



VALUES-THEMED ARTICLE: February 2014

Quality decision-making inspiring young people to do well and do good



Young people growing up in today's world are witnessing how individuals' choices and actions can rapidly be broadcast via social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

It's all the more important therefore that learning to make informed, principled, well considered decisions is an integral part of their education so that each of them can leave school with their reputation intact, confident of doing well, with a life-long learning mentality that enables them to maximise their abilities and with the desire to be responsible citizens, capable of making the world a better place.

Values - reference points for decision-making

We are constantly making decisions and the clearer we are about what beliefs, principles, standards and priorities we are actually drawing on to reach our conclusions, the more confident we are likely to feel about the quality and consistency of those choices. Whether we are aware of the extent of their influences or not, we are strongly motivated and driven by what really matters to us, our top values.

Understanding ourselves and the development of our top, priority values takes time. It's an ongoing learning experience, coloured initially by our upbringing and conditioning but as time passes and we become more independent, they are increasingly governed by our own passions, interests and thinking.

If, from a young age, children are given the opportunity to explore, learn about and experience being guided by inspiring values, the greater the likelihood of outcomes aligning with what is important to them and what they really want to achieve and the more likely they are to be able to recreate positive feelings that boost their wellbeing, educational attainment and happiness.

Decision-making in action

Appreciating how values motivate us, help us to prioritise and provide a sense of inner peace and happiness, better enables us to stick to ones that support us, especially at critical moments when we are faced with dilemmas, tricky alternatives or when, inevitably, we wobble a bit due to pressures, tensions and our emotions.

With quality values education as an integrated, systematic part of the school curriculum, children and young people progressively learn how to incorporate life-enriching values into their thinking, choices, actions and behaviour. Participants eagerly embrace them as they consider risks, personal matters, relationships, rights and responsibilities, how the past has been shaped, the kind of society they want to live in and their part as guardians of the earth. This inspiring, transformative awakening and the conscious connection with their priority values becomes particularly relevant when they address many of the issues raised during, for example:

- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development
- Religious Education (RE)
- Sex and Relationship Education (SRE).

During discussions about risks and evaluating their consequences, it may be appropriate to point out that some personal information and images created in a youthful situation and stored electronically could become a ticking time bomb, publicised online at a later stage in the individual's life and with grave implications.

Looking to the future

It is apparent that the matter of core values is now playing a key part in how many businesses, other organisations and governments conduct their affairs. Evidence shows that a raft of clear advantages arise and successes mount when the promotion of and adherence to strong, clear, uplifting values, including social responsibility and sustainability, are central to the corporate culture. Additionally, leaders, groups and individuals all over the world are recognising the powerful influences and dramatic impacts positive and negative online postings, via portals such as YouTube, can have on brands as well as corporate and personal reputations.

As young people embark upon earning a living, their top values will be critical in giving them a steer towards what to pursue so as to develop meaningful, happy careers and fulfil their potential. Such is the significance now of following through on priority values, it is reported that many of the smartest students at Harvard University in the USA no longer want to go into banking, business or law but would rather be part of an organisation that explicitly seeks to combine doing good with running a sustainable enterprise. The beneficial, social contribution of their workplace is as important to them as making money.

True satisfaction - Steve Jobs (1955-2011), Co-founder of Apple Inc

"The only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work and the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking and don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking; don't settle."