

# Added Values

Giving young people rules and restrictions isn't nearly as effective as creating an educational environment where agreed principles of human behaviour underpin absolutely every aspect of teaching and learning, says **Dr Neil Hawkes**...

**A**s an international education consultant, I am privileged to work with head teachers in many countries to support their inspirational drive to hold on to key educational principles. One of these tenets is that the purpose of education is to help students to become humane, and thus ensure the flourishing of humanity.

Values-based Education (VbE) is an educational philosophy that bases everything a school does on a community inspired set of universal, positive human values, which may include respect, responsibility, justice, compassion and resilience. VbE combines explicit teaching of values with the creation of an environment in which students experience values first hand, so it becomes a framework for teaching in all subject areas. It gives students an awareness and understanding of positive universal values so that they learn about and experience values at a depth. This process encourages them to embed the values into their personal model of life. Awareness and understanding is strengthened through reflective study. Students gain invaluable social and emotional skills by understanding the need to be empathetic to others and recognise their own self-worth.

Research\* demonstrates that students become more self-confident and self-motivated. Their self-esteem rises and behaviour improves. The school environment becomes less stressful and as a consequence provides a more satisfying and fulfilling experience for both teachers and students. It enhances the life of every student, not just those who are more academic. An effective VbE school is calm and purposeful, creating a school environment that is more conducive to teaching and learning. In practice, academic attainment increases in an effective VbE school.

Studies show that the behaviour students adopt at school is modelled primarily on the behaviour they witness in teachers and support staff and only secondarily on how they are instructed to behave. Therefore, the staff at VbE schools agree to model the behaviours they want students to adopt – not always an easy task! It is vital that there is staff consensus about how values will be modelled, as students are quick to notice inconsistencies.

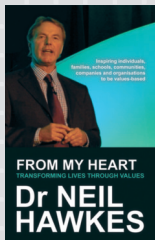
The VbE framework is built on a set of universal values that are applied to every aspect of a school's operations. The framework involves the explicit teaching of positive values and consideration of what they mean, so that they can be living values. A key component of VbE is the provision of 'values words' that create an ethical vocabulary, which I believe enables students to develop ethical intelligence. Students are taught the transformational power of reflection as recommended by neuroscientists to strengthen their understanding of values, and to control their responses.

## Measures of success

So, what specific impacts can VbE have on teaching and

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learning? Professor Terrence Lovat research at Newcastle University (Australia) has identified many, including:

### 1: VALUES CONSCIOUSNESS

Deliberate and systematic VbE enhances values consciousness. For instance, students, teachers and parents develop an increased consciousness about the meaning of values and the power of values education to transform learning and life. Such increased awareness is more than a superficial understanding of values; it is related to a positive change in behaviour. Teachers think more deeply about their teaching and the values that they model both in and outside of the classroom. Students report that their behaviour is more altruistic.

### 2: WELLBEING

Students' wellbeing is enhanced through the application of values-focused pedagogies, which give time for them to reflect deeply on the nature of values and what these mean to themselves and others. In thinking about, acting on and feeling values, students develop feelings of self-worth, empathy and responsible personal behaviour. Evidence from the data shows that values education has a very positive effect on the sense of self of students who are 'at risk', marginalised or disadvantaged. Students develop a greater understanding of the impact of their actions on the wellbeing of others.

### 3: AGENCY

Agency is the capacity of individuals to act independently, making choices and carrying them through. The evidence shows that VbE strengthens student agency when it involves various forms of giving, outreach and working in the community. Agency is developed through meaningful real-life experiential learning, such as engagement in community projects, when there is opportunity for the development of student voice, initiative and leadership; and an explicit focus on ethical, intercultural and social issues. For values learning to take place activities have to be deeply personal, deeply real and deeply engaging. Relationships between students and teachers are enhanced through such activities. This research finding has wide implications for teacher agency and teacher education in terms of understanding appropriate pedagogy in the context of an enquiry-based curriculum.

### 4: CONNECTEDNESS

The research shows how a focus on values builds positive and wide-ranging connections between teachers, students and parents – this is called relational trust. It supports student engagement in learning, improved parent engagement in their children's learning and allows teachers to develop new relationships with their students, each other and the parents and families in their school community. The