed us that way. But you've got to be cold, hard, objective, you know, particularly if you're a social researcher, blah-blah-blah. If you're a teacher, you step away from values.

I was told by a head teacher once that I was not to get into values. I wanted to bring something about what was happening in the Philippines with Marcos into my Social Science. You know, what the papers and the news reports were telling us. It was really at the heart of the Marcos regime. It was quite oppositional to what the syllabus told me that I should be teaching. I was given very strict instructions that I was to leave the values out of it. In fact, the words were, "Social Science is not about values. It's about fact." And I think he could have been saying, "Real education, good education, is about facts. Not about values." I think we can kid ourselves, and I think we have. And I think that's why we've sort of stunted the capacity of schools to actually make the difference, take the tail of society and flip it around and give it potential.

About the national framework, the Good Practice Schools Project: the findings are now on the website, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) website and available, 260 pages of it; the Executive Summary, and this is sort of teacher-talk. These are teachers talking from their own experiences. Values education clearly has a profound effect on the total environment of a school, affecting teacher practice, the climate and the

¹ Ofsted: the official (UK) body for inspecting schools.

ethos, student achievement, student attitudes and behaviour, student resilience and social skills, intellectual depth of teacher and student understanding, and improved relationships of care and trust and enhanced partnerships with parents in the community. That's pulled out of the testimony of, in this case, 166 schools and the teachers thereof.

And these are just some of the expanded sorts of comments that you might be interested in. Taking that values approach, flipping on its head the notion that values is something you leave outside. You actually embrace it, you model it, transact it in your pedagogy. It leads to a different kind of professional practice. And I've heard teachers actually explain this beautifully.

You know, a teacher said to me not so long ago, she had taught for 20 years, never really enjoyed it, always felt on the defensive, you know, "I spent most of my time trying to manage and predict where the breakout was going to come." When she got into the transaction of values, to talking about why it is that your life is better when blah-blah-blah. Challenging students, if you like, at that level of transaction, it just led to a different kind of a relationship. The children started to talk to her in a different sort of a way. She found herself talking to them in a different sort of a way. That changed relationship affected everything. She couldn't then go back to teaching even mathematics the way she had in the past. It's just a totally different way of coming at the whole professional, vocational thing.

Lots of talk about minimalisation of inappropriate behaviour. It clearly made a difference to the way kids interacted in the classroom and on the playground and after school. There's behaviour management data that confirmed this. Everyone became more conscious of trying to be respectful, not just because they were told it, or it was up on the window as the value of the month or whatever, but because they'd talked it through. They had experienced for themselves how much better it is when I'm respected, and therefore how much better it's going to be when I respect others, because the only way I'm going to get respect is when I respect others, etc, etc. The logic of the whole thing. The pedagogy, if you like, had been put in place.

And student learning improved. Why? Because everyone is more settled. They're happier. Therefore, the brain is relieved of all of those other preoccupations and defences, etc. Provided many benefits to the students – belonging, connectedness, resilience, sense of self. The ability to articulate feelings and emotions, emotional development of the students much more evident. Transference becoming evident in all aspects of classroom learning and in the students' ability to deal with conflict. Much better place to be, well-behaved,

improved self-control. Relate to each other better, share a common language, a common pedagogy, if you like, of values.

Okay. Ripple or trickle down effect that values education is having across the school. There was the issue of time. I think this is a rather simple kind of insight into why it might be that students in these sorts of environments actually function better in every way, including academically. They can even sit down and do their boring old tests more effectively, it seems.

A particular primary principal in Victoria wanted to be one of the trial schools. The teachers complained they were already having too much to do – this choked curriculum idea. “But, for us,” he said, “values education’s actually meant we’ve got more time to do. It wasn’t because we added values education, it’s because it changes the whole approach to the way teaching happens, to the way learning was prioritised.” The school became more peaceful, less interruptions and discipline problems. And it means teachers have got more time to teach, to engage in a learning relationship, rather than spending 90% of their time worried about where the next break-out’s coming from.

Haim Ginott, a US child psychotherapist, offered a beautiful little thought that I think captures a lot of it. “To reach a child’s mind, a teacher must capture his heart. Only if a child feels right can he think right.” You could say the same about teachers.

And another one: “It’s said that nature always sides with the hidden flaw. Teachers have the opposite role, to side with the hidden asset. Minimising a child’s deficiencies intensifies experience and enlarges life.”

Again – and it’s interesting that Ginott was saying this 30 years ago when the credo was so much the opposite. Teachers can’t play that role. They’ve just got to go with the hidden flaw, if it’s there!

But you know, from his intensive work dealing with students in real need, and the ways that they’ve got themselves out of those holes, he came to believe in the power of a teacher to play a positive role, gone about in the right way.

And finally, I’ve had a bit to do with applying all of this to one real thorny issue in Australia, and it’s about the experiences of young Muslims in Australian schools – another Government priority. And a lot of it came from the London bombings of two years ago, when the profiling of those home-grown Muslim students in the UK showed that their relationship in school had, at some stage, been one of the turning points that had maybe pushed them

over to join with Islamist and Jihadist forms of Islam, etc, etc. So there was a lot of work done over this in the last year or so, and we had an Islam showcase last year in Canberra. And a whole lot of young Muslim students themselves got up and talked about some of the experiences they'd had.

This particular girl spoke about early experiences that she'd had, which were very negative, and possibly could have thrown her off to join with the wrong sorts of groups, but her school had actually gone about values education in a way that made the connections for her, drew her in as a minority population, etc, etc. And she came out with this little gem, which I hurriedly wrote down. And I thought, if ever anything sort of turns on its head the old conceptions of Parsons and co, that schools can't make a difference – this kid hit it beautifully. "Schools are the place where the future is rehearsed, the engine-room of multiculturalism and integration. They are where we learn the grammar of respect and co-operation."

And frankly, I'd say, in our society, if it doesn't happen at the school, it's not going to happen. We can't rely on families, we can't rely on religious groups, we can't rely on peer groups, we can't rely on the media. They are all extraordinarily narrowly framed. We have to rely on the school and teachers picking up the cudgel on this to make the difference.

Q – Delegate:

Last year I did a Graduate Diploma of Education at the University of New South Wales, and I don't remember once hearing the phrase 'pedagogical dynamics'. You did mention the importance of teacher professional development. Do you have any idea of how long it would take to develop and implement these kinds of teacher training programs?

One of the projects running out of the national framework is a teacher education project which I've actually been co-ordinating. We've been to every teacher education facility in the last 12 months, running out these sorts of findings that are coming out of the Good Practice Schools project. In other words, showing teacher educators the findings of what works or seems to work according to teachers who are doing these things in schools and therefore, obviously, the need for these sorts of perspectives to be inculcated somehow into teacher education programs.

Teacher education will only respond to something happening in the school – that's the reality. It is very hard for teacher education at the moment, because it genuinely is so choked with the politics of accreditation and a zillion different things. But again, if I was to say, "Look, every teacher education program has to have a course in Values Education," it's doomed. It's got to be a perspective. It's got to be riveted into 'Educ101', you know, teaching and learning in the modern classroom. It's got to be in the Ed Psych and it's got to be in the Sociology of Ed, and it's got to be in the professional experience. And that will take a while.

But this sort of stuff is so infusing the thinking of systems now, all the systems – State, Territory, Federal, public, private – that in time, I’m quite confident, it will just become almost it’s own sort of credo, if not choked, ground out by the many other agendas.

Q – Delegate:

Terry, are you familiar with Marshall Rosenberg’s Non-Violent Communication strategies, and whether there would be a role for that type of program to be easily adapted? As far as I’m aware, it’s a two-day training course with facilitators. It talks about empathy, respect, how people communicate. And just listening to what you were saying, I think it’s just a perfect vehicle for that type of training.

No, I’m not. I’m not. There are numbers of different sorts of programs - “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” is another one that’s around that’s also a commercial program and involves two or three days of in-service. And I think all of these are useful, particularly for teachers who – well, maybe not, but I was going to say, particularly teachers who have been in the classroom in another kind of environment, their head’s in a different place, 20 years, a bit drowned out, a bit tired. It’s not just a matter of hearing these things. It sometimes is a case of going to the mountain and getting a new dose of wisdom. And that’s the importance, frankly, of professional development, which sadly is probably the thing that most of our systems do worst.

Q – Delegate:

You’ve reminded us that at the heart of good teaching is the relationship between the teacher and the child. And it seems to me that, in the context of Values Education, then, it’s inevitable that a child who loves their teacher – and that will be all of the children, probably, of great teachers – will want to be like them and imitate them, and in a sense, take on their values. Now, in a sense that the nine values of this Australian Values Statement are probably uncontested, but some of the values we’re exploring at this conference, I would say are probably contested values – ‘animal liberation’ would be a contested value. ‘Vegetarianism’ would be a contested values framework. Would you like to comment on the hazards perhaps associated with teaching if you hold some of those values positions? That is, the risk of being accused of brainwashing the children that you teach?

It’s the thing that’s always said, isn’t it. I mean, if I had sixpence for every time someone said to me, “Oh, yes, but whose values?” I’d be a millionaire!

My standard response is, well, whose history? Whose English? Whose physics? Whose any—? I mean, you know, it’s all values laden. I mean, don’t put the values agenda just on Values Education. It just becomes a bit more explicit, and in that sense, it’s probably got the greatest potential to be freed of the hidden – or what you were talking about, in a way, the values that are there, sort of always underneath it, anyway.

When we kid ourselves that we can teach history in a values-free kind of a way, we are really kidding ourselves. When we kid ourselves we can teach English in a values-free way, we kid ourselves. Even mathematics. If you know the history of mathematics, it’s absolutely values-laden! Not just about numbers, but about values, the way certain societies and cultures valued something, and therefore put a certain symbol to it, etc, etc.

I think approaching the whole business of teaching and learning as a values-laden exercise which is captured rather well when you have an explicit values education program, where teachers simply have to sit down and talk through the way they’re going about it, there can’t be anything hidden or latent or

arcane about it. It's probably got better potential to deal with the diversity of values that in fact are there in the classroom than when we kid ourselves we're not dealing with values.

Which is not an answer to your question. The only real answer to your question is, teachers have to be very careful, I think, when they set themselves up as models and when they engage in establishing meaningful relationships with their kids. But, just as we all have to, I mean, it's no different, in a sense, whenever we go into any sort of relationship, we should be doing it consciously, reflectively, and not expecting the other person's going to become like me, or take everything, you know. Because that's not love, and that's not good education either.

But I do think it's the teacher who is unaware of all of these things and who thinks they're going about their business in some values-free kind of way, is probably the more likely to be imposing values and expecting, you know, standard responses and marking kids down and alienating them when they're not giving those, than the teacher who says, "This is just a network, a matrix of values, the minute I step into a classroom, the minute I'm part of a school," and consciously and sort of responsibly then going about the business of transacting on those values. Easy to say! Not so easy to do!
