



Teacher training and
development: The need to
electronically
incorporate values.

Dr Amanda Mergler
Queensland University of Technology
Email: a.mergler@qut.edu.au



Overview

- Why train teachers in values education?
- The focus of current teacher training courses – QUT
- Ways to incorporate values training in teacher education
- Training teachers to run a values-based education program



Developing pre-service teachers

The role of universities:

- To educate pre-service teachers in the ways of being a professional teacher.

Why do people become teachers?

- To make a difference in the lives of students (Stiegelbauer, 1992) and help students become their biggest and best selves (O'Sullivan, 2005).
- To contribute to society and help others (O'Sullivan, 2005).

Thus teaching is a moral process, concerning shaping, challenging, and changing student understandings for the betterment of students (Day, 1994).



Why train teachers in values education?

- Historically schools have considered character development part of their mission;
- Parents and wider society want schools to have this role ;
- Teachers value this role and want to fulfil it.
- Federal government has instructed schools that they must concern themselves with values education

(O'Sullivan, 2005; Zbar, Brown, Bereznicki, & Hooper, 2003).



Connections between animal and human cruelty

- Debate in the literature about the validity of this connection.

However, recent studies have found:

- Famous serial killers (e.g. Jeffrey Dahmer) had histories of abusing, torturing, and killing animals (Lockwood & Church, 1998; Wright & Hensley, 2003).
- Prior acts of animal cruelty are associated with interpersonal violence (Merz-Perez, Heide, & Silverman, 2001).
- Animal abusers are more likely than non-animal abusers to be interpersonally violent and commit property, drug, and public disorder offences (Arluke et al, 1999).
- Individuals who commit earlier acts of animal cruelty as children or adolescents are more likely to be violent toward humans as adults (Merz-Perez & Heide, 2003; Wright & Hensley, 2003).



Pre-service teacher training courses

- Largely the focus is on acquiring the technical skills needed to become a teacher (Cummings, Harlow, & Maddux, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007).
- Pre-service teachers think of teaching as a moral endeavour, yet it is perceived as peripheral to their training (Revell & Arthur, 2007).

QUT education degrees

- Within individual subjects the notions of fairness, equity, morality and responsibility are embedded.
- Students are taught to consider their own beliefs about teaching and how these may impact on their teaching style.
- Classroom management instruction focuses on values of respect for others opinions, student cooperation, and social responsibility.



QUT education degrees cont.

- Degrees do not have a focus on training pre-service teachers to become aware of their own, or teach their future students about, values and morals.
- Pre-service teachers are not given strategies or resources to find out about and teach values and morals to their students.
- Some post-graduate courses have slightly more focus on ethics and values; however they do not teach pre-service teachers how to teach about values to students.

Day (1994) argues that this lack of exposure to notions of morality and values undermines the teachers essential passion (to transform the lives of students) and leads to dissatisfaction with the profession and burnout.



The way forward

- Pre-service teachers must be trained explicitly in the area of moral development and values education, as applied to other people, animals and the environment (Revell & Arthur, 2007).
- Specific subjects can be created that examine the moral responsibility of teachers to students, parents, colleagues and the community. Pre-service teachers can debate the notion of teaching values to students and consider how this could be done effectively (Benninga, 2003).
- Pre-service teachers must examine and discuss moral issues and educational ethics in order to reflect on their own positions (Sockett, 1993).



The way forward cont.

- Faculty and community members can create case studies based around moral dilemmas from their professional work that can be discussed by pre-service teachers (Benninga, 2003).
- Universities may invite well-known moral educators (or other specialists with a moral focus) to give lectures to pre-service teachers (Benninga, 2003; Xiaoman & Culin, 2004).
- The teaching of values should be embedded throughout all aspects of a teaching degree so it is seen as integral to good teaching (Sockett, 1993).



Professional development (PD)

- Teachers were trained in how to teach a values-based program, examining Personal Responsibility, to Year 11 students.
- Training was one two-hour session with four teachers.
- While all teachers felt reasonably comfortable with the content, they all wanted reassurance and many examples, and leapt at the opportunity to have me co-teach at least one lesson with each of them.
- All teachers were concerned that the students may not be open to learning about values and morals.
- The teachers embraced the program as they liked that it encouraged students to examine the responsibility they have for their choices and the consequences of these choices.
- All teachers appeared energised by the program and willing to teach it.
- The program was run by the teachers over a 10-week period (one hour each fortnight).



Activities from the PR program

LOOKING AT WHAT STUDENTS BELIEVE

- Around the classroom walls are placed the words **Agree**, **Sometimes Agree**, and **Disagree**.
- The teacher reads out a statement and students decide whether they agree, sometimes agree, or disagree by moving to that position after the statement is read.
- Students then discuss with others in the same position why they chose that position.
- The teacher then asks students why they chose that position.

Example statements:

- Someone else can entirely stuff up your life by what they do.
- By the time people are teenagers they have been shaped by their parents and friends into whom they are, and there is nothing they can do to change it.

This activity came early in the program, so it served the dual purpose of getting the students thinking and allowing the teacher to see where the students were at in their thinking.



Activities from the PR program

LOOKING AT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Step 1: In groups of three or four, students separate words bundled together in a bag into those that they feel are their rights.
- Students receive a worksheet with two columns, one headed 'Rights' and the other headed 'Responsibilities'.
- The students are asked to blu-tack the words that they feel are their rights onto the sheet in the 'rights' column. They are to then write down the responsibility that goes with this right in the appropriate column.
- Step 2: As a class, teacher asks groups to share some of their rights and corresponding responsibilities while listening for any differences between groups.
- Students discuss these differences. Teacher asks students why it is important to think about our responsibilities when we consider our rights? As a society member, why is it important to consider the responsibility that goes with the right?



Teachers perceptions

- At completion, the teachers discussed their perceptions of how the program had gone. They commented that:
 - they were surprised by the students willingness to engage, share and think;
 - they were surprised at their own willingness to share personal stories with their students, and the benefits that came from doing this;
 - they felt that they had made meaningful connections with their students;
 - they felt that the students had made meaningful connections with each other.

The teachers commented that they enjoyed teaching the program as they felt that they were helping the students become better people.



Conclusion

- Schools and teachers are keen to implement values-based education (Zbar, Brown, Bereznicki, & Hooper, 2003).
- Parents and wider community believe that core values should be taught in schools (Zbar, Brown, Bereznicki, & Hooper, 2003).
- Teachers desire the role of shaping, challenging and changing the lives of students for the better (O'Sullivan, 2005).
- Therefore it is imperative that universities revamp their education courses to include a focus on values – enabling pre-service teachers to examine their own values and morals, and enhancing their ability to teach their students to examine their values and morals.
- In doing so, universities will assist pre-service teachers in meeting their most fundamental goal – the ability to make a difference in the lives of students.



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