

Value-Based Education and Teacher Education in Mauritius: Analysing the Pertinence of Value-based Education at School to Reconstruct Society

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Abstract

Since independence in 1968, Mauritius invested massively in Education considering that its people are the major asset for development. However, despite economic success, Mauritius is vulnerable to market changes which brought its alignment to a globally competitive economy. Equally, a realignment of human resources constitutes the social infrastructure for a successful new economic agenda (MOEHR, 2008). This reinforces a revisit of education to vehicle the country's growth prospects in line with a knowledge society and an Indian Ocean hub.

Government's impetus is to ensure that education is for all, as stated in the Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan (EHRSP, 2008). At the level of curriculum development, focus is on values and skills for the personal growth and critical thinking of children. In 2006, curricular reforms in pre-primary, primary and secondary education have been initiated (MOEHR, 2006). Stress is now laid on the child's whole development through knowledge about values, human rights and diversity in a composite culture.

An integrated, inclusive and holistic approach is adopted in teaching and learning. Science components are integrated in Languages and values in Mathematics. Further, the national vision of education aims at empowering young people to become autonomous while maintaining moral integrity and sense of caring for the society members (MOEHR, 2006). To this end, schools will act as cornerstones of such a value-driven education. Paramount is the teacher's role in value-based empowerment of learners. Ultimately, the curriculum will play a key role in societal reconstruction.

This paper analyses how far the Teacher Education programme at secondary level equips teachers with skills to deliver a value-based education in order to respond to the new curriculum and emergence of a new society. Qualitative data will help to discuss the evolution of education and the need for value-based education for social stability. To this end, the role of teachers as leaders and school leaders will also be analysed. Document analysis, questionnaires and interviews will gather data for the research which will pave the

way for policy makers to include value-based education in teacher education programmes.

INTRODUCTION

A Case for Value-based Education in Mauritius

Mauritius is a country that is devoid of mineral resources and limited in size. Consequently, it has since its independence in 1968 the succeeding governments have been investing massively in Education, because it has been realised that people are our only asset that can ensure its prosperity and development. In fact education has been the leitmotiv for the economic success and a standard of living that matches top level developing countries. However, Mauritius has been in some ways victim of its economic success and observers are keen to point out the vulnerability of Mauritius in front of changes in the global market which has brought the country to align its economic orientations to a globally competitive economy. Equally, there is a need to realign its human resources which constitute the social infrastructure for the success of the new economic agenda (MOEHR, 2008). This reinforces the idea to revisit our education as a vehicle to shape the country's growth prospects. In fact, Mauritius ambitions at building a knowledge society and to become the regional hub in the Indian Ocean region. This will of course require changes in education that will enable the country to respond to internationally in terms of an education that is relevant and of high quality.

Much is being done by the government to constantly improve the quality and standards of education. In Mauritius, as from January 2005, education is not only free from primary to tertiary but is also compulsory for all until the age of 16. As stated in the mission objectives of the Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan (EHRSP, 2008), government's impetus is to ensure that learning opportunities are accessible to all.

At the level of curriculum design and development focus is on values and skills to further the personal growth of children and to enhance their critical and reflective thinking and encourage them to innovate and to adapt to changes in an increasingly globalised environment. In 2006, following a national debate on curriculum, a strategy for curricular reforms in the pre-primary primary and secondary education has been initiated (MOEHR, 2006). Stress is now laid on the whole development of the learner rather on the cognitive development of the child. The curriculum includes among others knowledge about the promotion of values, democracy, human rights, diversity in a composite culture. In order to achieve these objectives, the curriculum adopts an integrated, inclusive and holistic approach. This brought a shift from a subject-centred to a child-centred, from a compartmentalised to an integrated approach in teaching and learning. The different domains of learning are integrated in a cross-cultural dimension. Components of science are integrated in language just like values are in Mathematics and Science. Further, the national vision of education aims at empowering young people to become autonomous individuals while maintaining their moral integrity and sense of caring for the members of society

(MOEHR, 2006). To this end, the schools will be the cornerstone of such a value-driven education. Paramount is the role a teacher plays in leading and empowering learners of next generations with a value-based education. Ultimately the curriculum will be called to play a key role in societal reconstruction.

Rationale of this Study

Observations in Mauritius show that many social ills are products of a decline in values. If we aspire to live in a better society, everything possible should be done to reverse the escalation of the problems. One of the ways to achieve it is through the channel of education, more specifically a value-based education in order to empower the young generation as future nation builders of Mauritius who would otherwise fall in the vicious circle of societal plagues. To this effect, the elements of a value-based education can be found not only in the subject matter, but in the learning styles which are employed, the scheduling of the classroom, extracurricular activities, and parental involvement. Consequently, as quoted by Yogi (2009), the Value-Based education is therefore organized so as to secure the fullest possible development of body, mind and heart of the child.

Value-based education is highly needed in our Mauritian society because our lives have become more miserable. As Yogi (2009) argues: the quantity of education has considerably increased, but the quality has decreased., the number of educated people has reached at a high level, but murder, hatred, and selfishness have spread out like wildfire everywhere., many institutions are opened, but only few civilized people are produced., degrees are available for all, but the dignity has gone down., trained people are produced from many institutions, but sincere people are very few., many books are written and much research is done and professional achievements are attained, but humanity is threatened.

Through this study, the researcher is trying to analyse how far the Teacher Education programme in Mauritius is doing justice to equip teachers and children with the required skills in value-based education, that will enable them to be responsive to the aspirations of the new curriculum and help in the emergence of a new society built on solid blocks of humanity, wisdom, mental health, peace and genuine well-being.

It is expected that this research will provide policy makers and the Teacher Training Institute with evidence based information and make a solid case for value-based education in our teacher education programmes. This study will also provide a data base to educators so that they can include elements of research findings in their lessons. Further, it will be an opportunity for educators to learn about new techniques, interactive pedagogy to integrate values in our education.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to analyse the pertinence of value-based education at school for

society reconstruction.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:-

1. To analyse the perceptions of Teacher Education for a value-based education
2. To evaluate how far teachers and children are empowered through a value-based curriculum in Mauritius
3. To explore the role of school leaders in the infusion of a value-based education

Research Questions

The questions that will be answered through appropriate research tools are:-

1. How far does Teacher Education in Mauritius perceive a value-based education?
2. What is the role of the role of school leaders in the infusion of a value-based education?
3. To what extent are teachers and children empowered through a value-based curriculum in Mauritius?

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of the study, the review of literature has been carried out mostly through document analysis of national curriculum frameworks as shown in the following sub-paragraphs.

Values in the Curriculum of Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Schools

Pre-primary Curriculum

The National Curriculum Framework Pre-Primary (3-5 years) (NCFPP, 2010) has been developed within the broader perspective of the National Curriculum Framework for the Republic of Mauritius. It is in line with Government vision as spelt out in the policy document 'Towards a Quality Curriculum' (TQC, 2006) from which three national curriculum goals are connected to values:

Goal 1 : To promote an all-round development of the individual – physical, intellectual, social and emotional – leading to a balanced, active and productive lifestyle.

Goal 5 : To promote equity and social justice by providing opportunities for every learner according to his/her needs, interests and potential.

Goal 6 : To foster national unity by promoting in the individual understanding of and respect for our multicultural heritage.

Further, one of the 6 areas of learning which is entitled 'Personal Social Emotional Development (PSED)' caters for care and respect for self and others, spiritual development and sharing and relating to others.

Primary Curriculum

Chapter eight of the National Curriculum (NCFP, 2006) which is entitled 'Values Education' is exclusively devoted to the introduction of values in the primary education. Though the inculcation of values and attitude has always been implicitly present at primary level, the curriculum reform gives us the opportunity to build an explicit, structured and child-centred programme which will be judiciously included across the primary curriculum.

The purpose of Values Education is to promote good citizenship. Emphasis has been placed on the development of social values, thinking skills and problem solving skills; together with the building up of the children's character, behaviour and self-confidence. It will provide opportunities for them to interact with peers and adults, to become reliable citizens and to know what they want to achieve in life.

In the (NCFP, 2006), the aims of Values Education are to make the child:

- Value her/his identity and be prepared to play an active role as a citizen.
- Develop her/his character, have self confidence and a positive attitude in life.
- Develop empathy, good relationships with others and be aware of her/his responsibilities.
- Appreciate and respect for the natural environment.

As a result, the aims of the learning areas such as civic values, living values, child's responsibility, environmental care and awareness is to develop identity and prepare the child to play an active role as citizen. Examples of the components of learning area are given below:

Civic Values

- Myself – self identity: I am a special and unique person
- My family – father and mother, sister/brother
- My friends – being a friend
- I am citizen of Mauritius – the national anthem, the Mauritian flag, the head of state and the Prime-Minister. Appreciating that we are citizens of the Indian Ocean and member of the Indian Ocean Commission: Learning about our friends living in Comoros, Madagascar.
- Developing character, self esteem, confidence and positive attitude.

Living Values

- What I like/what I dislike
- What is good/what is wrong
- What is fair/what is unfair
- Developing positive attitude
- Setting goals and doing my best.
- Developing empathy, good relationship and responsibility

Child's Rights and Responsibility

- My own responsibilities as a child – taking care of myself, taking care of my personal belongings, taking care of my school clothes
- My responsibilities at home – helping, listening, playing together
- My responsibilities in the classroom and at school: studying, being attentive, playing and working cooperative
- Right to express his/her opinions and other rights of the child

Environmental Care and Awareness

- The natural environment in my locality (Pets, animals, birds, trees, flowers)
- Having a plant at home
- Cleanliness - Using the dustbin to throw litter
- Good use of water (e.g. closing the tap).
- Towards my parents - towards the elderly - towards my teacher - towards my friends
- Developing appreciation and respect of nature

Secondary Curriculum

In the secondary curriculum (NCFS, 2010), there is explicit mention of the importance of values through the sub-paragraphs such as learning areas namely Positive Personal and Societal Attitudes and Values, learning Sociology, Peace Education, Life Skills, Emphasising the Holistic Nature of Learning which clearly stipulate that secondary schools must cater for the holistic. Further, the teacher is considered to be a model for his/her students.

Ministry of Education Human Resource Strategy Plan

The mission statement of the National Education Strategic Plan (EHRSP, 2010-20) aims is to ensure learning opportunities accessible to all, provide learners with values and skills to further their personal growth, enhance their critical and exploratory thinking and encourage them to innovate and to adapt to changes in an increasingly globalised environment. In

addition, in the executive summary, it is recognized that the ultimate objective of any educational enterprise is to improve student achievement so that individuals may fulfil their personal aspirations for a sound, value-based lifestyle and also become positive contributing members of society.

Values in Teacher Education Programmes

To a certain extent, value-based education has been introduced in teacher education through the teacher training programmes and the strategic plan of the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), sole teacher training institute of the country. These are discussed in the following sections 2.21 -2.22.

MIE Teacher Education Programme Handbooks

Emphasis on Values teaching by teachers or trainee teachers who come for professional training are demonstrated by components of the programme handbook . These are as follows:

Teacher's Diploma in Early Childhood Education

Module : Expressive, creative and Aesthetic Development which contains Human values

Teacher's Diploma Primary

Module : Values and citizenship education

Teacher's Diploma Secondary Full Time

Module: Foundations of Education which has a Content: Moral Education in a multi-cultural context

Module : Family and Society with content Development of family values

Module: Business Ethics and Consumer Education with Content: Moral development and moral reasoning

The Mauritius Institute of Education Strategic Plan

The MIE strategic plan (MIESP 2007-15) ensures that MIE teacher education programmes have been diversified to cater for the emerging needs of the education sector which also includes special education needs, environmental work and education and value-based education. Further, the plan highlights core values and principles which guide the Mauritius institute of Education to achieve its objectives. They are as follows:

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Rigour and professionalism
- Service to our clients
- Fairness, equality and inclusiveness
- Team spirit
- Respect for diversity

- Freedom, creativity and innovation

International Practices of Value-based Education

It is important to find out some practical ways to apply Value-Based Education. As such, it can be done by starting with junior classes, developing a strong commitment of all academic institutions, encouraging parents for their persistent support, producing more trained and dedicated teachers, establishing supportive administrative teams and the like. As argued by Yogi (2009), although it is quite challenging to apply Value-Based Education (VBE), at present in Nepal, a few schools and colleges have been working on the promotion and implementation of VBE formally or informally. A few major obstacles to the application of VBE are: lack of good governance, unhealthy education environments, pressure of private money-making institutions, and unstable political situations. Nevertheless, they have been working constantly for VBE to restore values in society and impart good lessons of humanity.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Apart from the information collected from document analysis, interviews were conducted with 3 categories of participants in order to allow a triangulation of data. They are as follows:

- MIE Academic staff (lecturers) with long experience in teacher education (between 15-30 years)
- School leaders (Head Masters)
- Teachers

Participants	No. of participants	Length of professional experience
Lecturers working in teacher education (MIE)	3	15-25 years of service
School leaders	2	15-25 years of service
Teachers	3	15 years

Modality of the Planning and Intervention

As a first stage of the study, the documents of various national curriculum were examined thoroughly to identify and analyse every value-based component and contents. Face-to face interviews with the three categories of participants were conducted during the second round

of data collection.

Tools used in this study were:

- 1) National curriculum frameworks of the pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Mauritius
- 2) Interview grids using a set of open questions

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Lecturers (in Teacher Education) View:

Question 1: In general, what are the views held in Teacher Education presently at the MIE?

In Mauritius, every teacher education programme is composed of two components: subject didactics (teaching of the subject) and a more general type of education which involves issues in educational psychology, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, communication and school leadership and management. In this second component of teacher development, there is a possibility to introduce Value-based education as an option. Presently, in-service teachers and pre-service teachers (pre-primary, primary and secondary levels) are trained on issues of values through workshops and continuous professional development. Besides, Teacher education programme presented by programme coordinators ensures that the MIE teacher education programmes have currency (with respect to the global situation and needs of trainees) and relevancy with respect to trainees (teachers in training) and pupils in schools. A balance between theoretical (educational theories) and practical (teaching practices) approaches.

Question 2: Is there a case for value-based education in our Teacher Education programmes ? State at least 3 reasons.

There is a such a possibility due to the fact that we live in a country is multicultural and therefore exposed to various beliefs, cultures, values as compared to the European context. One example could be to have a core subject on what is VBE and how we can use it as knowledge. At the MIE, the approach to VBE is more project-based and is involved in a network of institutions in the Indian Ocean which work on values (based in Reunion island).

However, there might be no real reason for VBE since all education is value-based. As stated in the EHRSP, the philosophy of teacher education is value-based. Incidentally, the component of VBE should be there in terms of ethos, teacher's professionalism but not as a specific subject. As such, knowledge has a value-based component because for example, Science teaches us value of life, respect for nature and just like Economics explains the

importance of corporate social responsibility. Each field of knowledge is symbolic of value. In addition, at the heart of the teaching as a profession, there is a demonstration of values by the care for students, discipline in class. If we refer to critical pedagogy, students are perceived as contributors to teaching and learning at the same level as teachers. In sessions of collaborative work where we are valuing each student, much emphasis is put on their character development as mentioned by Gandhi and Aristotle. Further, Teachers are ethical leaders where society refers to them as role models. However, there may be a clash between the values of a teacher (private self) and societal values (public self). Another point is that VBE needs to be sprinkled over the teacher education programmes but not specific in order to allow a Mathematics or English teacher to use opportunities available in their subjects to teach values. It could be social values, cultural values, life values. Universal values (honesty, peace) is taught by a teacher, who are the benefactors? Students need to be empowered to discriminate between right and wrong for himself, others and to engage on the right path.

Question 3: What could be some of the strategies that could be used to infuse value-based education in Teacher Education?

There is a need to carry out an analysis of different subjects taught in the teacher education programmes to look for opportunities to infuse values in doing so, when imbued with values, the subject gains value. In addition, a general introduction of VBE as part of the professional standards for all teacher education programmes across the MIE. Besides, we are in a competitive driven and results oriented society, the teacher should come to understand a subject but also a human being. Issues of values are ignored as they are more of qualitative standards.

Question 4: What would be the incidence of Value-Based Education in teacher training towards the reconstruction of society?

Changes made in the curriculum might take some time but as an institution we can use the models applied in other countries. There is a need to teach holistically, school leadership and the philosophy of the school can both help to reshape the values the school want to reflect and children to adopt. One teacher cannot change the face of the school. School leaders' role is crucial.

School Leaders View:

There is a need for value-based education because the child learns everything quickly including the bad habits. Today, the bad is triumphing over the good side of human being. Just like a tree is growing, a child needs to be guided and corrected for his own welfare and

when he becomes an adult, he will transmit these values to the next generation. In their capacity of school leaders, headmasters ensure that Children are sensitised towards values through morning assemblies where topics of punctuality, good manners, respect for the elderly, honesty, tolerance, citizenship are regularly discussed and followed up by class teachers.

Teachers View:

VBE is strongly needed in our education as values are degenerating day by day. Education starts at home where parents play a fundamental role in developing values in their children. Otherwise children will be driven by their own will. VBE can be implemented in many ways: one session of discussion of values per week through film projections followed by debates in class. Workshops, talks on specific value-based topics can be organised by school leaders as well as training offered to teachers to equip them with required skills. Teacher-leaders in schools demonstrate a pastoral role in calling parents and children for appropriate counselling. In extreme cases, sanctions must be applied at the level of marks computation. In some chapters of subject areas such as travel and tourism, communication, there are opportunities to integrate a Value-based component.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the study, value-based education seems to meet different opinions depending on the exposures and nature of the profession. While in teacher education, much needs to be done to infuse VBE in various teacher education programmes, lecturers seem sceptical about the possibility of introducing a specific VBE module. However, for teachers and school leaders who are directly exposed to young people everyday, they cultivate a positive outlook towards VBE.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Responses from a sample of only 8 participants were studied which is a small sample for a comprehensive study designed to analyse the pertinence of value-based education in Mauritius. Additionally, in this feasibility study, only qualitative analysis has been performed, so further studies are needed to establish a particular theory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From findings, there must be more involvement of all educational stakeholders parents, teachers, school leaders, government in order to ensure that we are starting to walk on the path of a VBE in Mauritius. Sensitization campaigns must be made as well as more interactive pedagogy encouraged amongst youngsters at school. Training at all levels is

mandatory.

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