

## GATEWAY DOCUMENT 1.8

# Shared values

### WHY IS THIS RELEVANT TO *REsilience*?

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology offers as a definition of 'value': 'An abstract and general principle concerning the patterns of behaviour within a particular culture or society which, through the process of socialization, the members of that culture or society hold in high regard. These social values, as they are often called, form central principles around which individual and societal goals can become integrated. Classic examples are freedom, justice, and education'.

There are two important points to note about values of these sorts. One is that people who all claim to hold a value may between them have a wide diversity of interpretations as to what the value means and implies but, secondly, people do not hold values in isolation and different individuals and communities may have different hierarchies of values<sup>1</sup>.

A value commonly held by children is that of fairness. Values are related (but not exclusively) to religious and non-religious beliefs and to cultures. There are many different value sets and it is important to be careful about generalisations linking particular values to particular cultures, religions or beliefs.

However, it is not unusual to see or hear, in the press and in discussions on TV, reference to 'British values'. What is being referred to here is a set of values that are thought to be typical of public and much private life in Britain. There may be some discussion as to what precisely constitute the elements of the set of British values but most people would assume that they include tolerance, fairness, respect for the rule of law, and a commitment to democratic government<sup>2</sup>. By today's standards Britain has not always been tolerant or fair<sup>3</sup>. So perhaps

<sup>1</sup> As an example, libertarians and socialists may both espouse the value of liberty, but for the former liberty will be defined as 'negative' liberty (freedom from intrusions into personal decision making) whilst socialists are likely to emphasise 'positive' liberty (the freedom that comes from a place to live, food to eat, education and guaranteed medical care). A further difference between the libertarian and the socialist is likely to be that for the former liberty is the over-riding value that trumps all other values whereas for the socialist justice and solidarity may trump aspects of personal liberty in her hierarchy of values.

<sup>2</sup> Of course many other peoples would claim these values as their own, and there are certainly many, particularly in former colonial lands, that might read that list of supposed British values with a degree of cynicism (those who fought against British rule in places like Kenya, for example).

<sup>3</sup> Roman Catholics were subject to discriminatory laws well into the nineteenth century and still are not completely equal citizens (they cannot marry the monarch, and if they marry an heir to the throne he must

it is best to regard the set of claimed British values as those we are now striving to live up to and to develop a reputation in the world for.

Internationally, a very important statement of common values is certainly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights published by the United Nations in 1948. That was followed by the 'Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms' produced by the Council of Europe in 1950, to which the UK was a signatory. Britain made European Convention rights domestic law through the Human Rights Act (1998). Also important is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). It should be noted that not all religious communities are entirely happy with these declarations of rights. In 1990 the Organisation of the Islamic Conference produced 'The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam' to set out an Islamic perspective on human rights based entirely on the Sharia. Pope John XXIII set out Roman Catholic teaching on human rights in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of 1963 in which he asserted the inviolable dignity of each human being and explained that this led to important social principles.<sup>4</sup>

As already stated, individuals or communities can sometimes appear to share common values but the ways in which those values are interpreted may be very different (e.g. there are different ways in which individuals might interpret the value of 'respect for others'). So it is important for students to develop skills that will take them beyond surface features of what individuals and communities say they value and help them to avoid snap judgements, trying rather to understand the diversity of behaviour and where this does or does not denote different values. An important task for adolescents growing up is that of developing clarity about their own values alongside the process of developing their own identity as a person.

There are of course values of other kinds that are not purely ethical in nature, like those relating to work, food, sport or art (although they can be influenced by ethical considerations). Such values are also relevant to a consideration of shared values even though they may not be so immediately related to making moral decisions.

## KEY QUESTIONS

### How can this help teachers and students to increase their understanding of contentious issues?

Values identify what should be judged as good or bad, and behaviour based on such judgements often inspires community traditions. For example, buying a poppy for Remembrance Day reflects the values of respect, gratitude and, for some, patriotism. Drunk and disorderly conduct flies in the face of values such as appreciating good health, self-

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renounce his claim on it); similarly women were not given the vote on the same terms as men until 1928, were legally paid less than men for the same work until 1975, and are still striving for equality in the workplace.

<sup>4</sup> These can be summarised as: (1) The needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich; (ii) The freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful; and (iii) The participation of marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of a political order which excludes them.

respect and consideration for others. Most cultures hold values relating to family, which result in expectations about particular family responsibilities and structures. Understanding values can contribute towards the avoidance of confrontation based on ignorance, though there may nevertheless still be disagreement.

### **What classroom challenges might arise in RE?**

Some people in every generation challenge the existing values of society. This can be seen in challenges to values relating to dress and public decency. Some changes in values lead to new legislation, for example relating to protection of children or to employees in the workplace. In every generation, established values of the past are liable to be challenged by students.

In any school class there will be some values that are widely shared by students and teachers, but there are likely to be others over which there is considerable disagreement.

### **How can teachers address such challenges?**

Rather than telling students what their values should be, teachers should explore with them the values of various groups in our society. Any discussion of the extent to which these values are 'shared' could begin with the following *Statement of values* by the National Forum for Values in Education and the Community (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority 1996). This statement of 'shared values' was constructed after consultation with a large and diverse group of organisations and individuals representing many interests and professions, and all the main religions and denominations in the UK.

#### ***The self***

*We value ourselves as unique human beings capable of spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical growth and development.*

*On the basis of these values, we should:*

- develop an understanding of our own characters, strengths and weaknesses
- develop self-respect and self-discipline
- clarify the meaning and purpose in our lives and decide, on the basis of this, how we believe that our lives should be lived
- make responsible use of our talents, rights and opportunities
- strive, throughout life, for knowledge, wisdom and understanding
- take responsibility, within our capabilities, for our own lives.

#### ***Relationships***

*We value others for themselves, not only for what they have or what they can do for us. We value relationships as fundamental to the development and fulfilment of ourselves and others, and to the good of the community.*

*On the basis of these values, we should:*

- respect others, including children
- care for others and exercise goodwill in our dealings with them
- show others they are valued
- earn loyalty, trust and confidence
- work co-operatively with others
- respect the privacy and property of others
- resolve disputes peacefully.

### **Society**

*We value truth, freedom, justice, human rights, the rule of law and collective effort for the common good. In particular, we value families as sources of love and support for all their members, and as the basis of a society in which people care for others.*

*On the basis of these values, we should:*

- understand and carry out our responsibilities as citizens
- refuse to support values or actions that may be harmful to individuals or communities
- support families in raising children and caring for dependants
- support the institution of marriage
- recognise that the love and commitment required for a secure and happy childhood can also be found in families of different kinds
- help people to know about the law and legal processes
- respect the rule of law and encourage others to do so
- respect religious and cultural diversity
- promote opportunities for all
- support those who cannot, by themselves, sustain a dignified life-style
- promote participation in the democratic process by all sectors of the community
- contribute to, as well as benefit fairly from, economic and cultural resources
- make truth, integrity, honesty and goodwill priorities in public and private life.

## **The environment**

*We value the environment, both natural and shaped by humanity, as the basis of life and a source of wonder and inspiration.*

*On the basis of these values, we should:*

- accept our responsibility to maintain a sustainable environment for future generations
- understand the place of human beings within nature
- understand our responsibilities for other species
- ensure that development can be justified
- preserve balance and diversity in nature wherever possible
- preserve areas of beauty and interest for future generations
- repair, wherever possible, habitats damaged by human development and other means.

Discussion of these broad values could inform any discussion about school values, how they are articulated and whether they need to be more expressly shared through, for example, collective worship, display material, school publications and so on.

In order for schools to promote a sense of community within an ethos of diversity and pluralism, shared values need to be identified and modelled by staff.

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **Signposts for further reading**

*Our Shared Future* (2007) Commission on Integration and Cohesion (COIC), available at <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/06/14/oursharedfuture.pdf>.

'The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam' can be downloaded from <http://www.arabhumanrights.org/publications/regional/islamic/cairo-declaration-islam-93e.pdf>.

*Pacem in Terris* encyclical of Pope John XXIII, available in English translation from [http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs\\_jo23pt.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_jo23pt.htm).

### **Signposts for further resources**

<http://www.interfaith.org.uk/rcommit.htm> Millennium Act of Commitment by the faith communities of the UK.

<http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/connect-web.pdf> *Connect: Different Faiths, Shared Values* (2004), InterFaith Network in association with Timebank and the National Youth Society.

<http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/faithcitizenship.pdf> Faith, Citizenship and Shared Life in Britain today: A Discussion Document .

[www.theiceproject.com](http://www.theiceproject.com) The website of the Islam and citizenship project.

<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/media/file/codeofconduct.pdf> The RE Council's *Everyone Matters in the Classroom. A Practice Code for Teachers of RE* helps to exemplify both (a) shared values of courtesy, respect for individuals, respect for the law etc, and (b) ways of relating to people (including pupils) some of whose values you do not share.

UN Declaration of Human Rights can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>.

European Human Rights Convention can be found by searching website of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) [http://www.echr.coe.int/echr/Homepage\\_EN](http://www.echr.coe.int/echr/Homepage_EN).

Islamic Declaration on Human Rights can also be found at <http://www.alhewar.com/ISLAMDECL.html>.

Catholic teaching on Human Rights can be explored at [http://www.ihmsjc.org/roman\\_catholic\\_human\\_rights.htm](http://www.ihmsjc.org/roman_catholic_human_rights.htm), a Jesuit site dedicated to human rights from a Catholic perspective.

### **Signposts for further action**

Revisit the school's statement of ethos/values to ensure that it is universally understood and consistently implemented.

Look at the school environment to assess possibilities for further display of material which expresses and reinforces shared values of the school community and articulates them to students, staff and visitors.