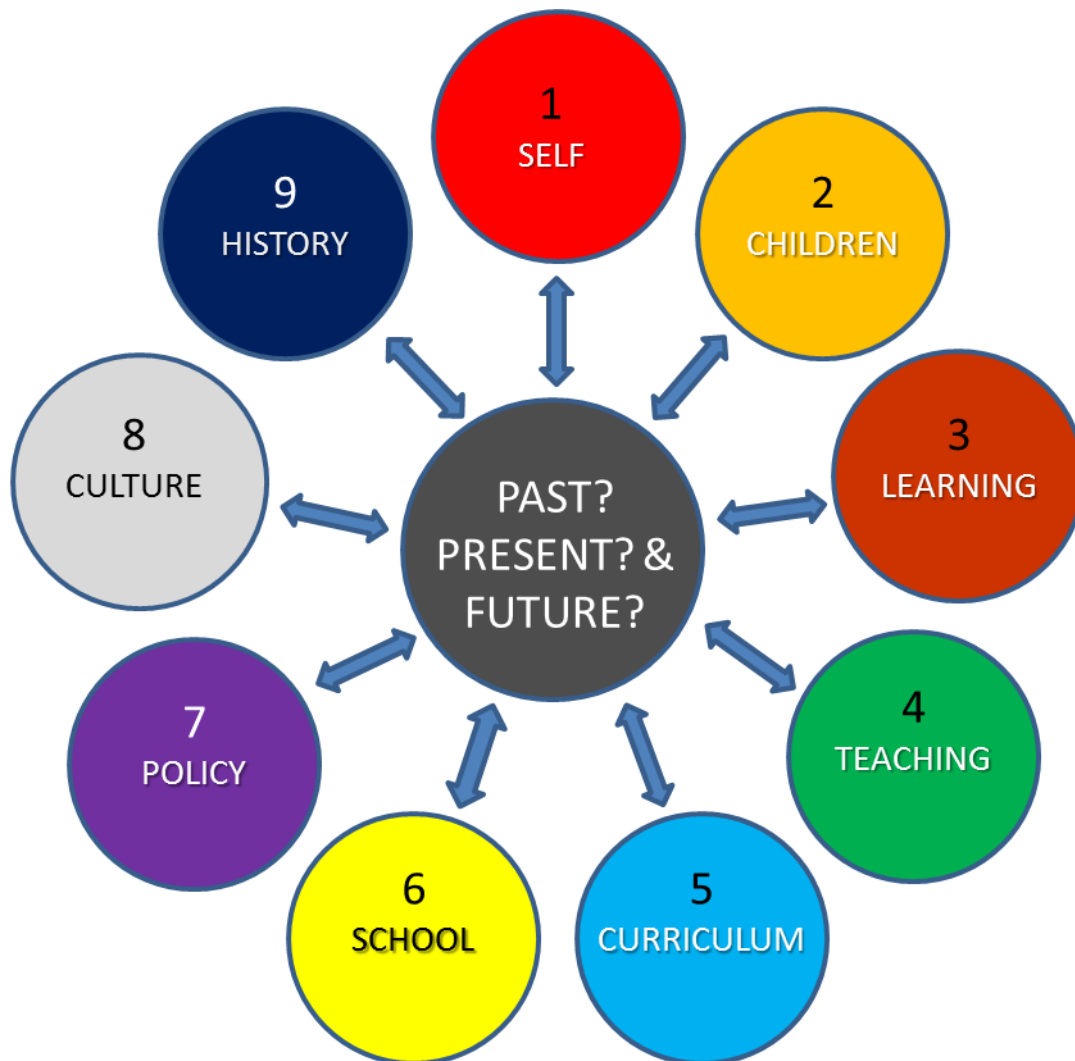


VALUES-THEMED ARTICLE: Spring 2016

**Teachers' Challenges - Using Variables and Values
to Perpetuate Learners' Zest for Life**



Human beings are complex, so teaching has to be among the most challenging jobs in our ever-changing world. In the busy swirl of the demanding day, how can teachers go with the flow, keeping all the balls in the air so that they and their pupils enjoy learning, growing and developing in ways that lead to happy, meaningful, successful lives?

A smart place to start is with oneself. As we begin to understand ourselves better and make more sense of our experiences, we are increasingly likely to be able to help others in engaging, purposeful ways - and being of service to others is one of the richest and most rewarding feelings - it kindles happiness.

By its nature, teaching is proactively helping, coaching and mentoring young children and adolescents, perpetuating their zest for life. Along with academic development, nurturing social and emotional skills is recognised as vital for optimising learning, positive behaviour, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and wellbeing of all who attend and work in schools.

Many people are feeling the strains of life today but enlightened education processes can help to identify the causes and ways of preventing undue stress, thereby mitigating the impact of daily stressors on the emotions and mental health of learners, parents and caregivers. Providing informed support can help individuals flourish and manage anxieties and pressure, increasing their experiences of positive emotion and preventing their fears from becoming harmful.

But what of teachers themselves? Schools are micro communities and so teachers may well turn to colleagues for social support when, as with all of us, they are feeling stressed - but, it's becoming more generally realised that consciously building one's inner strength is proving to be an effective strategy for coping with everyday worries and strains.

Understanding the Variables and Values in Teaching Domains

Knowledge is power. Insights into the challenging facets and complexities of teaching and the interplay of all the dimensions involved - including people, pedagogies, historical developments and expectations governed by external legal requirements and regulations or determined by the school's internal systems and processes - can help to boost teachers' morale and wellbeing, with the positive actions and emotions that follow helping to buffer the negative effects of stress and burnout - all too characteristic of modern life.

Clearly individuals, both teachers and their pupils, are unique and subject to a variety of influential factors every single day in various different situations.

Impacting every aspect of teaching are the values (being drivers, principles and standards) that have shaped the past, are informing and colouring today and will help to pinpoint and prioritise options to map out desirable pedagogies, policies, strategies, curricula, practices, personal trajectories and education outcomes.

Take a few moments to identify and take note of how past and present values have moulded and affected the facets of teaching shown in the table below.

Then consider the kinds of values required by all the stakeholders to enable them to manage effectively the issues, inevitable dilemmas and choices to be made to bring about the most beneficial future pathways for all concerned while promoting a compassionate, caring society:

	Dimensions	Imaginative, Innovative, Upward-moving Considerations
1	Self	- selfhood, internal strengths, role model, high standards, ...
2	Children	- their upbringing, needs, holistic development, futures, ...
3	Learning	- exciting curiosity, knowledge, skills, aspiration, ...
4	Curriculum	- visionary, broad, balanced, appropriate, experiential, progressive, ...
5	Teaching	- excellence, inspiring, challenging, motivational, empowering, ...
6	School	- ethos, values, vision, mission, community, physical attributes, ...
7	Policy	- enabling excellence in all aspects of the school's activities, ...
8	Culture	- engaging, supportive, self-improving, aspirational, enlightened, ...
9	History	- using information to maximise future possibilities & potential, ...

Starting with ourselves, our values and goals

The understanding of self is of profound significance as it affects our aims and delves into what it is to be human and, crucially, our interactions with others.

This process enables teachers, who have a concern for self-development, to build rapport and share elements of their learning with their students, thereby helping them to capitalise on problem-solving, communication and teamwork skills and equipping them with wisdom, capabilities and a more accurate awareness of themselves so that they can become increasingly independent, authentic, autonomous individuals.

The Barrett Values Centre provides a [free Personal Values Assessment](#), which is a simple survey that takes just a few minutes of your time and provides a wealth of information about why you do what you do. It helps to clarify one's values.

The introduction explains how self-knowledge helps one to think about and appreciate that *"who you are, what you hold dear, what upsets you, and what underlies your decisions, are all connected to your personal values"* and that *"Your values reflect what is important to you and act as a shorthand way of describing your motivations. Together with your beliefs, they are the causal factors that drive your decision-making."*

There is a [simple Goal Mapping system](#) for sustainable success in your personal or professional life. As Brian Mayne says, "Learning how to consciously direct the natural changes of life towards your heart-felt desires is the number one skill for success in the twenty-first century."

Raising awareness of the empowering effects of carefully chosen values and being intentional about setting and achieving goals, in ways that engender good feelings rather than additional stress, provides teachers with many thought-provoking concepts, ideas and techniques that open up debate and deepen conversations about how best to develop well-structured, effective targets, action plans and coping strategies.

The above two tools, which heighten awareness of self along with matters on personal, local, national and international levels, can extend the opportunities for less experienced and newly qualified teachers to reflect on their emerging sense of professionalism and make explicit the values that inform their own growth and development in ways that make them feel uplifted.

Taking responsibility for happiness and success in life

Each of us must take responsibility for our own happiness and success in life. In today's evolving and seemingly increasingly turbulent world, a teacher is a key person of influence in the life of many young children and teenagers and therefore the quality of a teacher's personal brand is particularly significant.

As role models on the front line and nurturers of competences that prepare learners for life, teachers have a special place in the hearts and minds of their pupils.

Throughout their school careers, in a variety of different contexts, learners are dependent upon encouragement from teachers. If developing young citizens are progressively armed with transformative values and key skills, confidence, discipline, motivation, a growth mindset and other uplifting, life-enhancing attributes and personal qualities that improve their wellbeing, they can enjoy making carefully considered, reflective, informed, purposeful choices that enable them to achieve and grow to full maturity as happy individuals and members of society who interact well with others and use their gifts and talents to contribute towards the betterment of mankind.