

CHAPTER 8: ETHICS IN EDUCATION: NACF REPORT, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON SCHOOLS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the implementation of recommendations from the Second National Anti-Corruption Summit held in March 2005, the National Anti-Corruption Forum (NACF) through the Support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) undertook an assessment of Ethics in Education and Training in Schools and Tertiary Institutions, in the provinces of Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West Provinces. The assessment which was undertaken by the Ethics Institute of South Africa informed the discussion for this session and the report was launched at this same session. This session was in the form of a panel discussion with presentations made by the following:

- Mr Enver Surty, Deputy Minister of Education;
- Ms K Callaghan, Schools Governors' Alliance; and
- Mr Dave Balt, National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa

CHAIRPERSON: PROFESSOR JONATHAN JANSEN: (Honorary Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand)

8.2 SETTING THE SCENE BY PROF JONATHAN JANSEN

What is it that we know about how students learn ethics and values? Is the problem that we face in society primarily a problem of curriculum? For a few moments I will argue that this is not the case. It is the South African tendency to ask: 'where is the module to address the problem?' This is wrong. By way of example, the reaction to the children that drowned on the KZN north-coast not so long ago was to suggest that swimming should be put into the curriculum. The primary problem we face regarding the moral issues of the day is not a curriculum problem; what we face is a problem of the curriculum of our lives – children learn about ethics and values by observing adult behaviour.

I know that the kind of husband my daughter will one day choose depends on how I loved her mother – not on a module of how to choose a life partner. What we need to recognize is that what children see in us, is the primary influence on how they behave. By way of example, many trainee-teachers become teachers because of important and powerful roles played by one or more teachers in their young lives and who they want to emulate.

What do my children see when they look at South African society today? They see the president of the leading party in South Africa on charges of corruption. What do they see, whether it is true or not, when another politician is accused of graft? I sit on behalf of the Minister on the Council of Educators; there I see long lists of people accused of the most heinous acts against our children. Nothing influences children's behaviour more powerfully than adult behaviour. What do children learn when they see that teachers are late, when the principle is absent? what do children learn when the classroom is over-crowded? What does a child learn when teachers have sexual relations with students?

You can tinker with the curriculum until you are blue in the face but it is the curriculum of life that is important. The students are watching us – what do children think of the curriculum of our lives? "The students are watching us" is a book by Ted Sizer and is recommended as far as ethics and values are concerned in children's lives.

The iconic picture in my generation is the picture of Antoinette Sithole running with Hector Pietersen - that was blazoned on our minds. The most iconic picture in my children's generation is the picture of

a Mozambiquan burning. Ethics is not simply the absence of wrong doing it is also the failure to speak out in the face of evil. I have been deeply disappointed by our political and religious leaders for not speaking out. Where are the voices that stood down the caspirs in the townships when I was a child? Merely saying that 'I did not steal' is insufficient. Do we speak out when there is wrongdoing? I have set out a few ideas of my own which can form part of the platform for further discussion.

8.3 PRESENTATION BY MR E SURTY: Deputy Minister of Education ²⁹

Prof Jansen has raised a number of issues and we have the responsibility to respond. A starting point is to look at the iconic picture of Hector Pietersen and to look at the struggle for freedom that the youth of the 1970s sought to bring about. That is the iconic picture that many of us can associate with. It is unfortunate that currently the global picture exists of South Africans being intolerant and being unable to deal with human interaction in a caring way.

What can we do differently other than to have a curriculum that embeds the values that are enshrined in our Constitution? What responsibility do we have as educators and as parents and as society to bring about change? To what do we attribute moral degeneration? Perhaps the starting point to learning is observation; children observe adults and try to emulate them. Therefore important role models and icons are there to produce ideal citizens. As Prof Jansen is asking; where is the leadership? What he is asking us to do is to reflect on where we have gone wrong.

1976 was the starting point for change and in 1996 we celebrated the South Africa Constitution. We celebrated our Constitution as the "birth certificate" of our new nation. It speaks to human dignity and among others regulates the power relationships between state and citizens and among citizens themselves. But if we do not understand the concept of the dignity of people we do not understand the values of and the purpose of the Constitution. It speaks about equality and it says to those noble teachers that equality is not merely a word written in the Constitution: it is the foundation stone of our democracy.

Those that struggled for our liberation are conscious of the transformation that is required to bring about the equality in the system of education. For our children to mature and to develop their abilities the depth and scope of the curriculum is worth nothing if our educators are not committed. The educators have to understand that they are being observed in terms of what they do and how they do it. They must have the ability to think critically and to be reflective in terms of students with divergent backgrounds.

When we speak of ethics we have to understand the importance of education as it begins at home and in the communities. What values do you pass onto your children before he or she goes to school? What kind of tolerance and what kind of decency as well as what kind of behaviour and contact do you demonstrate to your children as he or she is growing up? What role do the teachers play in their conduct and behaviour?

We are aware that there is abuse of women. We are aware that there is abuse amongst our educators. Why is does the South African Council of Education, that regulates the conduct of educators, take so long to act? Why has it not made a clear statement that we will not tolerate such conduct?

The content of the curriculum is very rich, but perhaps the approach and methodology is the problem. Can we influence the holistics of the learner in a way that he / she can assess information in different contexts? The Department of Education needs to look at these issues. Education and ethical conduct is the business of each one us in this forum, which represents the culmination of the endeavours to overcome and eradicate corruption.

²⁹ Mr E. Surty was, at the time of the Summit, the Deputy Minister of Education.

8.4 PRESENTATION BY MS K CALLAGHAN: Schools Governors' Alliance

Thank you to the organisers for inviting school governing body associations to participate in the panel discussions. I will comment on the Report on the "Ethics in Education" from the perspective of parents and public school governing bodies in particular.

At the outset we support the Report and its findings. The Report touches on the relevant role of Life Orientation (LO) in schools and the difference it can make in learners lives. We support the teaching of values in schools and the impact it can have on a learner's life. Life Orientation (LO) can make a difference to a child, but the influence of society and the environment where that child finds himself might not necessarily support the values being taught.

Is the programme achieving the outcomes?

Society is placing the responsibility on schools and educators to instil values in learners. So we come back to the question does LO make a difference in the life of a learner? The answer is yes if there is support of these values in the society where the learner finds himself. I need to quote from the Report: "The findings of this report indicate wide-ranging challenges that would have to be addressed in order to increase the efficacy of school education in general and specifically the values component of the LO programme.

Education is vital in the struggle to overcome poverty and in an endeavour to inculcate a sense of self respect and control in learners so that they are less prone to falling victim to criminal role models, thus perpetuating crime and other social ills. Quality education generally improves the character of individuals, making them more responsible citizens who are more capable of understanding their rights and their concomitant responsibilities. So we need to stand together as parents, civil society, and educators in order to prepare learners to become responsible citizens of the future.

We need to find a way of strengthening programmes being offered. Consultation must be ongoing with relevant stakeholders in education. Further, parents need to take up their role in their children's education.

Yesterday, Dr Ginwala said that at all levels of society we need to accept our responsibility for the ethics in society. Let's take up the challenge!

8.5 PRESENTATION BY MR D BALT: National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa

I quote from "The Ethics in Education Review" published in December 2007 and sponsored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and our own National Anti-Corruption Forum as I believe it serves as an appropriate introduction:

"The values crises in schools are to a significant degree a reflection of the larger moral malaise in South African society, which has historical roots and contemporary causes. South Africa's history is one of exploitation and dispossession that still casts its shadow over the present. But equally, the country's more recent political and economic transformation has superimposed a rights culture upon a social base that does not equally recognize an accompanying culture of responsibility, as well as upon a material base of persisting poverty and powerlessness."

This short contribution will focus on three aspects, namely, the challenge faced by teachers, secondly a reminder that the primary educator is not the school or teacher, and finally the impact of the moral "malaise" in which we find ourselves. Ethics in education is not a simple issue and incorporating ethics into education is complex.

There are different ways of doing it, but the outcomes and the process of internalizing ethics into the behaviour of individuals is never guaranteed. For the teaching profession the approaches include adhering absolutely to our professional code of ethics and incorporating ethics into a curriculum both formally as well as informally and in so doing infusing ethics into the practice of teaching.

Yesterday the Director - General of the DPSA clearly sketched the impressive and comprehensive National Integrity Structures that we have in place as dictated by our Constitution. To further reinforce the intention of the Constitution, codes of conduct for various sectors are crafted such as the South African Council for Educators Code of Conduct for teachers that I will refer to shortly. Also, in corporate South Africa as we heard yesterday too, that King I (1994) and King II (2002) were attempts to overhaul codes of ethics and to influence legislation. However, there is little evidence that these have had a significant impact. The answers then do not necessarily lie in tighter regulation and enforcement strategies as it appears as if legislation and codes have not succeeded in countering the moral erosion that is being reported on a daily basis and that appears increasingly to becoming a feature of South African society.

The fact that legislation alone does not seem to halt the erosion of morality in society necessitates looking at the role of education more closely. Any educational strategy that does not take into account our unique complexities in particular, will be in vain.

It is no surprise that in the Executive Summary of the Ethics in Education – Review, the following statement is made: “The research results show that South Africa’s educational institutions face formidable capacity challenges in pursuit of promoting core ethical values. There is evidence that values education and training go wrong right from the primary school, and that the unacceptable consequences of a failure to inculcate ethical values impact forcefully, and tragically, in secondary schools.”

A curriculum, designed to address ethics very often emphasizes technical skills and knowledge of the rules. Perhaps this is so because imparting knowledge about the rules is the easy part: write it into the curriculum, train teachers to deliver and assess it and assume, with a clear conscience, that ethics has been dealt with and that this will change the morality of society. This is, clearly, a worrying assumption as the success of teaching ethics can only be measured by measuring the change in behavior and not by assessing knowledge of the rules.

The question then is, what can education do to contribute to changing the behaviour of individuals?

Educational institutions are microcosms of the culture and the society that supports them and, clearly, the ethics curriculum which provides for knowing about the rules is, as has been stated, only one aspect. More importantly, each classroom becomes a laboratory of the process of decision-making, and of critically examining choices and examining relationships as well as individual and personal lives. Teachers must play an important role in assisting learners to view ethical choices as a vital part of every aspect of their lives.

Macfarlane (2004) emphasizes that it is important for teachers to develop “professional virtues, such as duty to learners and genuinely critical self-reflection as opposed to adopting prescriptive solutions to moral dilemmas”. A teacher is a leader and must lead by example.

It is important, then, to reflect on the circumstances that arise in schools in which teachers could be setting the example for ethical behaviour by the choices that they make in order to influence learners into making ethical choices, over and above “teaching a course on ethics”.

Teachers who live the following are best able to promote core ethical values:

- acknowledge the noble calling of their profession to educate and train the learners of our country;
- acknowledge that the attitude, dedication, self-discipline, ideals, training and conduct of the teaching profession determine the quality of education in this country;

- acknowledge, upholds and promotes basic human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa;
- commit themselves to do all within their power, in the exercising of their professional duties, to act in accordance with the ideals of their profession, as expressed in their Code;
- are not negligent or indolent in the performance of their professional duties
- recognize the parents as partners in education, and promotes a harmonious relationship with them; and
- strives to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa.

These points by the way are from our Code of Conduct for teachers.

The “hidden curriculum” in my opinion is at the heart of the transfer of ethics and values and is epitomized by the actions and example set by the teacher. An integral part therefore of what each teacher does every day, as well as those seemingly trivial incidents in which the teacher’s behaviour and ethical choices impact on what learners will come to perceive as being the “right behavior”.

The value of daily examples of the correct choices, both big and small (and mostly made without even thinking about alternatives) cannot be overestimated. To do this teachers themselves must be “ethically conscious” before it will be possible for them to apply the professional ethics used by the profession itself to regulate its registered members.

In order to influence learners, teachers will have to be comfortable with and act comfortably within their own ethical frameworks. It is behaviour and example that counts. It is the presence of the teacher and the effect of this presence that counts. We as teachers must win back our PRESENCE where and if we have lost it.

The review indicates though, that where we have the appropriate presence, and where we are teaching the appropriate ethic, the success rate is not what we would expect because, and I quote:

“...it is confidently deduced that the discrepancy between values taught at school and values lived in the communities of which learners are members significantly undermines the effectiveness and credibility of the values component of the Life Orientation programme.”

Given the realities of the modern social order then, as well as the complexities of our South African society, it would be unrealistic to place the burden of changing the very fabric and morality of society solely on the shoulders of education. Sadly, and no doubt for a multitude of reasons, the majority of parents do not see themselves as the ‘primary educators’ and as a consequence more and more of the imperatives for the holistic development and education of children, particularly around ethics and values, has been directed to the school, and ultimately the teacher.

We are all aware of the many challenges teachers face in schools and just how demanding the job actually is. This a position by the way that is supported by the review. It is because of the size and the importance of the challenge that we are calling for a radical change in approach.

The most successful teaching model is that of the triangle with the child, the parent and the teacher working together. When the appropriate relationship has been established, the child, both young and not so young, knows that a “team” is in place to support him or her which brings in a level of accountability from each of the partners. Accountability in our present system is not as vigorously pursued as it ought to be. But when correctly applied by both parent and school we have improvements in levels of:

- Discipline;
- Work ethic;
- Respect; and

- Responsibility, and most important of all it provides a base for the inculcation of appropriate values and ethics.

Our call then is that mechanisms are put into place that establishes the necessity of parental involvement in the education of their children. This we believe warrants research or an investigation to establish how best to achieve this. To continue as we are will mean that it will remain extremely difficult to maintain present standards of discipline – many would say that the present standards are already unacceptable.

We all were shocked and saddened at the levels of violence at schools that were reported last year. Let us pray that the improvement in the levels this year are as a result of interventions put into place at schools by teachers and Departments. The Review states: “There are a number of strong indicators, mostly of violence in its various forms which are seriously undermining education in our schools. Theft at school, violence in the community and pervasive bullying has a detrimental impact on the quality and effectiveness of learning.”

We cannot afford further impediments in the classroom situation as we are already performing well below par, in fact embarrassingly so, but that debate will have to stand over for another time. Suffice to say that teachers alone will not be able to solve, address, and eradicate violence in schools without the assistance of parents and the community.

Irrespective of how conscientious either the parents, or the school are in attempting to inculcate the core ethical values, the impact of what is seen in the broader society will play a decisive role in the mind of the child.

I quote a number of excerpts from Mamphela Ramphele’s book “Laying Ghosts to Rest”, which are self-explanatory in the context of our moral malaise:

“The so-called Travelgate scandal involved 40 members of Parliament. Parliamentarians earn over R500 000 per year and enjoy pension and travel allowances, yet these members of an institution that is meant to enforce good governance, helped themselves to more public money by colluding with travel agents to make false travel claims.”

“Even more disturbing has been the embarrassing tardiness in dealing with this matter over the last five years or so since the scandal broke. Political parties involved, with the notable exception of one party, have failed to demonstrate their abhorrence of fraud and corruption by expelling those involved.”

“Corruption on the scale suggested by these examples and others reported in our media suggests that we as a society are ensnared in a political culture that tolerates corruption.”

“Ethical politics is not an option in a democracy; it is a requirement. In a democracy governed by ethics one need not fear opposition party victories or changes in leadership. What would matter would be the extent to which those standing for public office are able to advance the common good.”

The solutions to our “moral agony” lie not only in the hands of the powerful who decide about what passes for “good” or “bad”. Morality and choices about ethical behaviour are in the hands of ordinary people, particularly teachers and parents, who lead by setting the example of doing the right thing, in the right way, even when no-one is looking.

In conclusion, it is essential that all players review their roles and if we are not inculcating the necessary values and ethics into the minds and the hearts of the children of our country then let us take remedial action – the stakes are too high; we cannot fail the youth of our country.

100 **8.6 PANEL DISCUSSION**

A panel discussion ensued after the presentations and the input/comments on the presentations are contained in Table 3.

TABLE 3: COMMENTS ON PRESENTATIONS

Debating points	Inputs from conference delegates	Response by panel members
<p>Teachers' needs are not met</p>	<p>I was a teacher during the period of political upheaval which also affected teachers. Students in my class were murdered yet teachers were never taught how to deal with such students and situations. The issue of trauma is real and support is needed for teachers, as well support on a range of other aspects.</p>	<p>Our trauma is something that we have to acknowledge and live with as our past has been a painful one. Indeed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was an attempt to heal the wounds of the past. Xenophobia is also a manifestation of the past and we have to ensure that we deal with this problem and that xenophobia becomes part of the discourse within schools. With regard to the imbalances of the past, we have a special affirmative programme where we resource our previously disadvantaged school in terms of sanitation and other infrastructure. However, we must still make huge strides to improve conditions.</p> <p>Regarding teaching as a profession; thousands of teachers get fully funded bursaries especially in areas such maths and science. We have produced more than 1000 teachers last year, yet there is still a need for more teachers as they also make a difference in breaking the cycle of poverty.</p> <p>Naturally the unions have a responsibility to improve education in South Africa.</p> <p>Regarding issues such as strikes; in our profession the morale is extremely low as it is a very difficult task to teach. A lot more can be done by parents and societies: if we support our teachers we will have a far better output in terms of education and ethics. In Finland they only accept 10% of teacher training applications, whereas in South Africa we train 20 000 teachers too few! Why is this? Morale is low and the job is difficult.</p> <p>Regarding the right to strike, it is entrenched in the Constitution. However, we appeal for responsibility on the part of strike organisers.</p>

Debating points	Inputs from conference delegates	Response by panel members
<p>NACF</p>	<p>What is it that children see when they hear of the NACF? What do they see regarding the actions of government, civil society and business? What do they see that is exemplary? We hope that the resolutions at the end of the Summit will speak to these issues.</p> <p>The NACF may require a higher profile as many people including myself (Prof Jansen) had not heard of it prior to the Summit.</p>	<p>The review should not be lost. Research must be taken further as it only includes three provinces. Regarding all these issues, we all have a very important role to play and these processes should not be lost at the end of the conference</p>
<p>Concepts and language that people can understand</p>	<p>The biggest problem we face as a society, including the problem we face in this forum is that of concepts. When we speak of the NIF: what is the difference between the NIF and the Moral Regeneration Project? We are obsessed with concepts. We need to use language that speaks to basics and that goes to the poorest of the poor. Also we need to act and we need to implement.</p>	<p>Regarding the language of the conference and its sophistication; how do you link the NIF with the Moral Regeneration Programme? Why have two separate programmes? There is some logic to this and I do believe that the organisers would want to look at the possibilities of how to integrate this.</p>
<p>Women and sexual exploitation</p>	<p>Women are concerned about sexual exploitation and thus consideration should be given to the reinstatement of girls' only boarding schools by the Department of Education.</p>	<p>Root out any teacher that abuses another teacher or learner – action must be taken, action must be taken</p>

<p>Debating points</p> <p>FET Colleges</p>	<p>Inputs from conference delegates</p> <p>The report does not speak to FET colleges; in South Africa the focus is on the matric pass rate and the 'problem children' are rooted out of general education and are encouraged to go to FET colleges. But the FET colleges are not prepared to deal with such learners.</p>	<p>Response by panel members</p> <p>Regarding the FET colleges; they were previously seen as technical schools. We have changed the design of the FET colleges with the programmes and curricula content being adapted. In 2008 there are over 50 000 learners with bursaries of over R800 million. There are 50 colleges and satellite sites and in the next two years the goal is to achieve 1000 000 (learners) at these colleges.</p>
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