

# VALUES IMPLEMENTATION IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

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(Introducing Nigel Grant, The Scots PGC College, Warwick)

I shall begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today.

I work for Independent Schools, although I did start my teaching career 25-odd years ago in State schools in Queensland, and if I was to reflect on one particular school of which I had the privilege of being a founding staff member, that was Nerang State High School, with Bill Bonfield as the Principal. The wonderful thing about Nerang SHS was the way that Bill established, with the school community, with the Nerang parents, what the values of that school would be, long before we opened the doors to the school. Professionally it was one of the most amazing places I've ever worked. At the time, because of his vision and that very deep belief in a set of values that everyone shared, it was a great school.

Although I'm talking today about independent schools, I don't want it to be seen that somehow values belong only to independent schools. .

The first point to make is that independent schools have their own contractual agreements with the Commonwealth and with the State Government about money. We're not a system. Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) is not a system, in the sense that the Catholic Education system and the Education Queensland system make the contractual agreements with the funding bodies. Each individual school has to, in terms of independent schools, meet certain accountabilities and so on.

One of those is that we have to display the Values poster. Values Education in schools started here, with a poster that was very dear to former Education Minister (now Leader of the Federal Opposition) Brendan Nelson's heart. All schools should have this poster displayed prominently in their foyer. That is one of the 'ticks' in order to receive your Commonwealth money for the four years that finishes at the end of next year.

The other thing to mention is websites. One in particular that's relevant is the national website on Values Education: <http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/> and the next is the Queensland values education website <http://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/values/>,

which links to the national website. Everything I refer to can be found on the Queensland Values Education website. So if we can put aside the political nonsense of posters in every school foyer, and really look at what is happening, in terms of schools and how they're interpreting these values and working with them, you'll see some great stories and some great case studies and so on, on those websites.

From the perspective of independent schools, many of our independent schools were bemused, and a little taken aback by the whole business of values education. This is most likely because an independent school exists because of the values set by a particular group of parents that started that school. That is why the school is there. Independent schools grow out of parents wanting a particular type of education for their students, and we tend to think about the member schools of my association that are Lutheran or Seventh Day Adventist or Muslim or Jewish or whatever, and we think about their religious base. In fact, we have about 85 schools from our membership that do not have a religious base. They are Aboriginal schools or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schools, or they are Steiner schools or Montessori schools or special education schools or grammar schools or whatever. The list goes on but there is not necessarily a religious base to the school.

And even if it is a Lutheran school, the chances are that there would be quite a few parents who are not Lutheran, but would still accept that the values of that school sit comfortably with them, without having to join the Lutheran church.

I worked in a progressive Jewish school in Randwick and my children happily attended that school, even though we are not Jewish, because I lived, breathed, accepted and loved the values of that school.

That is why independent schools exist. They have the conversations around what the values of the particular school are, which are absolutely integral to how that school then runs itself, what it looks like in all of the things that it does, its policies, the interactions with the students in the classroom and the structure and content of the curriculum. .

At the moment, there is discussion with some schools identified as having intersecting disadvantage. Some students are from disadvantaged communities. They have already been identified as children in the care of the State, have critical health and drug and alcohol problems, and so on. Some of our schools are like that. We are working closely with a number of them to try and bring together funding from different sources to co-ordinate into a more appropriate use of that money.

Initially we are going back to their values, and really trying to work with their boards and with their parent community about what does the school really stand for. What are the 'non-negotiables' about the particular school? What is of most importance that we cannot afford to let go of? This is really interesting and very important. There's no point looking at their literacy scores until you've got that conversation very firmly shared amongst all the key stakeholders.

Politicians also wanted every school to hold a parent forum, and hence the role of the parents is important. In terms of our message today around care and compassion for animals, we need to really remind ourselves that schools are very busy places, that the crowded curriculum is a reality, and that many teachers are under siege. I am continually approached by people with a great idea that they're very passionate about, and that they want schools to run with, and they come to me and say, "Can you send this out? Can you do a workshop on this? Can you let your schools know...?" and when we start looking at the drug education and the road safety and the bushfire prevention and the shark attacks and the dog bites and the better spines, the list just goes on and on and on. All of them have a place and someone is justifiably passionate about them. But when you look at the totality of it, it cannot be managed. .

So my advice always is, "Where is it in the curriculum, in terms of the official syllabus documents?" . Because in the core business of teachers, if you can't find it in a syllabus, if it's not in what you're supposed to cover in your teaching, then it may not happen.

One of the conversations we have with schools about values education is, "Get the words off the poster, and start looking at where they fit into your core curriculum." And in SOSE, the Study of Society and Environment, it's quite explicit. That syllabus actually does talk about values and talks about what they are.

So we look at the school's curriculum. We also, of course, talk very much about the whole school community, which may well change over time. The values of the community then have to be renegotiated. Essentially a curriculum must be sequential, developmentally appropriate, planned, adapted, directly linked to the syllabus, assessed and reported on. Nothing matters to children in schools and their parents, unless it is actually assessed and reported on. Lutheran schools, for example, have a 9<sup>th</sup> key learning area – there are eight across Australia, but the Lutherans have a 9<sup>th</sup> key learning area, which is their religious education. They assess and report on their religious education, as do many of our other schools. Some of our schools might have "Thinking" as a learning area, a subject. Or

“Problem Solving” or “Democracy” or you name it. There are so many different things that some of our schools have. But it will be a part of the report, because it’s valued.

What next? If we’re trying to build up the profile of animals as a way to develop values education in independent schools, I am most open to discussions that we could have about professional sharing. I would run the workshop’s own curriculum for Independent Schools in Queensland, so we would welcome discussions about how we could do more in that area. We’re going to the Global Learning Centre at Albion in a couple of weeks’ time, with many primary teachers, to look at Global Education and Peace Education. It’s something we do. We are happy to have professional learning in this area.

At the moment the Queensland curriculum is going through a major upheaval; it is being redeveloped in terms of Essential Learnings. But this begs the question, “What’s not essential?” Serviced learning is another important aspect of learning.

I am also excited that Richard Eckersley, of the ANU National Centre for Epidemiology and Public Health has (in principle) agreed to do a series of breakfast workshops throughout Queensland. In his papers, Richard talks a lot about the importance of values – particularly with the intersection of values/community/population health. He argues that communities have lost their heart and soul through commercialisation, consumerism and individualism ... we are becoming greedier and less community spirited and this is impacting on our mental health. See [http://nceph.anu.edu.au/Staff\\_Students/staff\\_pages/eckersley.php](http://nceph.anu.edu.au/Staff_Students/staff_pages/eckersley.php)

We are now going to now focus on three Independent schools. .

As two of the presenters are unexpectedly unable to participate, I shall introduce these schools.

The first is the Ananda Marga River School in Maleny, an example of a wonderful little school where the parents of a particular community wanted something more and developed their own school. Information on the Ananda Marga River School can be found via web search or through the website of the Association of Independent Schools Queensland. It is a really interesting school.

I have taken one small quote from their website, about the school’s neo-humanist approach:

To promote an awareness of ecology in its broadest sense: i.e., the realisation of the inter-relatedness of all things, and to encourage respect and care for all living beings.

It is perhaps the only school among the 180-odd AIS member schools that specifically states in its vision that they have a particular philosophy about animals. And being an Ananda Marga school, you can appreciate the viewpoint that they have about the importance of animals in their world. It's a wonderful school and I would strongly encourage people to go and have a look at it.

The second school is St John's Lutheran Primary School at Bundaberg. Animals are part of the school environment. Having them at the school – e.g., guinea pigs, cockatiels and fish - teaches the children how to care for, and the responsibility associated with caring for, animals and birds. The school is like a large family, and the children take turns in looking after them and learning how to care for them. The care of animals contributes to an amazing, rich context of learning at St John's Lutheran Primary.

The third school is The Scots PGC, independently presented by Nigel Grant. Nigel attended a Values Education workshop that I conducted recently. At the same table was a person from a Christian school, a man from the Muslim school and another gentleman from a Jewish school, all working together, talking about Values Education. We reflected later, we should have taken a photo of it, because it just was a really nice snapshot of the diversity of our schools. Nigel has been part of our values journey for a long time, and I'd like to just hand over to him.

**NIGEL GRANT**

**DIRECTOR OF LEARNING, THE SCOTS PGC COLLEGE, WARWICK (QLD.)**

**PRESIDENT, QUEENSLAND AGRICULTURE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**

I represent Independent Schools Queensland as a practicing teacher at a Uniting Church School in Warwick, The Scots PGC College. However, one of the other hats that I wear is that of President of the Queensland Agriculture Teachers' Association and my presentation is probably as much from that perspective as from my perspective as a teacher at SCOTS PGC.

I've been teaching agricultural subjects in secondary schools for a little over 25 years, in both the state and independent school sectors. Based upon this experience, I want to speak about values education in the context of agricultural science. Specifically, I will address the important role played by animals in schools, particularly to those of us who teach in the area of agricultural science.

There are actually three agricultural subjects offered under the auspices of the Queensland Studies Authority for Queensland schools to teach. The first of them is **Agriculture Education**. By the way, each of the syllabuses is freely available from the Queensland Studies Authority website (<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/syllabuses.html>). Those of you who know the Queensland Education System will be familiar with key learning areas, and you might say, "Agriculture Education? I never even knew there was such a thing in the P-10 years." Technically, Agriculture Education sits within the suite of the technology subjects, but it's an interesting one because it's really a cross-curricula learning subject. In developing this syllabus document, the QSA recognised that it's possible, in the context of agriculture education, to deliver outcomes from the areas of technology, science, and also SOSE.<sup>1</sup> So it's an interesting subject.

The second agricultural subject offered by the QSA is **Senior Agricultural Science**, and the third one is **Agriculture and Horticulture Study Area Specification**. Agricultural Science is an authority subject – that is, it contributes to the calculation of the students' OP scores, whereas the Agriculture and Horticulture SAS is a Vocational Educational and Training option which usually– although not always – results in students achieving nationally accredited vocational certificates.

In each of these subjects, it is likely that students will be involved to some extent with animal studies. Additionally, a significant number of schools use animals for co-curricular activities such as showing of livestock or equestrian competitions. There are some very clear statements made in each of syllabuses about the use of animals in schools

Approximately 85 schools throughout Queensland, mostly in rural and regional areas, offer one or more of those agricultural subjects that I've just referred to. Within those schools, I'd argue that animal husbandry is an integral part of the learning. However, schools are subject to the *Animal Care and Protection Act, 2001* and so have to gain approval from the Queensland Schools' Animal Ethics Committee for any activities that are undertaken involving animals. We also have to be registered with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries as the use of animals in schools is considered to be a 'scientific use of animals'. Schools also have to report annually to the QDPI&F<sup>ii</sup> on the use that we make of animals in our schools.

#### **CASE STUDY: USE OF ANIMALS AT THE SCOTS PGC COLLEGE**

We have up to 20 beef cattle at the College at any point in time and the husbandry of these animals is an integral part of the teaching that we undertake. We have both stud cattle and led steers that are shown at a number of local and Royal shows. All normal husbandry operations are carried out by staff and students, including parasite control, freeze branding and the application of ear tags and nose rings. Because the cattle are to be led, they are also halter-broken, washed, groomed and clipped.

We also have up to 40 sheep at any point in time. Similar to the beef cattle enterprise, we have both stud sheep and commercial or prime lambs. Again, the husbandry of these animals forms an integral part of the teaching program.

We keep poultry, up to 60 at any point in time. Sometimes we incubate eggs. More commonly, we probably just buy in day-old chickens and raise them to point of lay and then sell them. We have obtained permission from the ethics committee to run a short experiment involving chickens, testing the effect of a minor nutritional challenge (protein deficiency).

Finally, we keep horses. We have facilities to keep up to 22 horses and we offer a Certificate II in Agriculture in the context of horse-breeding, as well as having a successful equestrian team.

What I'm trying to establish is that keeping animals in our school is a really important part of what we do and something that we can justify. However, in keeping these animals at our

schools we do recognise the three R's of animal welfare – reduction, refinement and replacement.

**Reduction** – we are obliged to keep animal numbers to a minimum. I've already indicated to you the kinds of numbers that we're talking about in my school. However, there are a couple of factors that limit the extent to which animal numbers can be reduced. I refer you here to the Senior Agricultural Science syllabus where it says, "Consideration may be given to maintaining the exercise (that is, of keeping animals) at a scale that allows students to experience an industry perspective and to obtain meaningful reports." (p10, my emphasis). That's why we have 40 sheep; that's why we have 60 poultry. That's why we have 10 cows. In trying to teach students about animal behaviour, I'd argue it's not particularly practical or even kind to the animals to keep one cow. If you're studying the behaviour of a herd animal, you need to have a (albeit small) herd. Similar practical considerations come into play when teaching the principles of animal husbandry – for example, how to drench a sheep or take the temperature of a cow.

**Refinement** - We're obliged to carefully design any fieldwork or use of animals in schools, to keep numbers to a minimum. In designing and carrying out scientific trials involving animals, teachers must balance this principle with the need for a reasonable amount of replication to ensure that the results are reliable.

**Replacement** – Wherever possible, teachers are required to use non-animal alternatives. As I have already outlined, this is not possible in the case of many agricultural education programs. However, in the case of anatomy studies, many schools are now exploring alternatives to the use of animal dissections.

The syllabus commits us to modelling best practice in the use, care and welfare of animals, and therefore commits us to discussing ethical, social and scientific issues that relate to the use of animals in both educational and agricultural systems. Agricultural science teachers around Queensland routinely engage their students in discussions about ethics in the context of animal welfare.

In conclusion I will outline one particular activity that I undertake in my classroom. This is a particular piece of assessment that I've been involving my students with now for the last seven or eight years, in the context of a unit on poultry production. The unit is actually called, "Issues in the Poultry Industry," and in particular, we focus on the issue of how should poultry be housed? My students learn about research techniques, specifically about consumer surveys. I then send them out in small groups to survey egg consumers, to find

out their attitudes about housing systems for poultry and egg production. The students gather and record this data, and then submit to me a written report. The written report must include a literature review on the various poultry housing options. That is, the students explore the whole spectrum of housing options, including traditional cages, enriched cages, as well as barn and free range systems. They have to read widely a whole range of literature – scientific and other literature on the issue - and, ultimately, each of the students is required to come to a point of view on what they believe is the best system for housing poultry. You'll see that this is really a values-type education system that we're engaged in. There's no right answer. Rather, students have to explore their own (and others') belief systems to come to a conclusion that they believe is morally defensible as well as economically sustainable.

However, I believe I have to be really careful in teaching about values-laden issues like this. I'd like to think I am a good teacher and I like to think that the kids like me. It's probably inevitable that, because they like me and want to please me, they might want to find out what I believe, and therefore, become like me, and take on my values statement. Clearly, educators need to avoid any hint of indoctrination or the inculcation of values that are unorthodox. I have adopted an approach to teaching values education that I first read of in a book by Professor Terry Hill, from Western Australia, who argues that the best way to teach values education is to be really overt about it: to say to the students - 'These are my values. I'm not expecting, necessarily, that you will embrace them, but these are my values. I owe it to you to tell you the values position that I'm coming from. Now let's explore some alternatives and let's help you to come to a values position that you feel comfortable with.'

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<sup>i</sup> SOSE Studies of Society and the Environment

<sup>ii</sup> QDPI&F Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

### **Q – Delegate:**

*I hope this comment will address a question that's been raised by Jenene, and alluded to by Nigel, as well as raised by Rupert and by Terry. And that is this issue of the question you asked, quite directly, "Where can these animal ethics issues fit in the curriculum?" Because if they are not going to fit – because we've heard the concepts of how busy teachers are, how overcrowded the curriculum already is, and how very many other important issues, societal issues like drug abuse and so on, that you mentioned, Jenene, have to be dealt with out of session, so to speak, in order to be accessible to students.*

*I would be a little bit concerned if people left this forum today thinking that it's almost a hopeless case, that there is no opportunity for introducing these animal ethics issues into the curriculum. And so, if you've got the stamina to be here for the very last session tomorrow afternoon, I will hopefully outline how I feel that these animal ethics issues can be taken up in a relatively straightforward and simple way within the existing curriculum, without introducing another whole subject.*

*Please don't go away feeling that we're facing an impossible task, because I don't believe we are.*

**Q – Delegate:**

*With your position in agricultural education, you're in a potentially very influential position, and you can intervene to counteract a lot of habits that have continued from one generation to another.*

*I've been in the farming communities for about 20 years, particularly 15 years out at Longreach in Western Queensland, and I've seen, personally, hundreds of abuses of stock, from mishandling, from poor stockmanship.*

*In your education program, do you address stock handling? Good stockmanship?*

Yes we do. As I said, I guess, wherever a school has animals as part of the teaching program, they're obliged, under the Act, to teach good animal husbandry, best practice animal welfare issues. And so, certainly, we do talk through some of the contentious issues associated with animal stockmanship.

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