

## **Evaluating the Impacts of Value Education: Some Case Studies**

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### **Abstract**

Inculcation of values among the students can play a very important role by shielding them from negative influences which may be caused due to present day gross consumerism and an aggressive rush for self fulfilment. Over the past two decades, colleges and institutions have devoted energy and resources to a wide range of educational programmes and initiatives designed to promote character values and behaviours in their students (Dalton and Crosby, 2010). Value education forms a part of the curriculum in different educational settings across the globe. Countries like India, Australia and Singapore lay a strong emphasis on imparting value education through well defined curricula and syllabi. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the impacts of value education on the academic performance of the students as well as the overall environment of the academic institutions where value education programmes have been explicitly put into practice. In the context of New Zealand institutions, effects of incorporating character education were demonstrated through questionnaires sent to schools in years 2004 and 2007, respectively. Results demonstrated enhancement of overall qualities within each institution (Cornerstone Values, 2009). Another project in Australia aimed to provide quantifiable and defensible data about links between Values Education practices and quality teaching outcomes. The research addressed the following main question: *Can the impact of values education on teaching and school ethos, as well as student achievement and behaviour, be tested empirically and observed reliably?* The observations of the report indicate the “profound potential of value education to transform the learning environment, ethos, coherence and inclusiveness of a school and, in so doing, to stimulate student social development by strengthening relationships between students, and students and teachers (Lovat and Clement, 2008, Impacts of Value

Education, 2009). Even though the above mentioned studies strongly indicate the positive impacts of value education, there is a need to carry out more such studies in different educational settings across the globe for ascertaining the positive impact of values education on the academic achievements of the students and overall environment of the academic institutions.

**Keywords:** Value education, global context, character education, education policy, academic achievements.

## **Introduction**

The need of value education in today's context cannot be overemphasised. These days we are all surrounded by gross consumerism and an aggressive rush for self fulfilment. Moreover, the social system worldwide is undergoing great transformation. In Indian scenario, for example, we are gradually moving from joint family system to nuclear family system. Also, there is a high degree of stress, especially in the younger generation, owing to fast paced modern day lifestyle. Factors like religious fanaticism, stockpiling of nuclear weapons and terrorist activities are posing grave threats to global peace. There is a proliferation of vast amounts of information because of internet and media, and this may cause negative impacts, mainly in the more impressionable young minds, unless and until they have something robust to anchor upon. It is here that inculcation of values among the students can play a very important role by shielding them from all such influences.

## **Value Education in the Global Scenario**

Over the past two decades, colleges and institutions have devoted energy and resources to a wide range of educational programmes and initiatives designed to promote character values and behaviours in their students (Dalton and Crosby, 2010). Value education forms a part of the curriculum in different educational settings across the globe. Countries like India, Australia and Singapore lay a strong emphasis on imparting value education through well defined curricula and syllabi.

In Singapore, values education forms a part of the Pre University Civics syllabus (MOE, 2010). The revised Pre-University Civics Syllabus is based on the central theme, Making a Difference. The focus is on engaging students to play an active role in helping to improve the quality of civic life in the community and to take the lead in service to others.

The Indian national policy on education (1986) as modified in 1992, considered value education as an integral part of education and noted that (UGC, 2010):

*“The existing schism between the formal system of education and the country's rich and varied cultural traditions needs to be bridged. Education can and must bring about the fine synthesis between change oriented technologies and the country's continuity of cultural tradition. The curricula and processes of education will be enriched by cultural content in as many manifestations as possible. In our culturally plural society, education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards*

*the unity and integration of our people. Such value education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism. Apart from this combative role, value education has a profound positive content, based on our heritage, national and universal goals and perceptions. It should lay primary emphasis on this aspect. The growing concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society has brought to focus the need for readjustments in the curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for cultivation of social and moral values.”*

In Australia the value education helps students understand and be able to apply values such as care and compassion; doing your best; fair go; freedom; honesty and trustworthiness; integrity; respect; responsibility and understanding; tolerance and inclusion (Values education, 2010).

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the impacts of value education on the academic performance of the students as well as the overall environment of the academic institutions where value education programmes have been explicitly put into practice.

### **Value Education at Taupo-Nui-A-Tia College in New Zealand**

In 2004, a questionnaire was sent to New Zealand institutions to demonstrate the effect of incorporating character education in schools. A similar questionnaire was sent in 2007 as a follow up study and from the combined response rate of 85%, the results demonstrated the enhancement in the overall qualities within each school due to character education. One institution which exhibited such improvements as a result of character education that it was adopted as a part of the curriculum was Taupo-Nui-A-Tia College. The responses of the students were noted in the years 2004, 2007 and 2009 respectively and score sheets were created on the basis of these responses. The score sheets were used to convert multiple response categories (improved, about the same, no improvement) into bivariate response (1= improved; 0= same/ no improvement) with respect to each specific attribute being measured (Cornerstone Values, 2009).

The use of score sheets in a longitudinal sense provided a visual representation as to the impact of character education in each of the sub categories. The key attributes that were measured included:

- a. **Relationships:** between principal and staff; between staff and students; between students and between college and parents
- b. Overall and playground student behaviour
- c. Discipline within the school
- d. Vandalism
- e. Student attendance
- f. School as a caring community
- g. Staff stability: including impact; reduction in staff turnover; improvement in staff morale and retention of good staff
- h. Enrolments

The key dimensions which demonstrated a continuous improvement as a result of the character education were in regard to relationships between staff and students, and relationships between students. Continued improvements were also observed in relation to student playground behaviour, discipline within the institution, staff stability, enrolments and the perception of the institution as a caring community. The results demonstrated that the impact of character education was significant in relation to the provision of a positive and supportive environment, positive influence on institutional culture, increased cooperation between staff and students, creation of an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning, improved attributes of the students and attraction of the students to the institution (Cornerstone Values, 2009).

### **Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience, Australia**

The analysis being reported herein aimed to provide quantifiable and defensible data about links between Values Education practices and quality teaching outcomes. The research addressed the following main question: *Can the impact of values education on teaching and school ethos, as well as student achievement and behaviour, be tested empirically and observed reliably?*

Ancillary questions included:

1. How is values education being implemented in ways that elicit positive change in teacher practice and student response?
2. How do we find evidence for the many claims based on teacher testimony that values education has a positive effect on: a) student academic diligence; b) school ambience; c) student-teacher relationships; d) student and teacher wellbeing; and, e) parental and family participation?
3. What added impact does the explicit teaching of values have on relevant student effects?

In summary, the triangulated evidence derived from both Group A and B schools cohered around the demonstration of values education impacts on student effects. The evidence emanated from a variety of research methodologies dispensed in a variety of settings and within a range of different projects. There was little deviation nonetheless in the coincidence of effects reported on. These effects match those that were targeted in the study and were summarised under the ancillary research questions (Impacts of Value Education, 2009).

**Ancillary Question 1.** The effective implementation of values education in both the Group A and Group B schools was characterized by a number of common elements.

- Values education was regarded as a school's "core business", given equal status with other areas and embedded in policies and student welfare practices;
- A 'common language' was developed among staff, students and families to describe values and the school's expectations of student behaviour;
- Staff endeavoured to 'model' and demonstrate the values in everyday

- interactions with students;
- Values were scaffolded by supportive school-wide practices including teacher facilitation of student reflection and self-regulation of behaviour;
- Values were taught in an explicit way in and out of the classroom and through other media (e.g. assemblies, sport and cooperative games, drama, songs etc.);
- Values education was allied to ‘real world learning’ involving deep personal learning and imbued both planned and unplanned learning opportunities;
- Values education was reinforced through positive visual media as well as consistent, verbal encouragement and acknowledgement;
- Values education was allied to expressed high standards for overall participation, performance and achievement; and
- Values education was optimally introduced under the guidance of the principal and/or a team of committed staff.

**Ancillary Question 2.** The assessment of the impacts of values education on student and teacher effects in both Group A and B schools also revealed common findings.

- a. The impact on *student academic diligence* was demonstrated by students:
  - showing increased attentiveness in class and a greater capacity to work independently;
  - assuming more responsibility for their own learning;
  - asking questions and working together more cooperatively;
  - investing greater care and effort in their schoolwork; and
  - taking more pride in their efforts.
  
- b. The improvements in *School ambience* included:
  - conflict among students decreasing or being managed more constructively;
  - students demonstrating greater empathy, honesty and integrity;
  - more tolerant and cooperative student interactions;
  - safer and more harmonious classrooms and playgrounds;
  - greater kindness and tolerance among students;
  - students actively seeking to include peers without friends;
  - students taking greater responsibility with school equipment and routine tasks; and
  - students treating the school buildings and grounds ‘with respect’.
  
- c. The impact on *student-teacher relationships* was evidenced by:
  - “more trusting” relationships between staff and students;
  - the establishment of more ‘democratic’ classrooms;
  - teachers giving students more ‘power’ by allowing them choices in learning activities;
  - teachers being more conscious of scaffolding students to manage their own behaviour or resolve conflict with others;
  - teachers seeking opportunities to acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behaviour;

- teachers ‘listening’ to students and responding to their concerns and opinions;
  - students perceiving that teachers treat them fairly;
  - students behaving “more respectfully” towards teachers; and
  - students showing greater politeness and courtesy to teachers.
- d. The positive impacts on *student and teacher wellbeing* included:
- students feeling a greater sense of connectedness and belonging;
  - students gaining a greater capacity for self-reflection and self-appraisal;
  - students developing a greater capacity for regulating their own and their peers’ behaviour;
  - teachers receiving collegial support and strong leadership;
  - teachers obtaining confidence and knowledge through opportunities for professional development and through staff collaboration;
  - teachers re-examining their practices and role; and
  - the fostering of relational trust among staff and between teachers and families.
- e. The impact of *parental and family participation* was variable. Although the impact of values education appeared to be enhanced when parents understood and shared the school values and reinforced these at home, in general, the successful implementation of values education did not appear to depend on parental support or participation nor did the introduction of values education per se, engender greater collaboration with families.

**Ancillary Question 3.** The added impact of the *explicit teaching of values* was also consistent across both groups of schools. When values education was explicit, a common language was established among students, staff and families. This not only led to greater understanding of the targeted values but also provided a positive focus for redirecting children’s inappropriate behaviour. Teachers perceived that explicitly teaching values and developing empathy in students resulted in more responsible, focused and cooperative classrooms and equipped students to strive for better learning and social outcomes. When values were explicitly endorsed, acknowledged and ‘valued’ within a school culture, it was incumbent on schools to ensure that staff, as well as students are both benefactors and recipients in respectful and caring interactions. The common focus drew teachers together to create a collaborative and cohesive school community which supported teachers to do their job more effectively. This had important ramifications for students’ academic progress and wellbeing.

Therefore, within the limits imposed by the nature and timing of the study, it is evident that the central question that drove the study, namely, *Can the impact of values education on teaching and school ethos, as well as student achievement and behaviour, be tested empirically and observed reliably?*, was answered in the affirmative (Impacts of Value Education, 2009). The observations of the report indicated the “*profound potential of value education to transform the learning environment, ethos, coherence and inclusiveness of a school and, in so doing, to*

*stimulate student social development by strengthening relationships between students, and students and teachers. In turn there are cascading effects on student learning and behaviour, the way teachers teach and support their colleagues, teacher self efficacy and sense of self fulfilment, and communicative competency and capacity to negotiate (Lovat and Clement, 2008).*” Thus the results have clearly demonstrated the centrality of values education to creation of a stimulating teaching environment and thereby, enhancement of quality teaching.

## **Conclusions**

Every education is, in a sense, value education. ‘Value less’ or ‘value neutral’ education is a contradiction in terms, given the meanings of ‘value’ and ‘education’. Education, in its aims, curriculum and methods, is inseparably linked with values. (Seshadri, 2005). However, these days, colleges and institutions are devoting energy and resources to a wide range of educational programmes and initiatives explicitly designed to promote character values and behaviours in their students. Value education forms a part of the curriculum in different educational settings across the globe. Countries like India, Australia and Singapore lay a strong emphasis on imparting value education through well defined curricula and syllabi. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the impacts of value education on the academic performance of the students as well as the overall environment of the academic institutions where value education programmes have been explicitly put into practice. In the context of New Zealand institutions, effects of incorporating character education were demonstrated through questionnaires sent to schools in years 2004 and 2007, respectively. The results demonstrated that the impact of character education was significant in relation to the provision of a positive and supportive environment, positive influence on institutional culture, increased cooperation between staff and students, creation of an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning, improved attributes of the students and attraction of the students to the institution (Cornerstone Values, 2009). Another project in Australia aimed to provide quantifiable and defensible data about links between Values Education practices and quality teaching outcomes. The research addressed the following main question: *Can the impact of values education on teaching and school ethos, as well as student achievement and behaviour, be tested empirically and observed reliably?* The observations of the report indicate the “profound potential of value education to transform the learning environment, ethos, coherence and inclusiveness of a school and, in so doing, to stimulate student social development by strengthening relationships between students, and students and teachers (Lovat and Clement, 2008, Impacts of Value Education, 2009). Even though the above mentioned studies strongly indicate the positive impacts of value education, there is a need to carry out more such studies in different educational settings across the globe for ascertaining the positive impact of values education on the academic achievements of the students and overall environment of the academic institutions.

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