# Nurturing democratic virtues: educators' perspectives

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It is widely accepted that certain values and their associated virtues are desirable in citizens of a democracy. Schools in South Africa and elsewhere are expected to play a part in the development of appropriate values, although the precise form of their influence is frequently not clarified. The development of values and virtues is the central theme of moral development, a process linked by some psychologists to cognitive development. Although cognitive competence cannot guarantee virtue, it is generally recognized that insightful moral judgement and action are facilitated by certain cognitive dispositions and skills, and that values and habits of thoughtfulness are interdependent. Research indicates that educators are aware of a responsibility to nurture morality but suggests a number of concerns related to their capacity and to their understanding of their role. The study reported here is a quantitative survey of the priorities of a sample of 350 Western Cape educators regarding the dispositions (both cognitive and moral) they consider to be important to nurture in the classroom and the extent to which they attempt to do so. Educators rated all 25 dispositions as at least of some importance, the four most highly rated being goal-setting and planning, reliability, punctuality, and persistence. Despite the high priority accorded to certain dispositions the percentage of educators who claimed to assign effort to their active nurturance was never more than 31%, and educators did not seem to prioritize cognitive dispositions. Gender, professional experience and phase of education were each found to influence priorities and practices. Finally, educators maintained that they assigned effort to nurturing many characteristics in addition to those listed on the questionnaire, of which respect (21%) and self-respect (14%), were mentioned most frequently. These findings have implications for the engagement of educators in values education.

## Introduction

In 1994 South Africa formally became a democracy. The maintenance and development of a democracy depends, however, on more than legislation and the verbal affirmation of democratic principles. It also requires informed citizens who possess certain virtues, sometimes re- ferred to as civic virtues, although many virtues are equally relevant to both private and civic life.

A number of authors strongly recommend that formal education, although by no means the only relevant influence, must play a role in fostering civic or democratic virtues (Gutmann, 1987; 1995; Fine, 1995; Marcus & Fritzer, 1999; Sizer, 1992). In South Africa the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Na- tional Education, 2001) makes it clear that the education system is perceived to have a responsibility to promote the values of democracy and to influence the development of young South Africans towards higher levels of moral judgement.

What are civic virtues? A report published in the United States refers to the importance of nurturing "habits of heart and mind that are conducive to the healthy functioning of the democratic system" (NCSS Task Force on Character Education, 1997:226). In England, where citizenship education was formally introduced into schools in 2002, the authors of the Crick Report (cited in McLaughlin, 2000:545) describe civic virtues as being made up of "skills, values, attitudes, dispositions and understanding". In each of the above three examples it is recognized that there are moral and cognitive dimensions to be- coming a 'good citizen' of a democracy.

## Values and virtues

Hill (1991:4) describes values as "beliefs held by individuals to which they attach special priority or worth, and by which they tend to order their lives" Values may be, but are not necessarily, morally desirable. The literature does not always make a consistent distinction between values and virtues, but when authors identify desirable values they are, by implication, suggesting associated virtues. For example, if truth and respect for reasoning are considered desirable values, it follows that the virtues of honesty and reasonableness are desirable qualities of persons. Virtues are not independent of values. They are the active manifestation of positive values, recognized in dispositions to behave in a particular manner. As such they are sometimes referred to as qua- lities of character. The term 'virtue', according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, refers to forms of moral excellence. In this study civic virtues are conceptualized as being either moral or cognitive in nature

in order to accommodate the two dimensions of citizenship frequently identified as important.

## The virtues of a democratic citizen

No definitive listing can be made of the attributes desirable in citizens of a democracy and proponents of different forms of democracy may emphasize different virtues. Nevertheless the literature on citizenship education identifies a number of personal characteristics, such as a sense of responsibility, a concern for justice, and the capacity for cri- tical judgement, about which there would be little argument. Lickona (1991:45) writes, for example, that most Americans agree that "hones- ty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compas- sion, co-operation, courage and a host of democratic values" are central to moral lives in a democracy. Inman and Buck (1995) cite the following as core democratic values: respect for reasoning, respect for truth, fairness, acceptance of diversity, co-operation, justice, freedom, equality, concern for the welfare of others and the peaceful resolution of conflict. Borba (2001) lists empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness as the seven essential virtues. The literature clearly refers not only to moral but also to cognitive characteristics. The ideal citizen is described as one in whom the moral values of democracy and their associated virtues have taken root, together with the cognitive virtues that enable reasoned judgement and considered action. Friedman (2000) suggests that students should be educated to recognize oppression and injustice and to be capable of critical reflection. Expressed differently, Lipman (1993; 1998) empha- sizes the importance of fostering critical, creative and caring thinking in children and young people. It is widely recognized that the nur- turance of democratic virtues in children and young people necessarily includes attention to both moral and cognitive development. This by no means implies, however, that 'high intelligence' is a prerequisite for, or a guarantee of, morality.

## The development of moral intelligence

Coles (1998:3) describes the development of moral intelligence as the "gradually developing capacity to reflect upon what is right and wrong with all the emotional and intellectual resources of the human mind". The nurturance of this process in schools depends, *inter alia*, upon educators' personal values and understandings of their professional role. It is also likely to be influenced by the theoretical orientation from which educators approach their professional tasks. According to behaviourist theory, modelling, the judicious use of rewards and a

certain amount of rote learning might suffice to develop morality from an early age.

Kohlberg's (1963; 1968; 1981) influential theory of moral development suggests, however, a very different process. Linking his work to a Piagetian understanding of cognitive development, he proposes that there is a necessary sequence of stages of moral development. This implies that, although activities can be initiated to enhance the progress of each stage, expectations of moral thought and behaviour must be matched to developmental stages. The theory stresses that 'higher' levels of moral reasoning emerge in human beings as a species, given sufficient and appropriate environmental challenges to invoke the necessary assimilation and accommodation processes. Kohlberg maintains that sophisticated moral judgements cannot be expected before adolescence because the prerequisite level of reasoning has not yet developed. Kohlberg's description of moral development in terms of levels of moral reasoning has been questioned, for example, by Gilligan (1982), who suggests that this form of morality is gender specific to males. It is also challenged by social constructivist views of intellectual development which imply a greater need for active mediation from an early age. Nevertheless, the belief that many aspects of morality must await the emergence of the capacity for formal operational reasoning is fairly widespread. Accounts of initiatives to promote moral development tend, therefore, to describe work with adolescents based on Piagetian assumptions.

## The role of schools and teachers

As Carlin (1996) and McLaughlin (2000) point out, explicit attention to values in schools is controversial. Values clarification has been criticized in the United States as promoting relativism and secularism (Etzioni, 1996) and even permitting the validation of values that are not in the public good (Fine, 1995). On the other hand, moral education can easily become indoctrination. This concern is recognized in the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of National Education, 2001:iii) where it is stated that there is "no intention to impose values", excepting that of discussion and debate. Nevertheless, the education system is to actively promote "equity, tolerance, multi-lingualism, openness, accountability and social honour". The document does not appear to acknowledge the tensions that may arise between values, or between individual and social values. There may be times when schools, individual educators and communities need to reflect upon and debate the values they wish to nurture and the limits they may wish to impose in the interests of solidarity and democratic nation building. Notwithstanding a commitment to debate, it is not possible, or desirable, for schools and educators to adopt a completely value neutral position, as Veugelers (2000b) notes.

## Educators' perspectives

International research suggests that educators tend to accept that the school is a moral environment and that part of their role as educators is to provide moral education (Henson, 2001; Maslovaty, 2000; Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Zuzovsky, Yakir & Gottlieb (1995).

There has been little research, however, into educators' perspectives regarding the content and process of moral education. It seems reasonable to suppose that their perspectives will reflect the diversity of opinion regarding the teaching of values found elsewhere. Ling, Burman and Cooper (1995) found that educators in Australia prioritized tolerance, respect for the self and others, equality, and social survival skills. Killeavy's (1995) study of educators in Ireland listed the following curriculum principles: democratic values (unspecified), honesty, truth, equity, care, respect, religious values and children's needs. Educators in Israel (Zuzovsky, Yakir & Gottlieb, 1995) favoured left wing and liberal curriculum principles and considered values education important, linking it to cognitive problem solving. Educators in Slovenia (Razdevzek-Pucko & Polak, 1995) supported principles of honesty, justice, peace, human rights, respect and tolerance. Stephenson (1995) conducted a similar study with educators in England and found support for curriculum principles of moral values, tolerance, respect and caring. The most frequent ethical stance adopted by educators in various countries was consensus pluralism, an acceptable position but one that can lead to avoidance and confusion in schools and, if extreme, can result in a moral vacuum. There were also educators who supported moral universalism, religious monopolism and nationalist values. Wood and Roach (1999) found that the five character education values that teachers believe are the most important are responsibility, honesty, good citizenship, respect and co-operation. Parents and teachers in a study conducted by Bulach (2002) highlighted the importance of respect and honesty.

Educator concerns that have been identified include the need for training (Maslovaty, 2000; McClellan, 1999; Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Wood & Roach, 1999), a reluctance to make a public commitment or to have their values scrutinized (Ling, Burman & Cooper, 1995), and the perceived impossibility of teaching values that are not one's own (Stephenson, Ling, Burman & Cooper, 1995). Moreover, the belief system of individual teachers and the contexts that they find themselves in affect their choice of teaching strategy and guide their educational practice (Husu & Tirri, 2001; Maslovaty, 2000; Veugelers, 2000a; 2000b).

With regard to educators in South Africa, the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of National Education, 2001) mentions research findings indicating that 78% of educators believe that the government overemphasizes human rights, and that this leads to classroom problems. It also refers to school based research conducted for the Department of National Education that indicated that the two values most strongly felt to be lacking were respect and dialogue. It is not clear, however, whether this was the opinion of educators or of learners, or both. If educators are to be expected to address issues of values in schools it is important to access their current perspectives and to encourage debate.

## Aims of the study

The major aims of this study were to identify the moral and cognitive dispositions that educators in one province of South Africa believe to be important to nurture in schools, and the extent to which they actively engage in doing so. A secondary aim was to investigate possible differences that might exist based on gender, phase of education or years of experience.

## Research methodology

### Sampling procedure

This was a quantitative survey aimed at identifying broad trends within one province. It was intentionally relatively impersonal to take into account possible reservations on the part of educators. With the permission of the Western Cape Education Department, a random stratified sample of 108 schools was drawn, six secondary and six primary, from each region in the province, representing different education communities. The final sample was not truly random since not all schools selected, and not all educators in any one school, agreed to take part. Moreover it does not represent a random selection of individual educators.

### Participants and data collection

Each school selected received a letter explaining the research, with a copy of the questionnaire attached. Questionnaires were mailed or delivered to schools that agreed to participate and personally collected when completed.

The questionnaire was completed by 350 educators from 36 schools. Approximately 55% of educators worked in schools in the four Cape Town metropolitan regions and the remainder in the other three regions of the Western Cape. Both primary (57%) and secondary (43%) educators took part, with 66% of the sample being female. Educators with ten or more years of experience made up approximately 63% of the sample.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first section educators were asked to rate on a scale of 1–6 (chosen to avoid a mid point) a list of 25 'dispositions' in terms of how important they thought it was to nurture each in schools. Dispositions included moral/social virtues (for example, the disposition to be reliable/trustworthy) and cognitive virtues (for example, the disposition to reason things out using logic). Items were selected for inclusion based on the literature on desirable cognitive strategies, habits and dispositions (Costa & Kallick, 2000; Tishman, Perkins & Jay, 1995; Sharp & Splitter, 1995) and the desirable qualities of citizenship as indicated in a number of the publications referred to earlier in this article. The term disposition was used to signify an enduring tendency. It was explained on the questionnaire as 'tendency to behave like this most of the time'.

After rating each item educators were asked to state which four of the dispositions listed they personally put effort into encouraging in the classroom, and to mention any additional dispositions that they attempted to foster.

## Data analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS software which generated descriptive and inferential statistics, using Student's *t* test, Pearson's Chi-Square test and Fisher's Exact Test as appropriate. The qualitative data were analysed according to themes.

## Validity of the data

The constructs behind the questionnaire were based on the literature and it was piloted and revised to promote its validity. However, the data themselves came only from educators sufficiently interested to provide the information, which does suggest a need for caution in their interpretation. Nevertheless, and although the sample was not truly random, it is considered sufficiently large to justify generalization of at least the more robust findings ( *p* values of 0.01 or less) to educators within the province.

## Research ethics

All educators participated voluntarily and were assured of confidentiality. A feedback summary was sent to every participating school as the data analysis became available.

## **Research results**

### Priorities identified by educators

Table 1 lists the 25 dispositions in rank order as rated by educators. It indicates that all the dispositions listed were considered to be between quite and very important to work on in schools. Table 2 shows the dispositions that were rated most and least frequently as top priorities. Both tables suggest that educators are highly aware that learners need to acquire the capacity to set goals and make plans and to persist. They also see it as important that learners develop the moral/social virtues of reliability and punctuality. The dispositions prioritized by the smallest number of educators were: to take citizenship seriously, to enjoy contestation and debate, and to be generous.

Within the above priorities male and female educators differed in their perceptions of the importance of different dispositions. Female educators considered each of the dispositions listed in Table 3 to be of greater importance than did their male colleagues.

Similarly, primary and secondary educators differed concerning the importance of some dispositions. Secondary educators considered each of the dispositions listed in Table 4 to be of greater importance than did their colleagues working in primary schools.

Table 5 reports on differences in priorities between educators with either under or over ten years of experience. More experienced educators assigned greater importance to each of the dispositions listed.

### Educators' practices

The foregoing information represents what educators believe to be

**Table 1** Dispositions in rank order as rated by educators

| | Minimum rating assigned | Maximum rating assigned | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disposition to set goals and make plans | 2 | 6 | 5.61 | 0.70 |
| Disposition to be reliable/trustworthy | 1 | 6 | 5.55 | 0.82 |
| Disposition to be punctual | 1 | 6 | 5.43 | 0.90 |
| Disposition to persist rather than give up | 1 | 6 | 5.23 | 1.00 |
| Disposition to set and live by certain values | 1 | 6 | 5.23 | 0.95 |
| Disposition to reason things out using logic | 1 | 6 | 5.20 | 0.94 |
| Disposition to strive to be a 'good person' | 1 | 6 | 5.19 | 1.04 |
| Disposition to respect legitimate authority | 2 | 6 | 5.18 | 0.95 |
| Disposition to express own thoughts clearly | 1 | 6 | 5.16 | 0.95 |
| Disposition to be tolerant | 1 | 6 | 5.14 | 0.96 |
| Disposition to be polite to all other persons | 1 | 6 | 5.14 | 0.99 |
| Disposition to generate creative ideas | 1 | 6 | 5.12 | 1.03 |
| Disposition to manage own thinking/learning | 2 | 6 | 5.12 | 0.98 |
| Disposition to organize/ connect thoughts/ideas | 1 | 6 | 5.12 | 0.94 |
| Disposition to listen with empathy to others | 1 | 6 | 5.11 | 1.01 |
| Disposition to collaborate well with others | 3 | 6 | 5.10 | 0.89 |
| Disposition to be compassionate/kind | 1 | 6 | 5.05 | 1.01 |
| Disposition to make own judgements | 1 | 6 | 4.99 | 1.03 |
| Disposition to care about accuracy | 2 | 6 | 4.94 | 0.96 |
| Disposition to evaluate own/others' reasons | 1 | 6 | 4.92 | 1.02 |
| Disposition to be curious and ask questions | 1 | 6 | 4.91 | 1.01 |
| Disposition to reflect/consider | 2 | 6 | 4.88 | 1.00 |
| Disposition to be generous | 1 | 6 | 4.65 | 1.16 |
| Disposition to enjoy contention and debate | 1 | 6 | 4.00 | 1.05 |
| Disposition to take citizenship seriously | 1 | 6 | 4.52 | 1.27 |

**Table 2** Dispositions rated by educators as most and least important

| Disposition | Percentage of educators who rated this as very important to work on in schools |
|---|---|
| To set goals and make plans | 92 |
| To be reliable/trustworthy | 90 |
| To be punctual | 87 |
| To persist rather than give up | 81 |
| To be generous | 57 |
| To enjoy contestation and debate | 54 |
| To take citizenship seriously | 53 |

important. The next set of tables refer to what educators say they actually do. They were asked to mention, in no particular order, the four dispositions to which they gave most attention. Table 6 shows educators' reported practices.

Educators were not asked to prioritize, but 22% of educators

**Table 3**  Gender differences in priorities

| Disposition | Mean rating (male educators) | Mean rating (female educators) | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|
| To be punctual | 5.31 | 5.51 | 0.05 |
| To be reliable/trustworthy | 5.43 | 5.64 | 0.05 |
| To evaluate own and others' reasons | 4.79 | 5.03 | 0.05 |
| To collaborate well with others | 4.96 | 5.17 | 0.05 |
| To care about accuracy | 4.83 | 5.05 | 0.05 |
| To be polite | 4.99 | 5.22 | 0.05 |
| To be kind/compassionate | 4.91 | 5.16 | 0.05 |
| To be generous. | 4.45 | 4.77 | 0.01 |
| To express own thoughts clearly | 5.03 | 5.27 | 0.05 |

**Table 4**  Differences between primary and secondary educators in terms of priorities

| Disposition | Mean rating (primary) | Mean rating (secondary) | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|
| To reason using logic | 5.03 | 5.42 | 0.01 |
| To respect legitimate authority | 5.10 | 5.29 | 0.05 |
| To care about accuracy | 4.73 | 5.23 | 0.01 |
| To be curious and ask questions | 4.80 | 5.05 | 0.05 |

**Table 5**  Differences between less and more experienced educators in terms of priorities

| Disposition | Mean rating (nine or less years of experience) | Mean rating (ten or more years of experience) | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|
| To express own thoughts clearly | 5.01 | 5.25 | 0.03 |
| To respect legitimate authority | 5.02 | 5.31 | 0.01 |
| To listen with empathy to others | 4.92 | 5.27 | 0.01 |
| To evaluate own and others' reasons | 4.78 | 5.02 | 0.05 |
| To set and live by certain values | 5.04 | 5.34 | 0.01 |
| To be kind/ compassionate | 4.91 | 5.15 | 0.04 |

**Table 6**  Educators pratices

| Disposition | Percentage of educators who claim to put effort into encouraging this disposition |
|---|---|
| Set goals and make plans | 31 |
| Be reliable/trustworthy | 27 |
| Be punctual | 26 |
| Set and live by certain values | 25 |
| Persist rather than give up | 22 |
| Be tolerant | 21 |
| Be curious and ask questions | 19 |
| Manage own thinking and learning | 19 |
| Respect legitimate authority | 18 |
| Listen with empathy to others | 17 |
| Generate creative ideas | 17 |
| Strive to be a 'good person' | 15 |
| Express own thoughts clearly | 14 |
| Reason things out using logic | 14 |
| Organize/connect thoughts/ideas | 13 |
| Collaborate well with others | 13 |
| Be compassionate/kind | 10 |
| Be polite to all other persons | 10 |
| Care about accuracy | 9 |
| Make own judgements | 7 |
| Enjoy contention and debate | 5 |
| Take citizenship seriously | 4 |
| Evaluate own/others' reasons | 3 |
| Be generous | 2 |
| Reflect/consider | 2 |

**Table 7**  Differences between secondary and primary educators in terms of dispositions on which effort is expended

| Disposition | Proportion of secondary educators | Proportion of primary educators | Significance level ($\chi^2$) |
|---|---|---|---|
| To reason things out using logic | 23% | 7% | 0.000 |
| To listen with empathy to others | 11% | 21% | 0.021 |
| To take citizenship seriously | 1% | 6% | 0.048 |
| To care about accuracy | 15% | 6% | 0.005 |
| To set and live by certain values | 34% | 18% | 0.005 |
| To generate creative ideas | 13% | 21% | 0.047 |
| To strive to be a 'good person' | 9% | 19% | 0.015 |

**Table 8**  Differences between less and more experienced educators in terms of dispositions on which effort is expended

| Disposition | Proportion of less experienced educators | Proportion of more experienced educators | Significance level ($\chi^2$) |
|---|---|---|---|
| To set goals and make plans | 20% | 34% | 0.008 |
| To respect legitimate authority | 12% | 23% | 0.018 |
| To enjoy contention and debate | 10% | 4% | 0.027 |
| To set and live by certain values | 18% | 30% | 0.013 |
| To make own judgements | 3% | 9% | 0.020 |

listed the disposition to set goals and make plans as the first of their practices. Apart from this disposition they varied widely in terms of the dispositions they actively nurtured, with no one other disposition being mentioned first by more than 9% of educators.

There was a significant difference between male and female educators in terms of effort to promote the disposition to respect legitimate authority. Twenty-five percent of male educators mentioned this as one of the four dispositions on which effort was expended, whilst this was true for only 15% of female educators. There were no significant gender differences for any other disposition.

Secondary and primary educators differed in the proportions of educators who expended effort in respect of the dispositions listed in Table 7, with secondary educators more inclined to devote energy to the encouragement of logical reasoning, care for accuracy and the development of values, and primary educators more inclined to devote energy to the encouragement of listening with empathy, generating creative ideas and striving to be a 'good person'. Although there was a statistically significant difference in favour of primary educators, neither group assigned a great deal of importance to 'taking citizenship seriously'.

More and less experienced educators differed in the dispositions on which they expended energy, as indicated in Table 8.

## Other dispositions that educators attempt to foster

Educators were requested to list any additional dispositions (not mentioned in the questionnaire) that they attempted to foster. Three hundred and seventy-eight discrete responses were generated. Of these, 25 could not be interpreted and 40 described strategies rather than dispositions. Of the remaining responses approximately 20% clearly represented dispositions already in the questionnaire. The dispositions comprising the other 80% were assigned categories as shown in Table 9. In some instances there appeared to be overlap with questionnaire

items, but since educators felt they were worthy of additional mention they are reported here. Responses not representing at least 2% of the total are not reported in the table, but include loyalty, action orientation, patience, preparation for the future, efficiency and resourcefulness, versatility and obedience.

**Table 9**  Other dispositions that educators attempted to foster

| Category | % | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Respect | 21 | "respect for all living things", "you are not to think you are better than others", "understand and respect differences", "love each other", "regard for others", "respect peers", "respect teachers", "respect parents", "respect adults", "respect environment", respect others' values and religions" |
| Self-respect and self awareness | 14 | "to love themselves", "respect and love self", "to have self-confidence", to believe in self", "recognize own faults", "engage in introspection" , "self-esteem", "self-actualization" |
| Thinking and learning habits | 9 | "to be a critical thinker", "be critical re information", "follow up and correct mistakes", "be aware and alert", "analyse statements, problems and situations", "use time wisely" |
| Honesty | 8 | "to respect others' property", "to be honest", "honesty" |
| Responsibility | 7 | "to know they are responsible to change things", "to be responsible for actions", "sense of responsibility", "to be accountable", "be responsible for learning duties" |
| Self-motivation | 4 | "willing to be taught", "try your best", "self-enthusiasm" |
| Neatness, care and pride in work | 4 | "neatness", "pride in work", "passion for excellence", "care for possessions" |
| Academic dispositions | 4 | "to pursue academic thoughts", "passion for my subject", "to read critically and with understanding", "develop a love of reading" |
| Diligence | 4 | "to be hardworking", "to work hard", "to be hard workers", "diligence" |
| Independence | 3 | "take own initiative and be independent", "to work on their own", "tackle problems independently" |
| Commitment/ dedication | 3 | "to be dedicated", "to be committed, faithful", "dedication" |
| Health-related habits | 3 | "live healthy", "AIDS awareness", "drugs awareness", "keep classroom clean" |
| Self regulation | 2 | "think before action", "self-discipline", "be disciplined" |
| Friendliness, helpfulness | 2 | "to be friendly", "comradeship", "be helpful" |
| Religion, philosophy and values | 2 | "make good sense of what one lives for", "have a conscience", "believe in God", "Christian lifestyle and values", "true citizenship and patriotism" |

### Discussion and recommendations
The research findings suggest that the majority of educators, as in other studies, recognize a moral dimension to their work. On a 1–6 scale of importance, no disposition on the list was rated lower than 4.5. Alarmingly, however, many educators do not appear to act on this belief.

Discrepancies between rhetoric and practice are common in life and in research and this study was no exception. Despite claiming to believe in the crucial importance of fostering the following four dispositions in schools, only 31% of educators admitted to working

actively to promote the disposition to set goals and make plans, 27% to promote reliability and trustworthiness, 26% to promote punctuality and 22% to promote persistence. It is encouraging, however, that 25% of educators claimed to invest effort in encouraging learners to set and live by certain values. That the proportion is not greater may be explained by educators' confusion about their role in this respect and their reluctance to impose values, a finding in other studies. The tendency to avoid value-related issues is confirmed by the fact that only 2% of the additional dispositions mentioned by participants were specifically concerned with values, religion and morals. The low level of reported engagement may indicate that educators are uncertain about how to mediate values and develop virtues and unclear about the boundaries of their role. It is also possible that educators do mediate values but fail to recognize their own practices in these terms.

Any values-education initiative in schools will have to take into account the influence of context and the personal positions of educators themselves. Even if only the most robust findings are considered, this study highlights significant differences. The gender based differences suggest that female and male educators may prioritize different virtues, possibly along the lines proposed by Gilligan (1982). The secondary/primary differences with regard to logical reasoning indicate that most educators are strongly influenced by Piagetian views that relegate any attention to thinking and reasoning to adolescence. Secondary educators' greater emphasis on the importance of fostering respect for legitimate authority was not, interestingly, matched by a greater tendency to expend effort on its nurturance. Does this mean that they have given up or, perhaps, that they are genuinely confused about the question of authority in schools? More experienced educators were more strongly convinced than their less senior colleagues of the need to engender respect for legitimate authority, which may reflect long established habits of classroom management that take this for granted.

On the whole, educators do not seem to prioritise the cognitive virtues that would enable meaningful value judgements. Less than 10% of all educators claimed to expend energy on care for accuracy, the development of judgement, pleasure in debate, the evaluation of reasons and the disposition to reflect. The differences between more and less experienced educators may imply that those with ten or more years in the field have come to recognize the importance of certain cognitive virtues. They were not only more inclined to consider them important but also more inclined to devote attention to their nurturance. It should be noted, however, that, even if this is the case, it is only true of approximately one third or less of experienced professionals  The disposition to enjoy contention and debate was infrequently nurtured in either group, although this was more likely among less experienced educators. This might reflect different modes of educator training or levels of educator confidence. The notion of being a critical thinker appeared to be unrelated in the minds of some respondents to the various cognitive dispositions listed in the questionnaire, many of which are essential elements of critical thinking. Some educators listed thinking and learning habits, self-motivation, diligence, independence, dedication and, infrequently, self regulation, as additional dispositions that they attempted to foster. It is possible that many educators have not themselves analysed what it means to be a critical thinker (Green, 1998; 2001).

By far the most frequently mentioned disposition perceived as additional to those listed in the questionnaire was respect, which may indicate that respect in one form or another is often perceived to be lacking, a finding that confirms research cited in the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy. The disposition next in frequency concerned self-esteem. It may be that the introduction of the new curriculum has highlighted for educators the importance of personal strengths and interpersonal skills.

The first recommendation that emerges from the above findings is that, if educators are to take on this responsibility, they need to be encouraged to engage in some form of ongoing conversation about the values and associated virtues that a particular school and community

wish to nurture. Secondly, educators are likely to need experiences that mediate a deeper understanding and articulation of their own values and thinking processes and the relationship between them if they are to feel confident about their role. Thirdly, in the light of social constructivist understandings of cognitive development, it is probably necessary to address the assumption that reasoning and reflection are to be actively nurtured only in older learners.

In this article educators' priorities were described. A future study will describe their practices and, together with a number of qualitative studies currently in progress, may help to clarify the reasons for the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice and enable further proposals to address it.

## Acknowledgement

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