

A Values Education Program

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of a Values Education Program on the grade six school-leavers at Watuluma Catholic Parish in the Alotau Diocese of Papua New Guinea. The program was introduced in 2002 and was trialed with youths at Watuluma Parish by the Catholic Church. The study also explored the reasons why the formal education system was failing these children and how the youth can be provided with a better system. One hundred and eighteen youths, grade six dropouts, both boys and girls, were put through this program. The program was designed to promote awareness of educational values and then introduce them in the students' everyday life. Of the thirty values taught, the participants considered six to have been particularly influential – Creativity, Priority, Achievement, Confidence, Responsibility and Respect. After two years, the assessment revealed that Values Education Program was relevant to the needs of the youth by bringing practical and beneficial skills to them.

Background of the research

To appreciate the context of the research study, it is important to understand the unique situation of the youth in the Milne Bay Province (MBP). This province is the most easterly maritime province in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Its geographical boundaries enclose a landmass of approximately 20,254 square kilometres and a sea area of about 251,000 square kilometres (Dianne, 1995). The area of MBP is equal to the total landmass of the five highland provinces in PNG (Provincial Development Plan [PDP], 2001-2005).

The 211 main islands that comprise MBP are divided into seven island groups. The province is physically fragmented and for this reason many villages are remote and therefore lack access to goods and services. The census for the year 2000 shows that the population of MBP was 209,054 speaking 48 local languages. In terms of culture, family lines and rights are mostly based upon matrilineal relationships (Kinch, 2001).

The Milne Bay Province is predominantly Christian – United Church 65.5%, Anglican 14.9%, Catholic 13.4%, Seventh Day Adventist 1.2% and others 5.0% (PDP, 2001-2005, p.6). In the Alotau Diocese the Catholic youth are scattered throughout the province. Based upon the National Youth and the National Catholic Youth policies, membership is open to all between the ages of 15 and 25 that remain single. Nevertheless these requirements are flexible and may be adjusted according to circumstances and needs. Table 1 gives a summary of the situation.

Table 1: General background of the youth in the diocese of Alotau – 2004

The number of main parishes	14
The number of youth	2,231: 1,398 males and 833 females
Grade 12 with extra studies	17 (0.76 %)
Grade 10 with extra studies other than grade 12	258 (11.56 %)
Grade 6 with vocational training for three years	91 (4.08 %)
Between grades 6 and 10	31 (1.39 %)
Between grades 1 and 6	1,717 (76.97 %)
Never attended school	117 (5.24 %)

Table 1 confirms that a large proportion of children in the Catholic Church receive no formal education beyond grade six. Further, tables 3 and 4 indicate that the number of schools in each district is approximately proportionate to the population of the district.

Table. 2: Population by Districts (PDP, 2001 – 2005)

Districts	Alotau	Samarai/Murua	Kiriwina/ Goodenough	Esa'ala
Percentage	36%	20%	24%	20%

Table. 3: Schools by Districts (Division of Education – 2004)

Institution	Alotau	Samarai/Murua	Kiriwina/ Goodenough	Esa'ala	Total
Elementary (EP-E2)	90	72	45	63	270
Community & Primary (Gr. 1- 8)	66	41	36	38	181
Secondary (Gr. 9-10)	-	1	2	1	4
Senior Secondary (Gr. 9-12)	3	-	-	-	3
VTC/VSS	1	3	2	2	8
Totals	160	117	85	104	466
Percentage	34.33%	25.11%	18.24%	22.32%	100%

Churches and other Non Government Agencies administer over 55% of schools in the Province (PDP, 2001-2005, p.10).

Table 4: Schools in Milne Bay Province by agency (Division of Education – 2004)

School Agency	Elementary	Community Primary	Secondary	Senior Secondary	Vocational Technical	Total
Government	109	59	2	1	2	173
United Church	51	45	1	-	2	99
Catholic Church	69	42	1	1	4	117
Anglican Church	32	24	-	1	-	57
Kwato Church	9	8	-	-	-	17

At present there are over 37,000 students enrolled in Milne Bay schools (PDP, 2001-2005). The above data demonstrates that the ever-pressing concern surrounding the ability of the education system to effectively retain students until they satisfactorily complete Grade 6 (now grade 8) is a major problem in MBP, particularly as shown in table 2.

The data indicates that most Milne Bay villagers lack a basic understanding and awareness regarding education and its objectives and comparative capabilities. The identified contributing factors for the existing situation in MBP could be explained as follows (PDP, 2001-2005):

- Ninety-seven per cent of the total rural population is absorbed in the agricultural system and so has inadequate earning opportunities
- Limited access to the cash economy and the lack of transport and communication
- Dissatisfaction with the education system and uncertainties and confusion in the system over clearly established duties and functional responsibilities due to many changes in the reform education systems
- Traditional ways of relating within the family and the broader community are being challenged by a greater dependence on a cash economy and by globalisation
- At present PNG struggles with a law and order problem that is identified with the very poor employment prospects of the youth
- Deterioration in traditional values and customs.

Given this dilemma in society, one must discover the contributory roles of the formal education system and of the foundations of PNG education. We need to review whether it really serves the development of the people. The difficulties outlined above that are being experienced can be reversed. Identifying future leaders and preparing them for their responsibilities is an important challenge requiring the emerging need for non-formal education such as the Values Education Program.

The Values Education Program was initially arranged at only one parish, Santa Maria Catholic Parish, Watuluma. One hundred and eighteen youth attended the regular weekly classes spending four hours each week. The course was conducted in the year 2002. The year was divided into two semesters from February to November. Each participant was given a textbook, notebook and a pen costing eleven kina per student each semester.

Fifteen lessons were given on different values in each textbook, with reflective as well as evaluative questions and assignments. Besides following the lessons in the textbook there were practical assignments, semester evaluations and other activities in harmony with each lesson. After the first batch of youth groups had finished a year of the Values Education Program at Watuluma Parish there has been a widespread demand for the program from other parishes in the Diocese of Alotau.

Consequently the proposed research is how to address the lack of information regarding the effect and influence that the Values Education Program has had at Watuluma Catholic Parish. The reason for this enquiry is that the program emphasizes the 'person in community' (Groom, 1996) approach and calls for each individual to examine his or her goals in the light of the common good. Therefore this research problem requires a genuine contemplation of the present and future society, the youth themselves, youth animators, Church leaders, pastors and teachers in educational institutions at large.

Literature review

A review of the literature reveals that PNG is in a state of social transition from the traditional era to a 'modern' way of living (Gewertz & Errington, 1999; McLaughlin, 1994; McLaughlin, 2002; Whiteman, 1984). A sense of perplexity is permeating all spheres of the external and internal dynamism of both the individual and in society life, particularly in the value system and its implications (Mel, 2002). There are four bodies of literature that are relevant to this research about the youth:

- ❖ Social and cultural changes
- ❖ Western style of education
- ❖ Globalization and its impacts
- ❖ Post-Independence changes.

Social and cultural changes

Many changes have been introduced since colonial times as a result of new technologies and the influence of Christianity, as well as the industrialization and urbanization that accompanied the advent of a cash economy (Whiteman, 1984).

The people of PNG did not define themselves in terms of their individuality, but in terms of their group affiliation (Mel, 2002). The person and family were considered to be the most important value in traditional Melanesian society. Sociologically the community is composed of the living and the dead, for the

dead do not cease to exist but only change their mode of existence (Mantovani, 1984).

At the heart of much of today's unease is concern that children are not being adequately supported by family structures, particularly where economic and/or social impoverishment occurs; and concern for the effects of the future on the individual and on society. The relationships that are at the centre of Melanesian society are changing rapidly (Narakobi, 1987).

In brief, Longgar (1998:171) explains the nature of social change in PNG by saying that:

The magnitude of the social revolution taking place throughout Papua New Guinea signifies an intensive period of societal transformation ... The results have been very disruptive, especially when the social change is disorderly, when the degree of social change is high and the creation of new institutions is multiplying ... These disruptive processes are bound to persist if the general pattern of development continues to create imbalances that disallow most of the people the opportunity and the right to benefit from these developments.

From this panoramic picture, this research will explore the quality of the Values Education Program offered at Watuluma. In a multi-faith and multi-cultural environment, youth ministry in PNG needs 'an abiding spirit of affirmation, appreciation, and celebration of life and of human beings' (Groom, 1998).

A Western style of education

One of the greatest and most pervasive sources of change has been the introduction of formal Western-style schooling into Melanesian communities (Whiteman, 1984). Formal education in PNG extends back to before the 1930s. In the 1930s education was provided exclusively by the Churches that wanted a literate population among whom to spread the evangelical word (Smyth, 1977).

Since Independence, a strong PNG syllabus and structure has developed in the formal education sector, although the foundations have remained as a western developed philosophy of 'academic excellence for all' (Smyth, 1977). PNG has enjoyed having a national teaching service since the 1970s and this has promoted some attempt at unity in the schools. The Church and Government work together in a unified education system embodying both national goals while respecting the philosophy of individual Church agencies (Onagi, 1999).

Despite this and because there is as yet no universal primary school system, there are large groups of children that drop out of the formal school system in their early years of schooling. Demerath, quoting Browne & Scott (1998), estimates that for the foreseeable future, 80% of citizens will continue to make their living from a village subsistence base (2000). The situation in MBP, at least as regards the Catholic youth (table 2), confirms Demerath's point of view.

The formal education system fails to convey a sense of mission, hope and inspiration that would bring human values to the fore and would contribute to the uplifting of the society. Therefore, notwithstanding the structures of the formal education sector, there is a great need for much to be done with non-formal sector. Hence, this research will bring out the experiential results about the Values Education Program.

Globalization

Globalization is a social process marked by the concentration and centralization of economic, political, technological and military power in the hands of a few rich countries and, to some extent, in the hands of the elite in poor nations (Hickling-Hudson, 1999, 2000). It is a complex phenomenon that affects not only economic affairs but also almost all other aspects of human life.

Many social scientists (Appadurai, 1990; Cancilini, 1995; Lull, 1995; Lefebvre, 2000; Rapoport, 2000) have emphasized territoriality in their discussions on the meaning of identity. Social space is often treated as the core point of a culture, and of the ecology, economy, politics and psychology of a people. More importantly, territory or space is closely related to the social identity of human beings. In a sense, what was territorial has become worldwide, what was local is now global.

Several social scientists (Scholte, 2000; Ellwood, 2001, Clark, 1997; Hobsbawen, 2000) claim that a sense of 'globality' is not new. In PNG substantive social relations on a global level began to develop even before the colonization era. Throughout the colonial period, various factors led to the gradual rise of 'supraterritoriality.'

In the words of Hickling-Hudson (2000), 'supraterritoriality' refers to an intensification of the processes of interaction involving travel, as trade, migration, dissemination of knowledge and global division of labor that shaped the global level of progress in the world. Global trade introduced through colonialism, created a basic disparity between the rich and poor, between the developed and the developing world.

Globalization and its effects are becoming ever more pervasive, shaping the minds of Government and policy makers. Parents who are the major consumers of education are seeing their world constantly change around them, and are not always convinced that there have been enough changes in school settings to enable their children to easily make the transition from school to work (Lynch, 2003).

Changes such as increasing knowledge, rising societal expectations, changing concepts of education and of policy advice from international monetary institutions are pushing PNG education system in certain directions, which hold both promise and danger (Onagi, 1999).

Formerly the traditional education helped the individual to know who he was, where he was going and how to get there while the formal education system promoted a sense of individual identity within the clan-society as well as a sense of security (McLaughlin, 1994). From this point of view the Values Education Program aims to provide quality assurance for youth. This research will bring out some of the changes that the community observed in the program participants.

Post-Independence changes

In the post-independence era the emergence of a cash economy has challenged the traditional pattern of consumption and encouraged a mixed culture. By culture I mean the knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, and attachments that give societies their own character and identity, and that allow their members to make sense of their lives and aspirations (Geertz, 1973). The forces of the global market overpower the creativity and the character of local or national cultures. The result is the formation of hybrid or mixed cultures.

Hybridity refers to newly composed, mixed or contradictory identities resulting from changes in various ethnic and tribal cultures (McLaughlin, 2002). In PNG hybridity involves the synthesis of western and indigenous traditions (Demerath, 2000). The 'PNG ways', which are mentioned in the list of national goals in the Constitution, become ambivalent when one attempts to identify the post-colonial culture. 'Ambivalence refers to a simultaneous attraction and repulsion of an object, person or action' (McLaughlin, 2002).

The media plays an important role in bringing together alien cultures. Therefore another concept in postcolonial theory is to interpret that of hegemony. Hegemony, or 'domination' is demonstrated by a subtle exercise of its power through institutions that serve its own economic interest, such as media and education (McLaughlin, 2002). Within this complex situation the Values Education Program expects to develop a sense of self-criticism in the youth whereby each may mature, making appropriate decisions according to the need.

The moral standards of PNG are deteriorating fast due to the omission of ethics and moral in formal education curricula (Onagi, 1999). Ethics – defined as the way individuals and society should best order their lives in order to attain maximum growth and development – are shaped and informed by the conscious and unconscious images of the being, power, and ultimate values that influence individual and communal relations (Caron, 1995).

The country struggles with problems of law and order, land shortage, criminality, prostitution, overpopulation, unemployment, pollution of the environment, destruction of the balance in the eco-system and general moral decay in the community (Waisi, 2001). The immediate challenge for contemporary PNG leaders is to find the balance between theoretical models of leadership and certain PNG traditional practices (Tivinarlik & Nongkas, 2002).

While traditional education was appropriate for traditional society, it can no longer provide the structure, knowledge and skills needed for the modern era and its demands (McLaughlin, 1994). The Values Education Program deals with living experiences, with contexts conjuncture, with elucidating values and belief systems in order that youth may become leaders within any given situation, which will be discovered in this research.

Research design

The participants selected for this research study were participants in the Values Education Program, their parents and community members. In total there were 21 participants. Selected groups of youth that have completed the Values Education Program were invited to participate in a focus group. The reason for choosing them is that they were the primary recipients of the program. In order to keep the gender balance, six boys and six girls were chosen aged between 17 and 25. Three of the program participants were studied as individual cases and invited to participate in in-depth interviews.

Furthermore, three parents and three community members of the program participants were interviewed individually. The reason for choosing the parents and community members is that, as the persons directly observing the daily conduct of participants in the Values Education Program, they are in a position to provide valuable information about them.

An interviewer's journal was maintained throughout the study, containing topics and issues discussed in each interview. This enabled the researcher to keep track of what had already been covered and to follow up items of interest in future conversations.

Relevance of the content of the Values Education Program

The opening question posed to the focus group was aimed at obtaining answers about the content of the Values Education Program. The participants showed strong insight and perspective on this subject. One of the participants reflected deeply on this experience:

I spent six years in the formal education system during which I learned many things from classroom experiences, but as time passed I can hardly remember anything that I studied there. Whereas what I learned from the values program keeps coming into my mind, particularly when I face serious problems and issues at home and elsewhere. Specifically, when I was asked to step down from a position by our community the value of 'evaluation' came into my mind. Further reflection about it helped me to overcome from any ill feeling. I feel strongly that the content of the values program, as taught to the participants, is excellent as it really applies to experience in practical life.

There was unanimous agreement that the content of the Values Education Program was very good and practical. This opinion was supported by examples from day-to-day life situations. One participant commented in a different manner about an experience:

In spite of my daily struggles and confrontations with my family and community I obtain an inspiring spirit from several values like priority, creativity and achievement. In a way these values sometimes control me, other times I feel that they are clearing my way to a greater understanding and helping me to adjust to the situation. I am not trying to say that I am yet perfectly okay but I feel strongly that the values taught by the program are a necessity for human growth.

Learning experiences from the Values Education Program

Almost all the participants gave it as their opinion that the practical application of the values in the context of living was the best and most useful learning outcome of the program. When asked to elaborate further on their answers, one said:

For me the value of achievement is very special because every time that I do something such as preparing the garden, fishing, participating in a simple discussion with my friends in the village or leading a choir group during the Sunday Liturgy, I spontaneously think about the value of achievement. Even now I sometimes read about the value of achievement as taught by the program because somehow it is always in my mind and it helps me to put this value into practice. I am realizing more and more that without putting them into practice, learning about values would be useless because they do not make any difference to my life. During the program, the continual insistence on applying the values through practical application really struck home.

Everyone in the focus group brought out one or two values from their personal experiences and made mention that the emphasis on practical application of the values was the best aspect of the learning. During the interview, it was very clear that the practical application of the values was the most beneficial thing that participants gained from the program. One of the interviewees revealed:

I learnt a lot about the value of respect but to begin with, it was a bit monotonous. Once, the facilitator asked us to do an assignment: Whom do you respect most in your life in your village and why? This made me think for almost a week and then I gave my answer that it is my father. The reason being that he is a hard-working, loving, caring and sacrificing person. Somehow the value of respect that I learned through this practical assignment makes me continue my assignment even today. What I am saying is that when I feel respect for anyone, the immediate question that I ask myself is 'why?' and I find it is really a challenging and thought provoking experience.

Observed changes among participants in the Values Education Program

Three parents and three community members of program participants were eager to describe some of the changes that they had observed in their children in their day-by-day lives. All of them mentioned 'openness, understanding, punctuality, commitment and the prioritization of habits' as observed changes in the program participants.

One parent stated convincingly:

Being a father and an uneducated man, I used to become cross with my daughter even for minor and silly things. During the Values Education Program I noticed that she began to ask me a few counter questions in order to make me clear about my stance. She continued in this way very often while going about her daily affairs. In fact, this started to make me think properly so that now, before I say anything to her, I take time to think a while. She is asking these counter questions not only in our family but also in the community, in the church and even when with the little children in the village. When I asked her about why she was doing this, she said that she lacks the value of self-confidence and was doing it in order to increase this value. It is quite definitely helping her to bolster her self-confidence.

Another community member gave a different perspective:

I am a community leader and often need to talk to the youth about problems and issues. After the Values Education Program I was very much surprised to notice several changes in their interactivity. While I was raising the issue of unexpected pregnancy of some young girls, the program participants pointedly asked questions like 'why, when, how,' etc. These questions convinced me of the need of sex education and the need of dialogue between the parents and their children. They even proposed that there was a need for parents to train their children to be responsible. I was really amazed to notice how relevant the discussion was becoming. I could really feel the extraordinary influence of the Values Education Program.

Leadership qualities through the Values Education Program

Every one of the participants of the focus group, as well as in interviews, said that the Values Education Program imparted great knowledge regarding leadership qualities. According to them, the values taught in the program are the very qualities required of leaders.

At one of the interviews someone said:

The values taught in Values Education Program are very good, in an instrumental manner, to assist anyone to become a leader in any context: in the family as father or mother, in the community, in the church and even

in the wider society. In every situation it is necessary to practice these values in our daily life so that others can see these values, understand them and appreciate them. In the process others will become inspired to follow them. The Values Education Program is the best way to learn leadership values and so to become a good leader.

Table 5 records the expressed values with their interpretation on how they are related to leadership qualities.

Table 5 Values that are related to leadership qualities

No	Values	Interpretation in relation to leadership qualities
01	Cooperation	Honesty, trust
02	Encouragement	Helping, supporting, assessing, approving and promoting
03	Openness	Honesty, truthfulness
04	Respect	Self-esteem, recognition, acceptance
05	Responsibility	Taking up tasks for the common good of the community
06	Sacrifice	Offering time, talents and abilities, absence of self-interest

Conclusion

The analysis of the responses through focus groups, in-depth interviews and reflective journals has shown the effect and influence of the Values Education Program on grade six school-leaver students at Watuluma. The inquiry into the relevance of content of the program brought out that the values are hierarchical, sequential, invariant (Rosado, 2000), universal (Fowler, 1981) and open-ended (Graves, 1974). Therefore there is a consensus that the Values Education Program could be an effective way to improve the values of the youth.

Participant responses on learning experiences taught by the Values Education Program strongly emphasized the importance of the practical application of the values. Findings in this section confirm the claims of Carl Jung and Maslow. Carl Jung (1933) claimed that all our values are based upon archetype aspirations from which all human yearnings derive. Maslow (1967) refers to 'meta-needs' as distinguished from basic needs like hunger, affection, security, etc. Meta-needs are required for growth of justice, goodness, beauty, order, unity, etc. Hence the Values Education Program may be the best possible instrument to meet important needs of the young generation in PNG.

The **main concerns** highlighted by the research on 'observed changes among the program participants', show it to be a good platform for resolving conflicts and making decisions (Kouzes & Posner, 1993) in the community. The ability to produce an effect is understood to be the capacity to bring something into being, to actualize, or to maintain what has been actualized against the threat of non-being (Loomer, 1995). Thus the Values Education Program is highly

relevant to the needs of the youth by bringing practical and beneficial skills to them.

In the PNG context, society is going through intense social, political, economic and educational upheavals. This turmoil endangers virtually all institutions and their leaders. Inquiry into the leadership qualities learned from the Values Education Program shows an increased commitment to thinking, growing and inquiring whereby learning becomes an attitude as well as an activity, a way of life as well as a process (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs & Thurston, 1999). Therefore leadership becomes a matter of *how to be* rather than *how to do* (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000).

In summation, the art of leadership is the ability to release the potential of those within the organization (Keene, 2000). Therefore youth animators, Church leaders, pastors and teachers in educational institutions can share the substance of leadership that is identity, motives, emotions, attitudes, abilities, intentions, preferences, values, beliefs, relationships, spirituality among other factors. The Values Education Program advocates people-centered practices and ethical standards that promote meaningful relationships and a learning process based on authentic values.

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