



## VALUES-THEMED ARTICLE: Autumn 2014

### "Values and Wellbeing" pedagogy delivering successes worldwide

**AN OPEN SECRET ...**  
How to maximise  
academic achievement

Worldwide research is showing that when the pedagogical target is the holistic development of learners - their growth as a whole person: social, emotional, moral and spiritual as well as intellectual - their intellectual advancement and academic achievement tend to be maximised.

Findings also confirm that the contemporary understanding of values education, sometimes referred to as '*values and wellbeing pedagogy*', accords well with recent neuroscience research. Studies show that notions of cognition, or intellect, are far more intertwined with social and emotional growth than earlier educational paradigms have allowed for.

Indeed, throughout the world, it's an open secret that high quality, systematic values education is proving to be a powerful tool for driving school improvement.

School inspectors have also noticed that when values education is central to all learning and consequently pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development is promoted in all lessons, the resulting, very evident positive relationships and co-operation that develop between teaching staff and pupils help pupils to learn effectively.

#### **Education expectations**

The purpose of schooling perpetually agitates scholars, teachers, parents, pupils, politicians and employers alike, because of the diversity of expectations. Education serves multiple objectives, coloured not least by dynamic global, political, economic, social, cultural and personal influences.

How instruction is delivered and how success is measured are evolving with the quest to provide continuously improving systems that are 'fit for purpose'.

However, amidst the constantly shifting education landscape, consensus remains that the personal and social development of children is a fundamental purpose of publicly-funded education and an ever growing body of evidence indicates that character development, actively coupled with academic advancement, is more likely to result in happy children with skillsets and mindsets that enable them to enjoy successful school careers and effective transitions into adulthood.

### **Values education - an integral part of a modern curriculum**

As with other areas of human endeavour, there are diverse opinions about the place of values in a school curriculum and approaches to be taken when developing students' "VALUES LITERACY" - which could be considered as their understanding and knowledge about a wide spectrum of values and their ability to choose and skilfully apply appropriate values within different contexts in real-life situations.

### **A holistic approach to education - informed by research findings**

In 2010 a comprehensive [International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing](#) was published following rigorous investigation into school and classroom practices worldwide. The handbook demonstrates that:

- ✓ Values Education - is essential to effective schooling
- ✓ Values Education - positively impacts all the important educational measures
- ✓ Values Education - is a worldwide, contemporary phenomenon
- ✓ Values Education - fits well with updated brain and pedagogical research, and
- ✓ Values Education - is a means to holistic student and teacher wellbeing.

### **Improvement compromised when broader human qualities are sidelined**

The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) is an enlightenment organisation committed to finding innovative, practical solutions to today's social challenges. Following its in-depth investigation into the provision of SMSC education and its variants in UK Schools, in March 2014 a report was published entitled '[Schools With Soul](#)'.

The authors found that increasingly, the requirement of schools to develop the broader human qualities of their pupils, is tending to be sidelined due to the overwhelming pressure placed on them to deliver better and better test and exam results. Of the four aspects of SMSC, they consider the spiritual is most at risk of neglect.

**Pupils' spiritual development is shown by their:**

- beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

***Extract from Ofsted 2012 definitions of pupils' Spiritual development***

Of necessity, with the rapidly escalating needs that young people face today and the massive socio-economic costs being incurred in addressing the fallout, educationalists, policymakers and other stakeholders are rethinking priorities and the imperative for the continuous, integrated, whole-person development of each child and young citizen.

**Values education promotes vital 'hard', 'soft' and 'intra-personal' skills**

Schools are expected to equip each of their pupils with essential and appropriate knowledge, skills and competences for life in the demanding and rapidly evolving 21st century.

Owing to its relevance to all aspects of life and the wide range of meaningful learning opportunities that explicit, systematic values education provides, it readily engages and inspires children and young people. As they consider values, issues and concerns in connection with themselves, their relationships, society and the environment, they envisage and manage success in a variety of different contexts and become ever more eager to take responsibility for their learning and progress.



### ***Personal aspects enhanced by a values-based approach***

As the adults in school communities, including parents and carers, become increasingly appreciative of the empowering nature of values education, they capitalise more and more on 'teachable moments'. Consequently, a growing number of young mindsets are being enlightened and transformed. This enabling collaboration allows children and young people to develop essential:

- '**hard skills**' or technical skills and abilities, which are conducive to gaining formal qualifications and learnt principally during classroom instruction and from practical training;
- '**soft skills**' or personal character traits, which are much less tangible than hard skills and often acquired through concerted effort and experiential learning. These attributes include inter-personal, transferable skills such as attitudes, flexibility, adaptability, team working, communication and listening skills, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, work ethic and rewarding habits. A conscious awareness of these capabilities may put the participants at a distinct advantage when it comes to job applications and interviews.
- '**intra-personal skills**' or those skills and communications that occur within a person's own mind. They are often cultivated during times deliberately set aside for peace and quiet thereby enabling individuals to respond consistently with appropriate reactions and attitudes due to positive, internal dialogue occurring within the mind. Amongst the intra-personal techniques that students may learn to use to sort out and evaluate situations and proposals are visualisation, meditation, prayer, affirmations and mindfulness. This learning process builds self-confidence, extends participants' horizons and is conducive to significantly improving their overall wellbeing and happiness.