

NEW ZEALAND

Catholic Education Office Ltd

Te Tari Mātauranga Katorika o Aotearoa



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EDUCATING WITHIN A DELIBERATE VALUES BASED CONTEXT

Leaders at every level of society need to open dialogue between cultures. A dialogue that is conducted with open eyes and with humility is required, since arrogance is our worst enemy.

Despite the new nervousness sweeping the world community we can stare down the fears by being bold and brave. Today 6.5 billion of us inhabit six continents. We can remain confident, however, since humanity has proven its capacity to rise to the great challenges of history. Being fearful of fear itself is paralysing and helps nobody. Only by recognizing and valuing the inherent sacredness of human beings and acting with hope and justice, will we make progress towards enjoying a peaceful global existence as well as a more socially coherent school community.

It is encouraging that many principals and senior managers are beginning to recognize that they cannot be ethical bystanders as kids grow up, when the younger generation is calling for greater recognition of character building education while at school. This doesn't mean a specific subject has to be added into the curriculum, but it does mean that, if a school is to deliver to the core expectations of both students and parents, values based humanistic education must be an integral part of what a school does.

Character education cannot cure all the ills of the world but it can provide a framework which will enable our young people to have some direction in their lives and to open their hearts and minds to fundamental human issues. Nations need citizens with solid personal foundations if they are to address the issues of violence in our society. Teachers are finding out that, by embarking on character education with students in some form or other, their teaching lives are made easier, as a result. It is not too difficult to make a difference for good in the world providing one is bold and courageous.

Hope is the foundation for all that we do. Tomorrow can be better than today. "We will see it when we believe", said Saul Alinsky.

Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotient, plus Spiritual Intelligence, are becoming recognized as being more important to life success than the historical Intelligence Quotient concept. Researchers are saying that IQ contributes only about 20% to the success of a person's life. Values education focuses on building self-confidence which generates independent, capable behaviour and which enhances the Emotional Quotient dimension.

While it may seem to be an old fashioned concept, addressing spirituality education, which nurtures a young person's foundational values and also addresses issues surrounding civics, is now seen as essential if young people are to gain an education that will serve them well for a successful life. As principals we have to come to grips with all of this.

You will probably agree that parents fundamentally want their children to be happy, no matter what. Having met many happy and unhappy people, you will probably have come to the conclusion that the most important part of happiness depends on the inner person. Unfortunately, society today has come to expect happiness to come from outside sources. For vast numbers of people happiness has become associated with possessions and having various experiences. Too many people think that happiness is something that happens to them if they are lucky, and they fail to recognize that fame, wealth and success, by themselves, cannot make us happy, because they pertain only to the material dimension of who we are.

Fundamentally, we as leaders will only be able to show students how to be happy when we personally recognize that there are four legs to the table which describes the human condition: material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Steady, sustainable happiness depends on all four of those legs being firmly on the ground. The emphasis on the material is the disease of the modern age. Fortunately, this is beginning to change and as educators we have to be at the forefront helping to create a balance in the lives of our students. They will need that balance, if they are to surf and shape the world's mega trends.

I would like to concentrate a little on this more recently determined spiritual intelligence concept or as some commentators are calling it 'ethical intelligence'.

Spiritual intelligence empowers us to be happy in spite of circumstances and not because of them. It gives us the vision to see something positive in every problem and the wisdom to handle it to advantage. In a school leadership setting you can easily recognize its vital importance.

In many respects it is the spiritual intelligence dimension that enables human beings to attain their highest potential. So when looking to the shape you wish to mould your school into, the integration of these three intelligences will be fundamental to your students' survival and development in a world of growing complexity.

Spiritual intelligence holds the key for attaining our highest human potential since it frees us from the limitations of the immediate, the material and the obvious. Without the spiritual framework, “life seems like a series of disconnected and meaningless happenings which starts from nothing and ends with nothing”. ‘Spiritual Intelligence: A Practical Guide to Personal Happiness’, by Khalil Khavari, White Mountain Publications 2000.

Emotional Intelligence. You all know about Daniel Goleman’s book on the topic which demonstrates that people with a high Emotional Intelligence excel in a variety of tasks, academic, social adjustment and in work place settings. Emotional Intelligence can be enhanced by special training and education. Any worthwhile education needs to have a strong emphasis on this dimension of human life.

How, then, does leadership on the move go about developing its philosophy, values and operational practice?

Fundamentally you have to create and enunciate your educational philosophy which has its foundations in your personal convictions and drivers. It means answering the question, what makes me get out of bed in the morning? Education is the ultimate engine of fairness since it is at the heart of our society and is a potent lever to liberate people allowing them to reflect on and learn from their experiences and the experiences of history.

According to the New Zealand Foundation for Values Education, “There are a comparatively small number of moral virtues that have been held in common by different cultures and countries for countless generations.”

The Foundation points to C.S. Lewis’ study of civilization, *The Abolition of Man*, which identifies eight objective values held in common by civilisations past and present. These include the Ancient Egyptian, Old Norse, Ancient Jewish Babylonian, North American Indian, Hindu, Ancient Chinese, Roman, Christian, Greek, Australian Aboriginal, Anglo-Saxon, Stoic and Ancient Indian civilizations.

The eight universal virtues are:

- Honesty and truthfulness
- Kindness
- Consideration and concern for others
- Compassion
- Obedience
- Responsibility
- Respect

➤ Duty

I am sure nobody here from whatever background would disagree on this core.

The study of the ideas of the world's great civilizations and religions is another way to nurture virtue in our own lives and in the lives of young people. Giving students opportunities to serve their peers, older citizens and disadvantaged individuals are other ways to build their strength in this important area.

Leadership is about formulating and clearly communicating aims and policies which benefit all students, while monitoring the performance of the school to ensure incremental achievement takes place.

Principal leadership is teaching kids about their duties and responsibilities in a democratic society while encouraging creativity, entrepreneurship and ambition.

The essential role of principals is to pass on to the next generation of children the qualities and values which they will need for their life journey – their school is a significant map maker for young people and this ought to be kept firmly in focus.

Courageous leadership which is not afraid to confront the hard issues is indispensable if your school is to make solid progress. There are answers to most questions, providing boldness is part of the leadership mix. While power structures are part of human interaction, no one individual or group of individuals ought to be allowed to stymie change that will bring about a better life for people. Likewise, a leadership style that waters down what needs to be done through lowest common denominator consensus seeking, is not the best way to achieve long-term goals for our students.

Young people who are blessed with enthusiasm, energy and a willingness to find out about the world require a personally tailored curriculum that also interfaces with the reality of global imperatives. This requires alliances to be made with other education institutions, non-government organisations, local communities and enterprise organisations. The African proverb says it all: 'It takes a whole village to raise a child.'

Teaching is an art with hope at its core. This means those involved in it have to submit to the law of delayed returns. No one is pretending it is easy to achieve our mission. In the final analysis, we depend on energetic leadership that delivers inspiration, sets high standards, promotes positive attitudes and sprays enthusiasm over students and teachers. I am of the view that the principal's leadership is one of the most influential of any occupation in our society. When positive personal human values are synchronized with complementary behaviour, you will be a world beater.