

Living Values international Train-the-Trainers workshop held at Global Retreat Centre (Oxford, UK) from 27 July to 1 August 2005

Summary Report



From 27 July to 1 August 2005, the Global Retreat Centre (Oxford) kindly hosted the ninth Living Values international Train-the-Trainers workshop.

The 47 participants came from all over the world - Armenia, Aruba, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, UK and the USA.

The participants learned skills to create a values-based atmosphere, took part in values activities and were encouraged by stories of the impact that Living Values is having in the world of education.

The main points of some of the sessions are below.



Introductions from Georgia and Rwanda

Values Awareness

Participants were invited to consider what 'values' means to them, by reflecting on special memories, important moments in their life, scenes in nature, etc. They shared their experiences and came up with the following definitions:

- *elements that compose our character and personality, and that describe the workings of our soul.*
- *inner guidance system that keeps you aligned with your beliefs and who you are*
- *fundamental aspects of human life ... expressions for living*
- *harmony of self and others with the whole world.*
- *spiritual energy 'in' us, which gives us our behaviour to deal with others*
- *fundamentals which differentiate between humans and animals*
- *values are the wings; and the height we reach depends on the number of values we have*
- *our beliefs; the foundations from which we enter into relationships; 'prisms' through which we build relationships*
- *group of emotions that push you to 'do' or 'do not'*
- *inner feelings learned from family and community*
- *dimensions for developing and opening yourself*
- *guidelines that show the 'way for living', and give us stability, security and trust in life*
- *ways of being and feeling through relationships, in different cultures/societies*
- *lead us to recognise our true self*
- *essence of life!*

Creating a values-based atmosphere – Qualities of the Educator

“There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.”
Albert Einstein

When implementing a values-based process of learning, the most important factor to an educator’s success is the degree to which she/he can model Living Values. Also, it is important to:

- recognise that you are an ‘OK person’
- acknowledge your physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual self
- daydream
- forget past memories (or present situations) of negativity - by ‘anchoring’ oneself in a positive frame of mind

Other tips were:

- remember that silence is a good friend to have around ... be quiet with your thoughts – for two minutes at least three times a day
- care for yourself
- forget the myths that (1) hard work, a good job, and much money will lead you to happiness, and that (2) happiness exists totally outside ourselves
- remember that students tend to do what we do, rather than what we say, hence the importance of the educator being a role model



Translating the vision of an education for the future

Creating a values-based atmosphere – Rekindling the Dream

‘atmosphere’ comes from *atma* (soul) and *sphere* (surrounding area).

All great achievements start with a vision. This session highlighted the importance of using imagination and creative visualisation. Participants were asked to imagine themselves at an ideal school. What did it look like? What did it feel like? What were the children like? What were the teachers like? Responses were shared, from which it was agreed that the requirements for a values-based atmosphere could be categorised into five key elements - all children want to be **loved, understood, respected, valued** and **safe**.

From a child’s perspective, participants reflected on, “How I would like adults to be”:

- active
- creative
- enthusiastic
- give guidance
- happy
- honest
- humorous
- in contact with nature
- just
- kind
- listen
- loving (unconditional)
- open/available
- patient
- playful
- respectful
- responsible
- safe
- sensitive
- sincere/credible
- soft
- strong
- tolerant
- understanding
- unlimited
- valued
- wise



Generosity – a rose for everyone

The LVEP Theoretical Model and the Process of Developing Values

The LVEP Theoretical Model shows that every child needs to feel **loved, understood, respected, valued** and **safe**, and indicates the attitude needed for each educator to encourage positive behaviour in their students.

After exchanging their personal experiences, the participants discussed the elements which help to make a positive school ethos and the elements making a negative school ethos. It was suggested that educators sometimes need to take risks in order to develop values in their school.

Values-Based Discipline

The first three letters of ‘Discipline’: D ~ ‘Dignity’, I ~ ‘Integrity’ and S ~ ‘Stop, and think before you act.’

It is important to appreciate youngsters for who they are.

From personal, successful experiences, participants determined that some of the main requirements for disciplining in a value-based manner were: respect, staying calm, time-out, accept/acknowledge anger, support amongst colleagues, clear boundaries, creating rules with the children (collaborative rule-making).

Parenting

In today's world, parents are not always ready to co-operate with schools, perhaps because they themselves had bad experiences when they were students or because they are too busy. Teachers do not see parents as often as they would like to – and when they do come to school, they are often angry or too demanding.

Based on positive experiences and the ways that each educator managed to keep parents interested in their children's work and in the life of the school, participants talked about their experiences in their country. They suggested:

- *regular meetings of parents and teachers, as a part of the community*
- *both mother and father should attend*
- *bi-annual gatherings for parents – to include values experiences, activities, etc.*
- *practising an open-door policy – parents should have the right to see teachers any time*
- *parents' week – parents come and do the teaching (this may include cultural exchange – food, songs, stories, costumes, etc.)*
- *international Thanksgiving*
- *Grandparents' Day*
- *re-integrating families into the community (currently being done in Bangladesh)*



Co-operation 3 to 7-year-olds at play

Parenting skills were emphasised:

- *importance of play and 'us' time*
- *building positive behaviour through praise*
- *balance of discipline and love*
- *active listening*
- *establishing a ritual*
- *thinking before saying, "No!"*
- *time to be*
- *staying stable and loving, and communicating*
- *'time-out' to think and communicate (steps for conflict resolution)*

Educators need to live their values and get them across by being consistent. It is also important to create quality 'family time':

- *to live in the present = to be*
- *to create a responsibility for each member of a family*

Some people have different values – perhaps even based on material needs – however, we still have to keep trying, until we 'touch the values of the heart'.

Active Listening



An exercise in active listening

This was a highly interactive and experiential session, which used a variety of role-plays between pairs of participants to model various 'Stoppers and Blockers' of the listening process – such as ignoring, judging, giving too much advice, listening in complete silence (without giving feedback), etc. The speakers expressed their discomfort! From these situations, participants recognised how many bad habits there are that prevent effective communication.

Another term that was used to describe active listening was '**Landscape Listening**', for which participants created the following descriptions:

- *'feeling' another's thoughts and words*
- *listening with my heart open so wide, that my eyes, ears and mind embrace the spirited words, thoughts, feelings of my partner(s)*
- *listening is to harmonise and adjust oneself*
- *deep communication and sharing*
- *being in tune with the 'now' ... being in tune with the speaker*
- *listening is paying attention and giving advice when necessary*
- *to be in dialogue with dignity, responsibility, co-operation and harmony*
- *to feel the 'rhythm' of the moment and to 'go with the flow'*
- *to 'dance with a partner under magic music!'*
- *resembles a person 'dancing' with you; to behave like an angel as if you are flying in the sky*
- *harmony ... no conflict ... understanding*
- *empathy ... profound feeling ... be present ... oneness ... space*

- *'Ideal marriage!' ... shared dance ... joy of life*
- *interactive communication (when you do it well!) ... to try to understand and co-operate ... 'Free flight' together with a friend!*
- *internal and external 'congruence' ... listening is genuine understanding!*
- *listening is harmonising and almost 'fusing' together*
- *listening is being attentive, receiving signals, and responding*
- *paying attention to the other with love ... non-listening is always dangerous!*
- *all the senses – a journey through hearing, seeing, smelling, ...from outside, to deep inside*



Harmony - group work

Conflict Resolution

A useful introduction to this subject was a comment made by a participant concerning the exercise from the Active Listening session, who felt 'anger, surging out from inadequate listening', which could then lead to conflict! It was pointed out that anger is a 'secondary emotion' and that behind it lies a 'primary emotion' (such as hurt, fear, shame, insecurity), which triggers conflict. To deal with the conflict, one first has to deal with the emotions.

Using active listening and mediation:

- *communication is restored*
- *respect is reinforced*
- *co-operation can start again*
- *humility and hope are shared again*
- *it is a win-win process*

In this process, one also has to be aware of 'blockers and stoppers' (such as accusing, blaming, distracting, advising, taking sides, etc.).

A role-play demonstration used ineffective mediation - the conflict grew worse and extended to a third person.

The same role-play was re-enacted using successful conflict mediation, to demonstrate the following:

- *active listening of the students in conflict*
- *directing students to listen to each other actively*
- *no interruption or speaking in someone else's place*
- *encouraging the students to repeat what the other has just said*
- *to appreciate the ability to listen, communicate and find solutions themselves*
- *absolutely avoiding taking sides*

Participants said that they felt listened to at last and thus encouraged to express their feelings as valued persons. Mediating adult conflicts often needs deeper skills, organisation and training.

Conflict resolution is a values-based process – useful to guide angry students in a conflict to a co-operative mood, helping them to reach this goal by themselves. This is the most important aspect of mediation: to teach higher capacities of communication and how to deal with emotions by oneself.



Creativity: activity for 8 to 14-year-olds

Conclusions

The workshop introduced LVEP through a variety of experiential and participative activities, together with an exchange of best practices from everyone.

The evaluation session highlighted a deep appreciation of the rich inter-cultural exchanges and the time spent reflecting on professional and personal experiences and values; with the wish to return home and continue to put the joy of Living Values into practice.

Web-site: www.livingvalues.net