



**VALUES-THEMED ARTICLE: Spring 2015**

**Character and Values Education - Work In Progress**  
**Laying the foundations for ongoing successes and impressive CVs**



People everywhere are fast recognising that the “Values Revolution” has truly arrived and is re-shaping many aspects of our lives as well as our families, schools, businesses and other public and private organisations around us. Savvy teachers will want to ensure they are preparing their young citizens well and providing quality guidance that creates the foundations for their success now and in the future.

**The need for learners to be able to engage chosen values**

Events around the world are bringing into ever sharper focus, the need for young citizens to be values literate.

As more and more individuals and organisations become values-driven, the effects are changing the landscape for workplaces and how modern, successful public and private entities are run. Increasingly people are keen to live their values, make a difference and improve the world through their lifestyles, their careers and their personal and collective choices.

Character and Values education is an absolutely vital component in a person's success. The experiences during the process can help to reduce the barriers that hamper individuals' learning capacities and their abilities to be innovative, grow and thrive. It provides young children and teenagers with ongoing streams of opportunities for growth and rounded development.

Life is constantly changing and it's essential that citizens-in-the-making are being equipped with flexible mindsets and skillsets that are appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By the time they leave school, they need to be fully conversant with the empowering and transformative effects of values and confident about engaging them when making decisions.

### **Values Education is essential for effective schooling**

If a school curriculum does not explicitly and systematically embrace Character and Values education, then the school is probably sitting on a significant amount of untapped potential. Conversely, education strategies that embrace the development of children's characters and values, as an integral part of their intellectual advancement, enable the individuals to gain a sense of their real potential and future possibilities, with the added bonus of inspiring windfalls along the way that raise standards, make learning more effective and enhance performance.

Character and Values education is a powerful, engaging source of success for participants and their lifelong learning. The time spent exploring values, mastering vital life skills and developing a strong, internal compass will bring in advantages for individuals, relationships, communities and the environment for months and years to come.

A key goal of Character and Values education is for pupils, teachers and parents to achieve and go on achieving. The process offers some goldmines, which are definitely worth paying attention to, particularly as they give meaning and direction to life, change behaviour patterns, raise educational attainment and boost wellbeing and happiness.

Mentors can offer some simple steps that individuals can take to ensure they profit from them. The knowledge gained can transform every aspect of life.

This is particularly true as young people apply effective and profitable techniques in relation to their emotional, social and spiritual capacities through time set aside for quiet reflection and mindfulness.

### **Values Education requires safe, supportive settings**

Character and Values education is not just about delivering life-changing information in a vacuum. It provides experiential learning that helps young citizens grow in all contexts and in all aspects of their development. The nature of a Character and Values course is that it affords personal, ongoing support and coaching, especially when participants are gently nudged towards the edges of their comfort zones. It provides space for learners to ask searching and challenging questions and introduces them to a range of real-life situations in which they can interact with - and support - everyone else engaged in the programme - central to which is harnessing energy so that individuals not only do well but also strive to do good.

Just as learners, who feel the backing of their parents / carers, tend to be more motivated to achieve, so the personal support of teachers, within a safe and supportive school culture, can make significant differences to the progress and success of young children and teenagers. Inevitably they struggle from time to time and there are occasions when teachers can massively improve results and outcomes, particularly when a young person senses that a teacher cares about his or her pupils as individuals.

Difficult circumstances can mean that for some participants it takes considerable courage to be true to themselves and to live by values that feel right for them. Some teachers are then viewed as mentors, to whom learners can turn, in confidence if need be, to be shown how to succeed.

### **Preparation for life and laying the foundations for success**

Good, systematic Character and Values education, delivered in bite-size chunks over a number of years, helps to create the foundation for participants' ongoing achievements.

The process continually allows children and young people to discover important aspects about themselves, especially as their mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual capabilities are explored and evolve. The enlightenment and inner strengths they gain, affecting all aspects of their daily lives, can extend boundaries and drive their performance to new levels of success, individually and collectively.

Authoritative research worldwide shows that Values Education improves the quality of teaching and promotes collaboration and the sharing of best practices. Many a time those teaching, guiding and mentoring learners have been very pleasantly surprised when they have remained open minded about what their students may be capable of and what they take responsibility for. This important attitude allows for exciting successes to mount up and plenty of progress to be made while young people attend to all aspects of themselves in informed ways, making mistakes and exercising resilience and determination to overcome.

### **A personal triumphs - or CV - exercise**

A CV is often considered a marketing document designed to get an individual invited to an all-important interview, which is a stepping stone towards a goal. The document directly reflects a person's character and values.

Depending upon the age and abilities of the participants, this exercise is not strictly about preparing a CV but rather about individuals or groups preparing a short brochure to identify and celebrate their 'Character and Values' efforts and achievements, not only for grades and academic qualifications.

It may be done before embarking on a phase of a course that cultivates personal attributes, for example, via Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and Citizenship lessons, and after a time interval, such as a few weeks, months or terms, in order to demonstrate and help individuals recognise just how much hard work and personal development has taken place over that period - and what to aspire to next.

The learners are invited to create a 1- or 2-page colour brochure that reflects the very best characteristics about them and some recent successes.

The individual or groups consider what they have achieved and their skills and positive attributes that have contributed to their success.

They need to think about the layout of their brochure and attractive use of graphics, along with some useful headings, short pieces of text and some pictures.

For example:

- They could identify the personal qualities and skills they now have that have enabled them to make a positive difference to someone or a situation.
- They could include photographs of an award ceremony or other aspects of their success.
- They could include photographs of them taking part in community work.

Participants are encouraged to think about what accomplishments, strengths and qualities make them stand out from the crowd and what is impressive about what they have achieved.

The exercise can be repeated after a while:

- to remind participants how they have progressed and the targets they have hit since the last 'CV brochure' was made
- to help them identify any areas of weakness in personal make-up or skills that they would like to work on, such as developing more confidence, doing things a little further outside their comfort zones, building resilience and overcoming setbacks or challenges
- to increase their qualifications and expand their experiences
- to promote high expectations and further their abilities to succeed in their future endeavours
- to extend the scope of their community spirit
- to give them direction in life and motivate them to meet fresh goals.