

Moral and Human Values Education

Rejieli Racule

Moral and Human values education at both primary and secondary level has been a new priority area for all staff of the Fiji Curriculum Development and Advisory Services Unit since June 1995. This development is a result of growing concern in Fiji about deteriorating moral standards and the increase in crime. It also seeks to compensate for a perceived decline in parental attention to children's affective development.

A Booklet has already been produced, and the following 'Preamble' clearly explains the background to and the goals of this 'across the curriculum' initiative.

Preamble

The need to re-emphasise the teaching of moral and human values in the schools is of great importance. This is because of the current situation that is affecting our youths. For example, because of the economic situation, many parents are working to provide for their families' needs. As a result, in most cases, pre-school children are left in the care of house-girls and school children are left on their own, unsupervised most of the time, as parents are still at work when the children get home. Many parents are often too tired after work or too busy catching up with chores or have other evening commitments, so that there is little time for parental guidance or family talk. Children therefore are often not made aware of human and moral values that will help to develop them into good citizens.

Many young people, including those who did well in examinations, are unemployed. The crime rate is increasing and, sad to say, involving young people who thus begin a life of crime right from the start of their youth. When caught, they land in gaol and henceforth scar their future. It is because of this and the general lack of knowledge about values in life and the negative attitudes and behaviour so prevalent among our young people today, that has prompted the Ministry of Education to re-emphasise

instruction on moral and human values in schools.

This course of instruction, therefore, has been developed at the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education for use in schools, to ensure that students are educated in moral and human values. By this, it is hoped that our young people will be nurtured to become citizens who will practise and uphold these values which are so very important in the building of a happy, harmonious family, community, country and nation.

(From 'Moral and Human Values Education for Schools' Fiji Ministry of Education, Fiji, 1995)

Content

The content of the curriculum is in the form of 41 themes - one for each week of the school year. Examples of these themes are

- kindness and caring
- humility
- relationships

The themes and strategies are aimed at helping students to develop the necessary skills and acquire the habit of practising the values as part of their everyday living so that they become responsible, caring and upright people.

Strategies

Three approaches to delivering the course content are being promoted, namely

1. **Direct Teaching** of the theme, for up to 15 minutes, three to four times a week. The booklet provides potential resource material for such 'lessons', including stories, songs and poems.
2. **An Integrated Approach**, whereby the theme may be communicated in any subject of the curriculum.

3. **Indirect Teaching**, whereby students' attention is focussed on the week's theme through whole-school or individual class activities, such as assemblies and 'form' meetings.

In-Servicing

Fiji has established trial schools in the Suva area so that resource material and strategies can be tried out and revisions made and communicated to all schools.

In addition, a series of in-service courses for head teachers and principals is being conducted throughout the country. Apart from familiarising senior personnel with the background, goals, content and strategies of the curriculum, the need for teachers themselves to be positive role models is given considerable emphasis.

Reactions

Reactions to overt attention being given to moral/values education from principals/head teachers and from the community have been highly favourable. In the past, these crucial aspects of children's education were only part of the hidden/informal curriculum and, as such, the impact has not been unsatisfactory.

In addition, the involvement of all curriculum development personnel, whatever their subject, has been highly successful in showing that an integrated approach to delivering vital curriculum content can and does work.

Readers interested in obtaining copies of the 'Human and Moral Values Education Booklet' may do so by writing to : The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Marela House, Suva, FIJI.

* * * *