Chapter 12

Expectations of schools for promoting the spiritual and moral development of young people

It Must be taught in schools!
When society has a problem, a matter of import,
'It must be taught in, schools,' they say, or something of the sort.
Traffic mayhem on our roads, there are too many fools —
Bicycle safety, that's the trick — 'It must be taught in schools!'
Too many drownings at our beaches, right across the nation,
Let's teach the kids in all the schools about resuscitation.
And now we have the deadly AIDS, it nearly has us tricked;
'It must be taught in schools', they say, and then we'll have it licked.
I see the future clearly now, as if through crystal glass,
A vast array of problems solved, as through the schools they pass.
Table manners, sexual conduct, coping with divorce,
Anti-smoking, prejudice, and conservation of course.
Children hooked on television? Parents don't you frown,
The schools can teach them how to cut their viewing hours down.
I know there'll be complaints about this passing of the buck,
But just ignore those teachers now, it's really their bad luck.
They always whinge and moan, you know, they really are so trite,
They even want to teach the kids to count, and read and write!
Now reading's fine, and grammar too, and all those spelling rules,
But really now, I ask you this, must they be taught in schools?
Rod Clark taught at Busselton in Western Australia[1]

This chapter addresses the vexed question of the spiritual-moral role of schools. It looks first at parental expectations. Of all groups in the community, it is usually the parents of pupils who have the greatest hopes that education will bring about desirable personal change. The National Values Education Study acknowledged that '[w]ithin the community at large there is a growing debate and discussion about what values our children should learn, where our children should learn their values and how they will acquire them'.[2]

Given the now well-established influence of economic and business interests on education, expectations from this quarter also need to be considered. Finally, the chapter looks at expectations for personal change implied in educational theory – in various educative themes and learning theories, as well as in literature concerned with the future of schooling.

At the outset, it is important to differentiate between concerns about the personal influence of the formal curriculum and that of the school as a community. Both aspects have potential for affecting young people. While the special interest here is in the former, it is the latter that probably has more personal influence.

12.1 Parental expectations of the school's role in promoting young people's spiritual and moral development

The hopes that parents often have for schools are typified in this letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> What is needed is an education, even at high school level, on personal relationships.
>
> School curricula should include classes in 'living' with such subjects as 'making a marriage work', 'responsibility of parenthood', 'job-hunting', 'family break-up' and 'drug and alcohol abuse'.
>
> And why not also include counselling in responsible behaviour, self-confidence and self-esteem, and coping with life generally?
>
> Some preparation for dealing with the problem of life is essential before our young people leave school and surely these subjects are relevant to everyday living and just as important as the subjects now taught in schools.
>
> After all, a technical or academic education is not much use to those who have become anti-social and can't cope with life.[3]

A common teacher reaction to letters like this is a combination of amusement, irritation and frustration that society is trying to make the school more responsible for the solution of social problems. The idea of introducing school courses on sex, AIDS, toxic substance abuse, driving, leisure, careers, bullying, transition to work, child abuse and domestic violence is often the first community response when people think about remedies for social problems. As one education administrator noted:

> This belief that schools can cure society's ills simply by running specific courses about them is regularly reinforced by the various media gurus who daily define our social realities for us. The conclusion is reached that the only answer to the problems is better education; schools must take more responsibility! This places teachers under enormous pressure. They are being submerged under what can be appropriately called an 'addition' curriculum, now with more additives than a dry packed dinner.[4]

Educators should resist having unrealistic expectations for student personal change placed on schooling. At the same time, their understandable irritation at such expectations should not make them insensitive to the important educational issues that underlie the sentiments in the letter. Does the average high school curriculum give so much attention to the main success/employment-oriented subjects that students perceive that little if any value is ascribed to studying what it means to become fully human? If the evident concern of the school is to develop language, mathematical, scientific and other academic abilities, and if there is no comparable study of personal, moral and spiritual growth, then the very absence of academic attention to these areas can be saying to young people that there is no special educational interest in how they develop as persons – this can take care of itself, or it will happen incidentally while the 'real' education goes on. This may be affirming the images of success that are dominant in society, which in turn are influencing the way students perceive (or do not perceive) value in their education.

This relates to the problem of negative values education by default (noted in **11.2**). On this question, Hill considered that it puts 'more value on subject matter than on the persons being subjected to it. And this is a value in itself. Because it has been unfashionable to talk about values in education, or at least to do anything explicit about them, unexamined values which tend to dehumanise students have been a hidden curriculum in our schools.'[5]

Problems in society are inevitably reflected in schools in some way or other. They can be mirrored in the values, or lack of particular values, within the school's structures, curriculum and social life (for example excessive individualism and competitiveness). While schools cannot be expected to be utopias of virtue, they can be expected to take a values stance and a view of how their curriculum and school life can contribute positively to pupils' personal development.

Sometimes the expectation that schools should address social problems takes the form of a naive structuralism. That means adding a school structure that is intended to minimise a problem while having tenuous ideas as to how the structure will actually affect pupils. Also, loading a particular structure with the responsibility of bringing about social change can inhibit efforts to see what might be done across the curriculum. A magazine cover story on education in the 1990s illustrates the point:

> A Principal – supported by parents who, in the wake of the recent government financial fiasco, are disillusioned with businessmen and politicians alike – has introduced Ethics into his school's curriculum … [to help students recognise] the consequences of the shortsightedness, selfishness and greed that seemed to come to a head in the 80s.
>
> [Another Principal] It's certainly becoming more evident recently that there is a need for values teaching. We are looking to firming up on responsibilities and duty – duty to the community is coming back in. There is an increasing disenchantment with money-making in reaction to the government inquiry on corruption and the bankruptcy of the 'high-flyer' businessmen. Where we've always been considered a very secular school, 12 months ago we actually took a chaplain onto the staff. It went through without too much opposition. His main role is as a social worker, but there is hope he will work more and more in the values and ethics area.[6]

The schools' role, as part of the wider community's attempts to address social problems, is related to what schools do best: helping students to be well informed and to learn how to think about the issues.[7] These methods can become part of their learning for life. Despite efforts by schools to fulfil this modest but valuable role, people's perception of the extent of youth social problems still leads them to think that schools are failing. This compounds the problematic gap that already exists between the personal aims for education and practice. Addressing this gap is the concern of the next two chapters, but at this point it can be noted that efforts to develop more realistic community expectations will be helpful.

Another problem with community expectations occurs in the very subjects that are supposed to bring about personal change, such as Personal Development, Living Skills, Religion. These can be dismissed by young people because they have no perceived relevance. While some parents, perhaps many, will nominally endorse their importance, they too feel that in practical terms these subjects have negligible personal impact, as well as doing little to help careers. The students are then reflecting

the attitudes of their parents. More will be said about this problem in 14.3.1 under the heading ‘psychology of the learning environment’.

12.2 Expectation of schools to ‘teach’ values: Letter by the Commonwealth Minister for Education

It is interesting to compare the letter to the newspaper quoted earlier with the letter by the Commonwealth Minister for Education in September 2002 when he launched the National Values Education Study. Comments are included on some of the main points.[8]

Table 21.1 Analysis of the Minister for Education’s public letter on values education

Quotations from the letter *Schools must teach values*, by Education Minister Nelson, 23/09/02	**Comments related to expectations of the spiritual/moral role of schools**
Values framework Increasingly, parents are concerned to know [that] education is being delivered within a values-based framework with which they feel comfortable.	The importance of articulating the core values that underpin the educational process, and the values it is hoped that pupils will adopt.
Character development The great challenge of education, and increasingly the expectation of parents, is for it to transfer to children not only the ability to learn and acquire skills for an increasingly complex world. It is also to assist in the building of character. What needs encouragement and formalisation in our schools is the teaching of values …	The articulation of personal development aims for schooling that endeavour to promote the spiritual and moral development of pupils.
Learning negative values be default The problem in many cases is not that young people have not learned our values, it is that they … [should] identify and acknowledge the values we implicitly communicate, and ask whether we want these values taught?	Education in values needs an evaluative component; this helps pupils explore how values develop and how to appraise the relative goodness and appropriateness of community-embedded values.
Taking a positive values stance and avoiding value neutrality [There is a] great risk in adopting a position of moral neutrality with young people. To deliberately not take a stand on life choices – drug use, exploitation of others, relationships with authority, or sexual activity – is to send a powerful subliminal message that ‘anything goes’.	Education in values needs to take place in a context with explicit values. It needs an appropriate code of ethics for teaching, particularly in relation to any reference to teachers’ own views and commitments. A stance of values neutrality is undesirable; it can convey negative values by default.
Value development as a goal of education [W]e want children to become … caring, persistent, tolerant, fair and imbued with a deep sense of compassion. We should teach them to be just, reasonable, loyal and trustworthy … we must surely aspire to see these attributes as the foundation on which we build young lives.	It is important to understand the links between education and personal change in young people so that there will be realistic hopes for fostering personal development aims (and not unrealistic outcomes that exaggerate the potential of schools for engendering values.)
Importance of a spiritual/moral dimension to	Attention to the spiritual and moral dimension of

education Without a context of meaning rooted in values, education serves only a utilitarian purpose. It must also be the basis of our faith in the next generation to build a better future.	education ensures that it is holistic and not just utilitarian.

The comments in the second column highlight principles that need ongoing attention in both educational theory and practice.

12.3 Further consideration of public expectations of schools

12.3.1 Contrasting the expectations of parents, pupils and teachers

It can be expected that adolescents will be wary of educational intentions to influence their thinking and behaviour. To a lesser extent, teachers, while affirming a spiritual-moral role for education, would also be wary; they acknowledge the danger in unrealistic expectations of schools to change pupils personally and engender desirable values. Parents, on the other hand, who want the very best of everything for their children, would be likely to have the highest expectations.

This is borne out in a survey on the role of schools in 'teaching' values (part of the National Values Education Study, 2003).[9] Even though the number of respondents was small, the results confirm the above interpretation. Data from two survey questions are reported:

Table 12. 2 Results from a survey on the role of schools in values education

Values should be taught in schools (as a separate subject)			
	Student response	**Staff response**	**Parent response**
Strongly agree	51 15%	8 6.5%	83 67%
Agree	99 28%	61 49.5%	37 30%
Not sure	79 23%	27 22%	1 0.8%
Disagree	118 34%	27 22%	2 1.6%
Total numbers	347	123	123

Values should be taught as part of the curriculum/all subjects not just one			
	Student response	**Staff response**	**Parent response**
Strongly agree	82 23%	81 64%	62 50%
Agree	157 44%	43 34%	59 48%
Not sure	60 17%	0 0%	2 1.6%
Disagree	55 16%	2 2%	1 0.8%
Total numbers	354	126	124

Teachers were more favourably inclined to a values dimension to across-the-curriculum studies. The problem with these survey questions is that the phrase 'values should be taught' is ambiguous and emotionally charged. The results might have been different if a more refined account of education for personal change had been investigated.

12.3.2 Community expectations of schools

The school is not a social service organisation, neither is it a therapeutic one. Its main function is to transmit the intellectual culture of a society and of civilisation; this, above all else, it must do well. However, the school does not exist apart from society but within a particular social context, and if it is to be accepted as one of society's important contributing institutions, it needs to respond to societal needs. And one

major need now is alerting young people to the personal damage being done by the influences described in Chapter 7.

In determining how it addresses social problems, the school must *filter* the demands made on it, selecting what can be covered appropriately within its educational framework. Schools can thus be a useful *part* of society's attempted solutions.

Since the history of universal education over the last century has shown it to be so successful, especially in what it set out to do in developing knowledge and skills, it is not surprising that people have high hopes that schools can be successful in addressing social problems. During this period, many desirable social changes have occurred, and one of the most influential factors must be judged to be universal education. So it is not unreasonable that many educators are, as Postman and Weingartner described, 'simple, romantic people who risk contributing to the mental-health problem by maintaining a [stubborn] belief in the improvability of the human condition through education'.[10] They hastened to add that they were not so simple and romantic as to think that all social problems are susceptible to solutions by any means, including education. But they suggested that education is one of the best long-term investments for minimising some social problems – as well as a good starting point for addressing them.

Today's society has gradually changed the rules about what is expected of schooling. From the 1960s it became more evident that schools were reflecting the profound changes that were occurring in society. As noted earlier, various education programs were introduced as part of the community's response to immediate problems. Some argue that the demands on the school have been too many and inappropriate, claiming that the primary role of education has been, and should always be, the study of traditional subjects and that it should not be influenced or undermined by calls to take up new interests or fads. There is some justification for this criticism. Particular innovations have not always been judicious, often serving the purposes of misguided enthusiasts or unscrupulous careerists.

Given that only important but realistic social demands should be made of schools, educators should consider the direction that schooling might take to meet the current and emerging needs of young people. But in doing this, they ought also take into account what schools do best in relation to promoting personal change.

In a United Nations exhibition on the future of the planet in 1990, four main issues were identified as being crucial to the survival of humankind and of the world in the 21st century: The threat to life and dignity through hunger, health and education problems; apartheid (especially between rich and poor); the refugee problem; the fragile balance of the environment.[11] Further, it was observed that for many of the young people leaving schools, the skills and knowledge they acquired would not be as durable or as useful as was the case for their parents, even though many of their parents have experienced this same problem. It will not be unusual for current school graduates to change the focus of their jobs substantively many times before they retire. This situation reminds educators that what young people need at school is not simply knowledge and skills, but wisdom in the way they will use and apply those skills; but even more, a wisdom to chart for themselves a fulfilling life that will have benefits for themselves and for others in the face of the considerable weight of various counter-influences.

12.3.3 Parental and business expectations of schooling

A senior education administrator pointed to one of the anomalies in parental expectations of education: ‘I’m talking to parents all the time and there is a certain schizophrenia at large. They want kids to get jobs but, on the other hand, they fear for the moral and human qualities. It’s just a hunch, but I believe the second urge is the stronger.’[12] His ‘hunch’ suggests there is parental support for the trend favouring more personal and spiritual aims for education. Previously, the personal or holistic curriculum was more the province of specialist schools such as the Rudolf Steiner schools, or church schools where the religious development of pupils was emphasised. Now it is expected that personal development aims should be central to mainstream education.

While it might be expected that business interests will be lukewarm as regards this trend, the evidence is surprising. Sectors of the business world have been revising ideas about the personal dimension of the workplace where job performance and market success have long dominated. One can now hear discussions about spirituality and ethics in business. This will inevitably have consequences for public expectations of education.

An example of this development was evident as far back as 1991 when *Fortune* magazine devoted two leading articles to the problems arising from the inhumane workplace. The cover story read: ‘Can your career hurt your kids? Yes, say many experts. But smart parents – and smart companies – won’t let it happen.’[13] The articles detailed changes in the work practice of some of the largest corporations in the United States to accommodate the personal and family concerns of employees. The icon of ‘success at all cost and career before everything’ no longer remains unassailable, even though in real terms the changes being implemented are small.

Enforcing business practices that keep people away from their families is being challenged. It is not helpful either personally or commercially if staff are constantly having to choose between work and family needs. Even top management are encouraged in some firms to take flexi-time, paternal leave, maternal leave, to integrate their work within the context of their whole lives. Where it has been tried, the results have been good: more efficient work practices, less stressed employees, higher efficiency. The article quoted a senior vice-president of a major firm, ‘Business used to feel that you ought to leave your personal problems at home’, and it suggested that ‘We can no longer afford to take that view. The psychic welfare of workers – and of their children – is increasingly a legitimate management concern, and companies that ignore it risk their employees’ future as well as their own.’[14] One might wonder if recent industrial relations ‘reforms’ in Australia will provide a work environment that furthers this thinking and practice, or inhibits them – certainly a question that warrants community scrutiny.

In the comment below, a school principal reflected the common view of success at an inner-city school; in some measure, this is probably applicable to most schools: ‘Parents and teachers expect kids to learn the sort of things that help them to get jobs and be part of a community. As long as society defines people’s worth in terms of paid work, we’ve got an obligation in working-class schools to deliver that. I’m not in favour of knitting on the dole queue.’[15]

The school’s image of success in terms of good marks is a straight reflection of what is happening in the business world and the job market. As long as people are judged to be successful in these visible signs and are applauded for this success, then alternative models will get little credibility. Any damage done to one’s personal or

family life is often seen by 'the world' as necessary and mostly acceptable – the price one has to pay for success. It is an ethic that should have been systematically challenged a long time ago. In the past, critics of this system were readily dismissed as 'star-gazing tree-huggers, out of touch with the real world and clearly not capable of mixing it with the big boys'.

But now even in the hard world of big business the alarm bells are beginning to sound. Increasingly it has become evident that a philosophy of total, uncompromising commitment to work is damaging more than the 'expendable' immediate family. Mid-life crisis and all it entails is having far-reaching effects in the community and, 'more importantly', on the efficient running of business. As one New York researcher observed:

> We can only guess at the damage being done to young children. From the perspective of American business, that is very, very disturbing. As jobs get more and more complex, the U.S. work force is less and less prepared to handle them … I'm seeing a lot more emptiness, lack of ability to attach, no sense of real pleasure. I'm not sure a lot of these kids are going to be effective adults. With more workaholic parents of both sexes, children are increasingly left to fend for themselves … we are cannibalising children . . they are dying in this system, never mind achieving optimum development.[16]

Sobering thoughts! Our discussion of the expectations of education show the vulnerability of schooling to pressures from outside the institution. This can make teachers cynical about the comprehensive aims for education. On the other hand, they need to understand that their efforts to foster young people's personal development must realistically take into account the social pressures that are influencing the thinking of young people.

12.4 Conflict of expectations of the role for schools

At this stage, it is important to recall a vital point made earlier about conflict between personal aims for schooling and those that are more concerned with employment-oriented competencies. The personal development of pupils cannot be quantified and benchmarked with performance outcomes; it does not fit comfortably with an outcomes model of education.

The other major concern here is the way in which school education has become bureaucratised. Responsive attention to personal aims is inhibited in a situation where excessive strategic planning, documentation of outcomes, and quality assurance procedures have now become like a mini-industry in the school and an end in itself, rather than procedures that are supposed to make education better. So much teacher time and emotional energy have to go into the documentary substructure of school organisation that what suffers most is 'quality' teaching and learning. Some teachers have referred to this as 'accountability out of control' and 'cannibalisation of the classroom'. Business-like control procedures have become so much a part of school operation that its constitution as a 'community of learners' is being eroded. With the prospect that increasing deregulation in industrial relations will further affect the work environment of teachers, the ground may become even less hospitable to implementing personal aims for education. The rise in school managerialism to control and supervise the 'outputs' of teachers, and to match productivity with work agreements, is likely to make the school climate increasingly impersonal. Teachers

may have to devote so much energy to professional survival and advancement in the system that the impetus for progressing the personal agenda of education is sidelined.

While there is not space here to consider these problems in more detail, they remain significant not only for the spiritual-moral dimension to education, but for the whole enterprise of schooling itself. The burden of documentation and accountability requirements affects classroom teaching practice negatively, and inhibits innovative activities, including excursions away from the school. The working climate in schools has turned some potential recruits away from the profession and has contributed to early retirement or career change for a significant number of teachers.

12.5 Expectations for personal change in pupils: From various educative themes and theories in educational discourse

Much of the popular and academic writing about school education usually has some implied expectations for changing pupils personally. In this section, we will identify such intentions in various educational themes and learning theories in a summary fashion.

The analysis is divided into three categories:

12.5.1 *Issue-related educative themes*: Education concerned with promoting personal change in relation to: construction of knowledge and meaning; power, political meaning, ideology and cultural hegemony; empowerment; critical consciousness; emancipation; praxis; personal and social transformation; critical theory and critical pedagogy; cultural agency

12.5.2 *Learning and pedagogical theories*: Theories of learning and pedagogy such as: constructivist learning; multiple intelligences; emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence; brain-based learning; right brain/left brain learning; de Bono's six thinking hats; DEEP pedagogical framework

12.5.3 *Future of schooling themes*: Theory about the future of schooling and the needs of 21st-century learners

[Box not styled]

12.5.1 Issue-related educative themes

Education and the construction of knowledge and meaning

In 1964, in his book *Realms of meaning*, Philip Phenix (an American philosopher of education) highlighted the role of education in helping young people construct personal meaning.[17] From this time, the idea of the 'construction of meaning' figured in educational aims for schools, even if these precise words were not used. The idea was implicit in the notion of a liberal education as developed by the British philosophers Hirst and Peters and in much education writing since the 1970s.[18] In recent times, however, especially with the importance of constructivism as a philosophical theme in education, and with the influence of cultural postmodernity, the idea of construction of meaning has become much more prominent as an aim and a pedagogical principle.[19]

Acquiring knowledge has never been missing as a basic aim for schooling; however, questions about what counts as knowledge and who has the power to decide this raise a raft of issues related to the role of schooling in a liberal democratic society, as well as to the role of pupils themselves in 'constructing' knowledge. Hence epistemology and the sociology of knowledge have become significant in considering

how the 'control' of knowledge in education has significant consequences for pupils' personal development.

John Dewey was one of the first philosopher-educators early in the 20th century to emphasise links between schooling, community, freedom and democracy. Pedagogical implications flowing from his theory highlighted the need for broadening the horizons of pupils' experience, for inquiry and reflection, and for free interaction in the construction of knowledge. A democratic society 'must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes'.[20]

One of Dewey's aims for education was to enhance his ideal for human development: the courage to be able to change one's mind.[21] *Emancipation* – bringing pupils to a greater sense of personal freedom – was also prominent in Dewey's educational thinking. From this time, the notion of emancipation became associated with the aims for schools in liberal democracies. It was concerned with promoting freedom by enlarging pupils' capacities for personal decision-making; it also intended to promote freedom as a prized value in democracies. As noted below, the idea of education for emancipation took on a more specific contextual meaning in situations where groups in society were perceived as marginalised and disadvantaged. The idea of emancipation was central to critical theory and critical pedagogy.

Other issues related to the construction and control of knowledge are considered below. Also pertinent here are sections **2.10.8** and **2.10.14**.

Power, political meaning, ideology and cultural hegemony: Education for empowerment

The philosophers Gramsci and Foucault, writing from a Marxist perspective, elaborated a view of power and how this affected what was given status as knowledge by prevailing authorities.[22] What was considered to be 'truth' within a community is politically influenced. Some of the literature on empowerment highlights its application to marginalised groups and the constraints of social structures.[23]

While perhaps many of the political implications of this thinking are distant from the classroom, they showed how schooling could reinforce particular ways of conceiving reality, including social and cultural stereotypes. This thinking also raised questions about the exercise of power by teachers, not only in the control of the agenda of learning and in the extent to which they allowed for a student-centred pedagogy, but in the provision of student access to information.

The typology of meaning in Chapter 2 described briefly the relationships between power, political meaning, ideology and hegemony. In an education that is intended to alert students to political meanings, there is scope for exploring each of these constructs, particularly in the way they figure in contemporary culture. This 'alerting' function, encouraging students to 'pay attention' to the sources of cultural and political influence (such as auditing the trails of power) is an essential ingredient to what is known as *political empowerment*. It has to do with expanding young people's consciousness to take in cultural and political horizons to which they were unaccustomed, or of which they were unaware. Helping overcome naivety is a basic part of empowerment. Even though it applies more to adults than children and adolescents, the idea of educational empowerment needs further consideration to work out what level of critical engagement in the process is appropriate for pupils' age and mental capacities.

In a simpler sense, empowerment means increasing the capacity and scope for individuals to make decisions that affect their own situation. In the classroom, it is fostered by increasing student involvement in initiating and negotiating their learning. Empowerment is associated with any educational process that gives students more control over their own learning (for example negotiation of options for research, following topics of interest, encouragement to formulate their own interpretations). It puts the emphasis on student learning rather than teaching and thereby alters the traditional power relations that applied in classrooms. For older students, an investigation of the meanings of the power-related constructs through examples would be valuable. The notion of empowerment has implications for the personal development of youth.

Another way of talking about empowerment is through *ideological education* and *political education*. Ideologies are sets of political meanings that give impetus to particular movements and ways of thinking. As noted in Chapter 2, ideological statements and actions are more likely to be effective when they are not identified as such – and where they appear to be natural, taken for granted or just common sense. An ideological-political education sets out to sensitise students to the detection and evaluation of ideologies.

An evaluative education is needed to alert students to ideologies because, as de Botton noted:

> The essence of ideological statements is that, unless our political senses are developed, we will fail to spot them. Ideology is released into society like a colourless, odourless gas. It is embedded in newspapers, advertisements, television programmes and text-books – where it makes light of its partial, perhaps illogical or unjust, take on the world; where it meekly implies that it is simply stating age-old truths with which only a fool or a maniac would disagree.[24]

Education for critical consciousness and emancipation

While Paulo Freire's special interest was the liberating influence of literacy on marginalised groups of adults(*Pedagogy of the oppressed*, 1971), his ideas were not without an influence on the expectations of schooling in general.[25] His notion of developing a 'critical consciousness' of social and political dimensions to culture readily suggested that school education needed to be strongly evaluative. He critiqued the traditional 'banking' concept of education along with its authoritarian teacher-–student relationship.

The notion of an 'emancipatory' education tcan be traced back to Dewey and Marxist thinking.[26] It is at the basis of education for *personal and social transformation*.[27] The intention was to develop critical thinking that would affect beliefs and values, resulting in personal change or transformation. In turn, the sequence from critical education to critical thinking and personal change could provide the commitment and energy to bring about social change – social transformation.

Also flowing from Freire's thinking, as well as from a confluence of other sources that included Aristotle, was the notion of *education as praxis*. It meant action arising from critical reflection; it involved social analysis and it aimed at bringing about social change. Freire emphasised the historical nature of knowledge, and the way in which it was culturally conditioned. He tried to address the false duality between

theory and practice and he proposed a ‘problem posing’ pedagogy. He thought it essential for schools to engage students in critical diagnosis of social problems. Even if there was little scope for political action in schools, the students could still learn to identify injustice and to take steps to sort out their own personal stance. Making adjustments in language, and not using the words and constructs of oppressors, was regarded as a valuable step towards emancipation.

Freire’s work provided a solid foundation for the initial development of what is known as ‘critical pedagogy’.

Critical theory and critical pedagogy

In section **2.10.14**, attention was given to the study of meaning from the perspective of critical theory. Complementing this term is *critical pedagogy*, which basically can be understood as the pedagogical implications of critical theory. It calls into question the role of schools in ‘reproducing’ society – that is, in reinforcing the assumptions and values of the dominant groups (especially in commerce) and of the ‘industry’ of cultural reproduction. It considers how values and attitudes could constitute a ‘hidden curriculum’ in schools, precisely because they are not identified and acknowledged. *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, published in 2003, gives a detailed account of the origins and history of critical pedagogy.[28] In this volume, McLaren describes it as ‘a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society and nation state’.[29]

Within critical pedagogy there is a range of concepts that owe much to a left-wing view of education. It has much to do with the politics of education in liberal democracies. The notion of critical pedagogy is directed towards informing educators and policy-makers about an ‘emancipatory agenda’. If they are conscious of the issues and if they are committed to bringing about change, this can lead not only to structural changes in educational provision (greater educational equity and access), but also to changes in classroom pedagogy that give pupils greater scope for negotiating their own learning, as well as opportunities for exploring social issues. However, Freire was concerned that critical pedagogy might easily be domesticated in the classroom and ‘reduced to student-directed learning approaches devoid of social critique’.[30]

Examples of thinking from critical pedagogy have already been given in the two preceding subsections. Another of its prominent themes is *education for resistance*. This view proposes that a political-ideological education can sharpen critical consciousness about society, and can help people resist attempts at cultural and political manipulation.[31]

Much of the material in this book is concerned with applying critical pedagogy to the spiritual and moral dimensions of the school curriculum.

Cultural agency

Complementing and overlapping with the ideas above is the notion of *cultural agency*. It postulates first, that culture should not be regarded as static because this tends to make it appear taken for granted, as if it were beyond critique. As socially constructed, culture can be identified and its meaning evaluated in relation to the context in which it was formed. In turn, such critique enables people to act as *cultural agents*; they can bring about some social change within their own limited sphere, as

well as being resistant to culture that they believe is harmful. This is similar to the notion of praxis.

In section **15.9**, the idea of cultural agency as developed by the Welsh sociologist Raymond Williams will be referred to as a way of helping young people investigate the shaping moral influence of the media.

[SHOULD BE Summary AND NOT OTHER PERSPECTIVES]Summary

The above discussion highlights the sorts of personal change expectations of schooling that come from various educative themes. Collectively, they have the following characteristics or emphases:

- a concern principally with adult education
- the development and nurturing of freedom in tune with the ideals of liberal democracies; an 'emancipatory' purpose
- a strong evaluative dimension
- a focus on political meanings and on the influence of culture on identity dynamics
- a concern with the way education can address various forms of social domination, marginalisation and discrimination
- setting out to develop critical rationality and critical consciousness in those being educated; the pathway from education to personal and social change is through being well informed, sensitive in detecting ideological influences, and becoming critical thinkers.

What is significant for the developing argument in the following chapters is that the psychological dynamics of personal change that underpin these educative themes are primarily *rational*. When the words 'personal transformation' and 'social transformation' are used in this context, they mean change as a result of critical thinking. While critical thinking will never be separated from emotional and affective dimensions, a primacy of the *rational pathway to personal change* is presumed.

The educative themes considered above provide a basic set of concepts that figure within other themes such as *social justice* and *feminism*, which have their own expectations for promoting personal change. Similarly, *values education* (and *moral education*) and *citizenship education* warrant consideration because they too generate expectations of the spiritual and moral dimensions to schooling. While there is not space here for analysing these constructs, we consider that, in general, they affirm the rational pathway for personal change described above.

What remains a key question for school education is discernment in determining the extent to which these educative themes can be applied to the classroom, taking into account the abilities, relative maturity and needs of children and adolescents. It acknowledges the natural but problematic tendency for educators (and the community generally) to project educational principles that are evidently important for adults onto schools without always moderating them to be more in tune with the limited capacities of children and adolescents as responsible learners. The next chapter addresses the need for such moderation by exploring the possibilities and limitations for personal learning in the school curriculum.

Given the concern registered earlier about the excessive expectations of parents and community, one may well wonder: does not the extensive list of educative themes (and the following learning theories) also create unrealistic expectations, and even

more anxiety for educators? The answer is yes – unless special care is taken to do the moderation and discernment tasks well. Otherwise, these educative themes will not be liberating, but punishing for teachers by exacerbating the already problematic gap between purposes and practice. Hence we see the conceptualisation tasks attempted in the next two chapters as crucial for the viability and progress of the personal agenda for education. That means showing in a realistic way how these educative themes are not a matter of 'adding' to expectations by placing additional burdens on teachers, but rather of suggesting how they can be comfortably 'integrated' in a constructive but modest way within teachers' ordinary practice.

In section **14.4** we will revisit these educative themes, making use of one – *education for wisdom* – to show how they can be located and evaluated within a larger conceptualisation of the spiritual and moral dimension to the school curriculum.

12.5.2 Learning and pedagogical theories

Contrasting with the educative themes noted above, but still important for the bearing they have on spiritual-moral expectations of schooling, are a number of learning theories (or pedagogical theories). They are more concerned with the psychological dynamics of learning in a generic way, and not with particular social issues. Our interest in interrogating these theories is to see the extent to which they point towards informed, critical thinking as the initiating mechanism of personal change, or whether they favour other mechanisms. In other words, are they congruent with the critical rationality pathway to personal change? Do they complement and enhance critical rationality? Do they propose alternative personal change pathways? Answers to these questions would show how personal and social *transformation* are interpreted from the perspective of these theories.

Some of the theories will be identified (with limited references) together with general comments about the extent of their focus on personal change. We do not endorse all aspects of these learning theories, but we are unable to provide a detailed critique here. While not a comprehensive list of learning theories, it will be sufficient to illustrate this line of inquiry:

- Constructivist learning theory
- Multiple intelligences
- Emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence
- Social and emotional learning
- Brain-based learning theory
- Left-brain, right-brain learning
- De Bono's thinking hats
- DEEP pedagogical framework.[32]

From a brief examination of these theories we draw the following conclusions about their relationship with the spiritual-moral purposes of education:

- The theories focus principally on the enhancement of generic *learning processes* (and not on sociocultural issues for personal development, although theories like spiritual intelligence and DEEP are more issue-related).

- They endeavour to enrich and diversify the scope of classroom learning activities, involving cognition, emotion, intuition, sensory-motor, play, social interaction and aesthetics to cater for different individual learning styles; they attempt to make learning more multidimensional and holistic; they emphasise variety in teaching and learning methods, with appropriate attention to experiential and creative processes.
- They do not minimise the importance of critical rationality as a personal change pathway; but collectively, they tease out different subprocesses involved in rational inquiry, in a sense expanding on what critical rationality means.
- They imply a critique of, and challenge to, learning that has been excessively or exclusively rational.
- Some of the learning theories give attention to the construction of personal meaning.

We consider that these theories help enrich learning, highlighting its breadth and complexity. By enhancing generic learning, they can enhance critical rationality as well as having positive effects on what in the next chapter we will call 'personal learning skills'. While we have no difficulty with the educational appropriateness of many of the suggested teaching and learning strategies, we think they do not always tap into the psychological processes of personal change as deeply as their proponents claim; in other words, their proposed or implied links with emotional and personal maturity are somewhat tenuous or overstated. In a few instances, we considered that the purpose of getting pupils to 'have good and pleasant feelings' during a learning activity did not necessarily have much bearing on personal change. The dimension of emotionality in learning is certainly important, and it warrants more attention than it has been given to date, but there is much more to 'emotional *learning*' than having good emotional experiences in the classroom. While not wishing to appear arrogant, we did not find any significant new insight into links between education and spiritual-moral development that have not been considered elsewhere in this book. Also, we judged that there was nothing in these theories that would require a change in the trajectory of the argument developed in Chapters 13 and 14 in interpreting the spiritual and moral dimension to the school curriculum.

We offer the following caveats:

The *constructivist learning theory/pedagogy* is consistent with what has been considered in earlier chapters about the personal construction of meaning, and education in meaning. Problems can arise where excessive attention given to the construction of personal meaning tends to minimise or exclude the consideration of community or cultural meanings (as well as to institutions and traditions); this tendency can contribute to the isolation of young people in the 'prison' of individualism, with too heavy a responsibility for the development of their own comprehensive meaning system.

The pedagogical theory based on the constructs *emotional intelligence* and *spiritual intelligence* does not appear to be very well developed, apart from 'social and emotional learning' (SEL), which draws mainly on the former. SEL illustrates multifaceted pedagogy that takes into account the social context of learners and purports to impact on wellbeing and social aptitude, as well as affecting the emotions. While the skills and techniques it recommends are excellent for learning, we do not have the same confidence that they will almost automatically engage pupils at an emotional level and bring about personal change – such change is more complex than seems to be implied in SEL. We will say more about the problematic notion of 'emotional learning' in section **13.5**. Similarly, the theory of *multiple intelligences*

provided a substantial basis for developing varied styles of teaching and learning, informing wide-ranging pedagogical skills. But its links with personal change need further clarification.

Creative teaching has long made successful use of a variety of pedagogical styles before a neurological basis for them was proposed. *Brain-based learning theory* seemed to confirm this view. However, the proposed neurological basis for *left-brain/right-brain learning theory* was not convincing; it provided a helpful shorthand for contrasting styles of perception and learning, but it seemed to exaggerate the significance of spatial cortical specialisation while not acknowledging that such differentiation only works well when it is balanced by neural integration and coordination. For some time it has been recognised that individuals vary widely in modes of mental functioning such as linear or logical thinking, emotion, intuition, and aesthetics, and this is important for educational planning. But we question whether the use of hemispheric differentiation provides a comprehensive neurological basis for these differences.

The *DEEP pedagogical framework* is a good example of recent efforts to give the construction of meaning a central place within the practice of religious education.

For the crucial question 'Is there a distinctive, and effective classroom pedagogy for bringing about personal change in pupils?' the simple answer is 'No'. A more complex interpretation of links between education and personal change is required. However, there is more mileage in an alternative question: 'Is there a distinctive patterning of existing pedagogies – and content – that is more likely to provide a context and orientation that are favourable to personal change in the future?' The answer here is a qualified 'Yes'. This discussion is about whether or not there *is* a distinctive 'transformational pedagogy' and whether this can be linked to 'social transformation'. Education writers who use these phrases often do so uncritically and naively; we suggest that they be used with caution. Any good pedagogy with relevant content can be a 'precursor' or catalyst for personal change, but no particular pedagogy can of itself automatically bring this about.

12.5.3 The future of schooling themes

The spiritual-moral expectations in some recent writings about the future of schooling will now be considered (English language only), as listed in the accompanying note.[33] We are indebted to our colleague Joanne Hack for her work on this topic. References below will be in name/date/page format. While not an extensive review, it is sufficient to signpost issues and trends.

Collectively, these writings engaged in four tasks:

1. Diagnosing current socio-cultural trends with a view to predicting the likely situation over the next decade or so
2. Estimating the changing personal and social needs of young people and adults in the future
3. Offering a critique of problems in recent educational theory and practice as regards their inadequacy to meet future needs
4. Speculating about what is needed in curriculum content and pedagogy to best meet the projected future needs of pupils.

While this literature examined a wide range of issues across these four areas, our interest is with their relevance to the spiritual-moral purposes of education. Hence we

will not refer to their treatment of questions about such matters as technological competence, globalisation and multiculturalism.

Spiritual and moral dimension

This literature has a strong emphasis on the spiritual and moral dimension to schooling. While it is unlikely that the current dominance of economic purposes to education will change much in the near future, there is increasing evidence of dissatisfaction with this situation, making the ground more receptive to advancing a personalist agenda. For example, the UNESCO International Commission for Education in the 21st Century recommended a change of educational focus from 'economic growth' to 'human development' (DeLors 1996: ch. 3.). The Report proposed 'Four pillars of education' (ch. 4):

- *Learning to know* (learning *how* to acquire knowledge, as well as gaining new knowledge).
- *Learning to do* (not only occupational skills but a flexible competence to negotiate different life and work situations).
- *Learning to live together* (the need for cooperation, interdependence, pluralism and respect for differences).
- *Learning to be* (personal development, autonomy and responsibility).

Beare, in *Creating the future school* (2001: 21–2), highlighted the spiritual-moral dimension as follows:

> A significant part of any curriculum is about intangibles about dealing with the depths from which we generate our life purpose and aspirations. An important part of schooling concerns the formation of constructive and systematic beliefs, the acceptance of social responsibility for the intertwined and complex task that it is, and the development of stories, which convey deep meanings about who we are. Schooling, then, deals with personal formation, belief construction, developing a world view and with culture transmission over and above the acquiring of useful knowledge and enabling skills.

Construction of meaning

Understanding and meaning were considered to be of increasing importance in a society that is rich in information but often with a deficiency of functional meaning (Ancess 2004; Carnerio 2000, 2003; DeLors 1996; Lynch 2002; Perkins 2004; Shepard 2000.). Hence Grennon Brooks (2004: 9) saw a fundamental link between education and meaning: 'Searching for meaning is the purpose of learning, so teaching for meaning is the purpose of teaching. If teachers do not have meaning making at the core of their pedagogy and practice, then let's not call the activity teaching. To do so demeans the word and the noble art and science it represents.'

Problems with the plausibility and credibility of traditional sources of meaning, together with increasing relativism, have arisen as part of the postmodern scepticism about meta-narratives (Lynch 2002). As a result, the 'construction of meaning' or 'meaning-making' was referred to as a fundamental goal for education in the future. De Ruyter (2002) and Hack (2004a,b) considered this activity a central part of a 'meaningful education'. Carr (2003) described this as helping pupils learn how to explore conceptions of personhood; it would require skills in the evaluation of

meanings. What was considered in Chapters 2 and 3 about the interaction between personal and cultural meanings was echoed by Carnerio (2000), who saw meaning being developed 'at the intersection of the journey within to selfhood (learning) and the journey without to citizenship (education)' (Hack 2004b: 54).

Education and the critical evaluation of cultural meanings

De Ruyter (2002) emphasised the evaluative role of a meaningful education as one that appraises different conceptions of personhood in culture. However, evaluative activity, while needing to appraise the relevance of traditional sources of meaning, should remain balanced, being careful not to fall into the postmodern trap of questioning the legitimacy of presenting traditional meanings and meta-narratives – since this would compromise young people's freedom and autonomy. There is an important place in education for the communication of traditional meanings. Young people's initial needs for basic institutional meanings should not be overlooked; neither should their level of maturity be overestimated in terms of their gradually developing capacity for the critical evaluation of meaning.

In a colourful way, this critical, evaluative role for education was described many years earlier by Postman and Weingartner (1969) as the responsibility educators have for refining students' inbuilt 'crap detectors': 'the history of the human group has been a continual struggle against the veneration of "crap". Our intellectual history is a chronicle of the anguish and suffering of people who tried to help their contemporaries see that some part of their fondest beliefs were misconceptions, faulty assumptions, superstitions and even outright lies.'[34]

Meaning, identity and spirituality

While the listed literature featured the critical construction of meaning as a fundamental goal for education, it did not give much attention to the construct identity. However, as noted in Chapter 6, there was considerable European writing about links between education and identity development. There was not much mention of spirituality, with the exception of writers who took an interest in religious and values education (Conroy 2004; Hack 2004a; Hill 2004; de Ruyter 2002; Wallace 2000), but there was a consistently high interest in a values dimension to education, even though we considered that the links between education and values development required further clarification.

Personal and social transformation (and transformative teaching) and critical pedagogy

The metaphors 'transformation' and 'empowerment' were prominent in the literature (for example Ancess 2004; Beare 2001; Bottery 2000; Gardner 2002; Mockler 2004). This echoed the various educative themes considered earlier. However, the psychological dynamics of personal change presumed in the use of these metaphors were not clarified. The notion of 'transformative teaching' was occasionally implied; but again, personal change was presumed to be the outcome while links with pedagogy were not explained.

The issues raised by critical pedagogy (**12.4.1**) were considered to be crucial for the future of education (Bottery 2000; Mockler 2004).

This sample of literature on the future of schooling touches on various issues for young people's personal development that were noted in Part II of this book, and it referred to a number of the principles for an education in meaning in Chapter 10. In

all, this literature confirmed our confidence that the constructs meaning, identity and spirituality had considerable educational potential.

12.6 Conclusion

12.6.1 The need for a workable conceptualisation of the spiritual-moral dimension to the school curriculum

Complementing the analysis of spiritual-moral purposes to education in the previous chapter, this chapter considered personal expectations of schooling from a number of perspectives: parents, community and business, the education literature. The bulk of this material, while it had much to say about the personal and social aspects of education, like the normative curriculum documents examined in the previous chapter, dealt principally with *educative intentions*. The learning theories were the exception, but they were more concerned with learning in a generic way and did not offer substantive accounts of how educational practice can actually bring about spiritual and moral change.

We conclude that many areas of education (including community expectations) have advanced the spiritual and moral purposes of the school curriculum. But this has not been adequately complemented by investigations of links between these intentions and classroom practice, even though study of pedagogy has been prominent in the literature. The actual lines of potential personal influence need further clarification, otherwise much of the talk about holistic education will remain where it is now, at the level of good intentions. Also, not enough attention has been given to the active role of students in their own spiritual and moral education. This means that in both theory and practice, more consideration is required of how young people, as autonomous, thinking, feeling individuals, are involved in their own personal change in response to education and other aspects of their social environment.

The development of a framework for understanding links between education and student personal change would give a better perspective to the personal aims for education, and more coherence and integration to the practical efforts to achieve these aims. This will be the task addressed in the next two chapters.

Increasingly, much store is being placed on enhancing the dimensions of meaning, purpose and value in school education. But an adequate conceptualisation of how this translates into practice is urgently needed; if not, there is a danger that expectations of the spiritual and moral role of schools will remain little more than ideological rhetoric, covering up confused patchy practice.

12.5.2 The influence of schooling on young people's spiritual and moral development

Having said this, we are not implying any lack of confidence in the capacity of schools to occasion personal change in young people. Our concern is to develop an interpretation that will not overestimate or underestimate this potential.

The experience of universal education, which in historical terms is a relatively recent occurrence, has presented educators, parents, students, governments and society with a startling array of what such a process can achieve. At no other time in history have so many people been exposed to so much information, so many ideas, and as a consequence, so many options.

It would not be over-zealous to state that this more democratic experience of education has been a significant influence in the many technological, medical, and social advances in the last hundred years. It is no wonder that educators are so consistently called on to be in the forefront of bringing about desired changes in society. And in turn, this is probably why there are such high expectations for schooling to produce desirable personal change in students.

Nevertheless, community discussion of the spiritual and moral role of schools often proceeds with unarticulated assumptions about the effectiveness of schools in bringing about personal change – assumptions that often prove to be unrealistic. The next chapter will help clarify further the potential links between educational activities and student personal development. It will consider a basic range of possibilities for personal change and judge which of these are ethically available for use in the classroom, proposing how the school might best go about its spiritual-moral task, given the complexity of the personal development process and the limitations on any cultural agency in occasioning personal change. Then in Chapter 14 a conceptualisation of the spiritual and moral dimension to the school curriculum will be proposed.

Notes

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1 We are grateful to Mr Clark for his permission to include his poem.

2 Curriculum Corporation 2003b, *Draft National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (prepared for the Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training), p. 4.

3 Letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in July 1984.

4 B Dwyer 1985, A new course is not always the answer!

5 BV Hill 1991, *Values education in Australian schools*, p. 3.

6 C Boag 1991, Nice kids rule, OK! The getting of character: Education expectations in the 90s, pp. 78, 81.

7 Elsewhere, in two books on religious education, we have given pedagogical examples of how to investigate social problems in the classroom: ML Crawford & GM Rossiter 1985, *Teaching religion in the secondary school*, Chapters 4 and 7; ML Crawford & GM Rossiter 1988, *Missionaries to a teenage culture: Religious education in a time of rapid change*, Chapters 4, 7, 17, 20.

8 B Nelson 2002, Schools must teach values (letter to *The Age* by the Commonwealth Minister for Education announcing the National Values Education Project).

9 Curriculum Corporation 2003a, *Values Education study: Final report* (prepared for the Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training), pp. 222–3.

10 N Postman & C Weingartner 1969, *Teaching as a subversive activity*, p. 12.

11 United Nations Exhibition, New York Headquarters, 1990.

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12 G Boomer, quoted in Boag 1991, p. 79.

13 *Fortune* Magazine, May 1991.

14 K Labich 1991, Can your career hurt your kids? p. 34.

15 Quoted in Boag 1991, p. 80.

16 Sandra Kessler Hamburg, director of Education Studies at the Committee for Economic Development, a New York research group which has corporate funding for education projects. Quoted in Labich 1991, p. 26.

17 P Phenix 1964, *Realms of meaning: A philosophy of the curriculum for general education*.

18 PH Hirst & RS Peters 1970, *The logic of education*; RF Dearden et al. (eds) 1972, *Education and the development of reason*.

19 R Jackson 2004, *Rethinking religious education and plurality*.

20 J Dewey 1916, *Democracy and Education*, **[In the Bibliog this is Democracy and EducationYES BIBLIOG IS CORRECT]** quoted in A Darder et al. (eds) 2003, *The critical pedagogy reader*, p. 1.

21. R Layton 1997, *The Influence of Humanism in Education*, http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/oasis/history6.php Accessed 22/04/05.

22 A Gramsci 1971, *Selections from prison notebooks*, ed. and transl. Q Hoare and G Smith; M Foucault 1980, *Power and knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*.

23 P McLaren 1989, *Life in Schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy and the foundations of education*; JL Miller 1990, *Creating spaces and finding voices: Teachers collaborating for empowerment*; RI Simon 1987, Empowerment as a pedagogy of possibility.

24 A de Botton 2004, *Status anxiety*, pp. 214–15.

25 P Freire 1971, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*; 1980, *Education for Critical Consciousness*.

26 P McLaren 1989, *Life in Schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy and the foundations of education*.

27 I Shor & P Freire 1986, *A pedagogy for liberation*.

28 A Darder et al. (eds) 2003, *The critical pedagogy reader*. This book republishes chapters in Shor & Freire 1986 and Giroux 1983.

29 P McLaren 2003, Revolutionary pedagogy in post revolutionary times: Rethinking the political economy of critical education. In Darder et al. 2003, p. 160.

30 ibid., p. 161.

31 HA Giroux 1983, *Theory and resistance in education*, p. 24.

32 Select reference lists for each of these areas are given under Learning theories in the Bibliography.

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33 See Bibliography under Future of schooling literature. This list has been selected from a larger bibliography (and content analysis) developed by our colleague Joanne Hack.

34 Postman & Weingartner 1969, p. 16.