

WHY FLUENCY IN VALUES MATTERS AT SCHOOL

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In pursuit of a better world

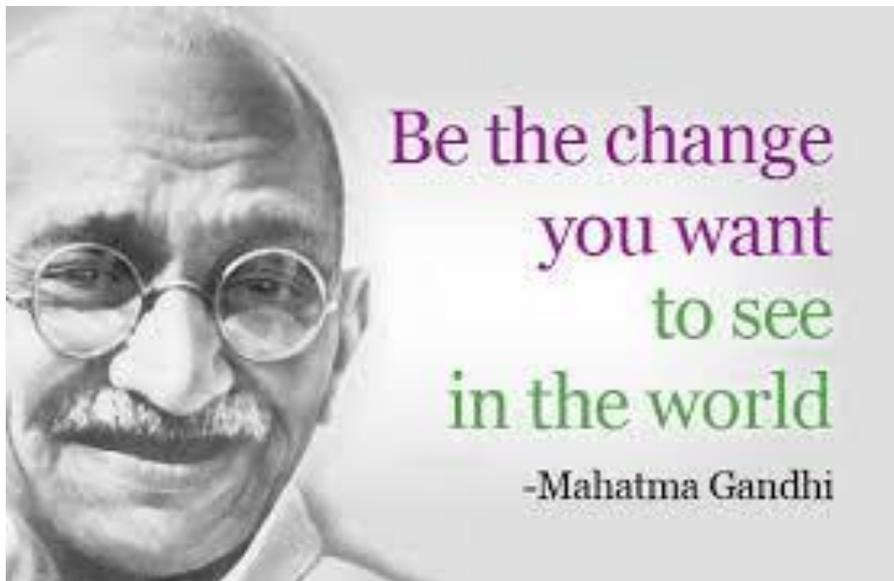
The theme of this conference is:

Why Values Matter

The Power of Purpose and Values: The Path to a Better World

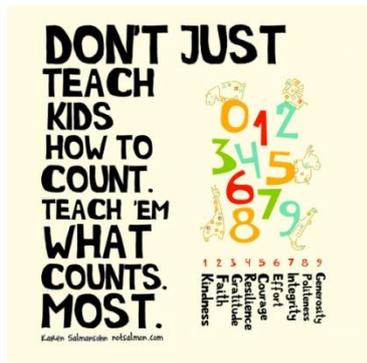
Values stand at the heart of decision-making by human beings. Values are the deeply held principles, ideals and beliefs that people hold or adhere to when making decisions. Individually and collectively we are facing profound, tough choices and need well considered values to advance and create the best and most responsible lifestyles and route maps.

If we truly want a better world then this purpose needs to galvanise the necessary actions to turn this ambitious aspiration into reality ... and this starts with individuals. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."



Individuals express their values through their personal behaviours, while organisations (in the broadest sense, including governments, corporations, public services, institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educational establishments and families) express their values through their cultural behaviours. Therefore, to develop pathways to a better world, attention needs to focus on the human dimension and especially the understanding and appreciation of how values drive individuals and the impacts from values-led organisations, the latter being a reflection of the underlying values of their leaders, present and past.

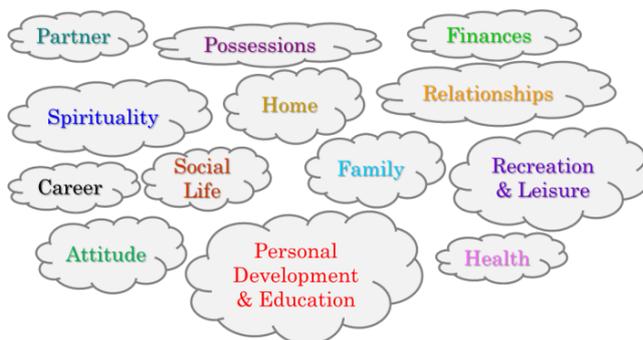
Developing a fluency in values



The American columnist, Bob Talbert said, *“Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching them WHAT COUNTS, is best.”*

Authoritative international research shows that values education:

- is essential to effective schooling
- positively impacts all the important educational measures
- is a worldwide, contemporary phenomenon
- fits well with updated brain and pedagogical research, and
- is a means to holistic student and teacher wellbeing.



Values Literacy – The concept of VALUES LITERACY could be considered as individuals' understanding and knowledge about a wide spectrum of values and their ability to choose and skilfully apply appropriate values within different contexts in real-life situations.

The impacts from developing character strengths, underpinned with thoughtfully chosen values (sometimes referred to as non-cognitive skills) are at least as important to the future happiness and life chances of young people as they are to their academic achievements. The holistic process of values education progressively nurtures in participants, qualities that enable them to take responsibility for their decisions and better shape their own destinies while also reaching out to and supporting others along the way.

The evolutionary pathway – different by design

By any standards, our world is in a mess. We need to do things differently, as epitomised by the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, a bold and potentially transformative initiative to shift the world onto a considerably more sustainable and resilient path.

(See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.)

Our trajectories to a better world need to be different, by design, with purposeful transformation and change contributing to the desired evolution.

Change – This implies a different way of *doing*. To achieve a better world, we need to explore how we can do things for the better for ourselves as individuals, for our relationships, for organisations, for society generally and for the environment. This entails examining activities and their impacts from a range of perspectives in order to achieve more quality-enhancing practices, more enlightened ways of operating, and being more efficient and productive while taking on board the need to do things in more sustainable, eco-friendly ways.

Transformation – This is about a different way of *being*. This will entail changes or shifts that go to the heart of our beliefs, values and assumptions. For beneficial transformation to occur, we must be open to a new future, recognise that we need to let go of practices that have not and are not serving us well, learn from our mistakes and have the courage to change our behaviours, both as individuals and as organisations. Transformation will inevitably result in some fundamentally different governance, systems and structures.

Evolution – As Charles Darwin recognised, evolution is *a state of continuous transformation and change*. In terms of advancing to a better world, the required evolution can occur only when individuals and organisations are prepared to embark on the altruistic journey of continuous transformation and change. This calls for vision, the right attitude, a commitment to continuous learning and development and qualities such as trust, adaptability, openness, transparency, excellence, innovation and magnanimity in order to be able to adjust constantly the values, beliefs and behaviours of individuals and organisations so as to create the conditions conducive to achieving what will inevitably be goals in a moving landscape.

To approach the future differently and more beneficially means that a key agent of change – human beings – must “grow up” in a cultural sense and think, make decisions and act wisely and in more informed, sophisticated and appropriate ways, courageously recognising the complexities of the roads ahead. In our increasingly globalized world, we need to be aware of and sensitive to purpose and its power, the breadth and enormity of changes taking place and needed in many different contexts, and interrelationships between all members of the human family and all other living things on this planet that we share.

V-A-L-U-E-S prompts

V	Vision
A	Attitude
L	Love
U	Understanding
E	Education
S	Service

The journey towards a truly healthy future in which all can flourish poses far-reaching, values-laden questions applicable to every aspect of our lives. As young people mature, they will become more aware of the need to delve deeply into themselves to determine the base for their choices, be they associated in specific contexts with individuals, religions, politics, businesses, science, technology, healthcare, the environment or indeed any other pertinent topic.

The VALUES letters can act as a simple framework for school-aged citizens to start creatively considering the importance and significance of morality, issues and concerns so as to gain insights and different perspectives and identify personal and collective skills, capacities and learning required to make life-affirming choices and take matters forward in worthwhile ways in these demanding and dynamic times. For example, these dimensions and factors might come under scrutiny:

- * V – VISION – for individuals, collective entities, the world; innovative paradigms
- * A – ATTITUDE – positive and negative effects; management of emotions
- * L – LOVE – connecting with people; setting them up for success; respect
- * U – UNDERSTANDING – people’s motivations, goals, ambitions; compassion
- * E – EDUCATION – holistic, whole-person development; lifelong learning
- * S – SERVICE – giving time, talents, experience etc to make positive differences

It’s important to appreciate that one person’s core values can be very different from another’s because they are a function of the diversity of upbringing, personality, culture, context, including time and place, etc.

For example, the values driving a young child will be different from those of an adolescent and they will be different from those of an adult and for each such group, they will be being moulded and shaped by their own personality as well as their culture and location in the world.

Quality leadership



Looking into leadership helps prepare young people for the real world and taking responsibility for their own decisions. Exploration could centre around these four scenarios and three domains (personal, internal and external):

- * LEADING SELF – know thyself; internal development; external expression
- * LEADING OTHERS – individuals; personal development; external engagement
- * LEADING ORGANISATIONS – members; internal culture; external interactions
- * LEADING SOCIETY – citizens; internal characteristics; external practices

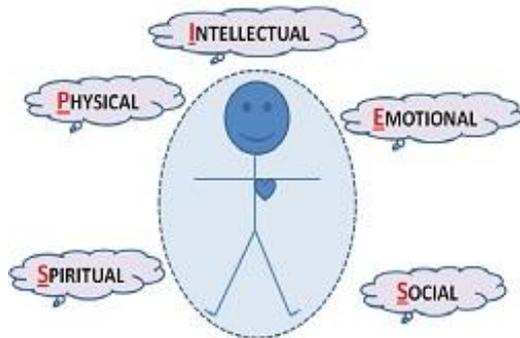
Trust has been badly eroded during our lifetimes, perhaps with the weakening of traditional moral guideposts. Leadership, in all aspects of our lives, needs to change in order to improve the quality of our choices and what is required to lead effectively organisations and ultimately nations along the best possible pathways in an increasingly complex moral landscape to a better world.

We need to see the big picture and continuously work towards cultural wellbeing that supports the greatest good.

Historically many moral quandaries have been polarized by what individuals consider is right or wrong but going forward, we need to appreciate more deeply, the full complexity of the challenges humanity faces and embrace with creative thinking, all the dimensions involved and dig down to get a better understanding of the interplay of all the distinct elements in order to learn how best to address each multi-faceted dilemma.

Progress is often viewed as an onward and upward trajectory of increasing individuality and material achievement but as the “17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development” illustrate, we need to develop capacities to explore and advance in more responsible and fulfilling ways. This may require shifts from “I” to “we” and from “What’s in it for me?” to “What’s in it for us?”

Conclusion



A values-based approach to the education of young citizens-in-the-making draws out the best in them, laying the foundations for lifelong learning, uncovering their strengths and weaknesses, continuously leveraging their skills and knowledge so that they can maximise their potential, fully flourish and capitalise on their passions, interests, ambitions and talents to find a purpose in life, happiness and fulfilment. Practice may not make perfect but it helps!

Both the present and our concept of where the future might take us are challenging. We all need to grow and develop. The evolving chapters of our human story will be shaped by how well we understand the power of values and how wisely we use them, all the while doing our best to grasp the realities of the interplay of the many factors and dimensions involved in each scenario.

Explicitly and systematically embedding high quality values education into the holistic upbringing of young people develops growth mindsets and principled thinking and is conducive to the emerging generation being better equipped and informed to address the questions that are arising as we endeavour to uncover and develop suitably responsible pathways forward to ultimately shape a better world for the good of all.

Rosemary Dewan