

# A FRAMEWORK

The challenge of introducing ethical issues to students is one faced in schools on a daily basis. Here



Edgar Eslava, principal at Colegio CIEDI, Bogotá, Colombia

## Ethical journeys for an international education

One of the defining features of today's student population is geographical mobility. On the one hand, there are the opportunities offered by electronic communications: at any given moment, while you may be chatting about the new adventures of a film hero with a Malaysian or an Argentinian friend, your monitor may spring into life with breaking news of a just-happened natural disaster in the Alps, a scientific breakthrough in Antarctica, or a new sports record achieved in Sydney. On the other hand, the mobility is also physical: scholarships, tour packages and student exchanges can generate opportunities for travelling, either inside the borders of one's home country or between countries oceans apart.

To be well prepared every traveller must carry with them some things that could hardly fit in a backpack. The traveller must face the trip with an open mind, knowing that the places they are about to enter are, most probably, ones where the culture could be unfamiliar. Only an individual who is tolerant, humble and a risk taker would be able to enjoy a world defined by its diversity. A traveller must also know that, like it or not, every time you land on foreign soil you assume - in the eyes of both locals and fellow foreigners - the not

unchallenging role of cultural ambassador for a whole country. A calm, centred, self-confident and honest person would have a better chance of success than someone lacking those qualities. Finally, every traveller must be balanced and generous, acknowledging that no matter how firmly you believe you are right, there is always a lot to learn and plenty of people to learn from.

The challenge of an international education is to educate the best possible kind of travellers, even if their travels never take them beyond national or local borders. Such an outcome must be a reflection of the institutions where we help our kids to grow up: schools that educate in diversity by treating their students as individuals; schools that respect personal identity and that promote identification with national values; schools honest enough to identify their strengths and to learn from their mistakes. That is the reason why what defines an international school is neither a marketing strategy nor a postmodern academic fashion, but their commitment to the role of educators of citizens of the world.

**Only one who is tolerant, humble and a risk taker can enjoy a world defined by its diversity'**



Joseph F Marino, PhD, principal at Xaverian High School, New York, USA

## Before teaching ethics: a five-step agenda

The goal of teaching ethics is to promote a sense that to be fully human is to be a responsible member of a larger community. I submit the

following as a viable preparatory approach for accomplishing this goal.

**Step one:** Teach the notion of perspective. Students need to understand the fact that 'point of view' is a given for each individual, but also that my perspective on the world is not an absolute measure. Each of us starts from a context of socially implanted ideas, including political, religious and family-laden values. Understanding these as my point of view and that they are not necessarily shared by others is fundamental to an understanding that questions of right and wrong extend beyond personal needs and interests.

**Step two:** Affirm the existence of core human values. In America's infancy, the founding fathers asserted this when they highlighted 'Life, Liberty and Happiness' as those rights which cannot be separated from the human condition at large. It's not argued that my life, liberty or happiness are irrevocable but that Life, Liberty, and Happiness themselves are sacrosanct. The self-evident nature of these values serves as a universal platform for a meaningful discussion of virtually all ethical questions.

**Community service projects should be an integral part of any attempt to teach ethics'**

**Step three:** Cultivate a sense of empathy. We can refashion our personal perspective through empathy. Just as I wince when I see someone hurt, I should wince morally when I witness a violation of core human values.

**Step four:** Go beyond the teaching of tolerance. To be tolerant suggests putting up with something. While I may not share your perspective or circumstances, I am able to understand them; even be empathetic with them. I realize that your stance on an ethical question may be reasonable; that is, consistent with core human values, although different from my own. Accepting different points of view is an exercise in intellectual humility rather than an arrogant endurance of what I don't agree with.

**Step five:** Mandate service. Detached discussion on ethical theory is insufficient. Without executing good deeds - that is, behaviours that promote core human values - all discussion about ethics is lifeless. Community service projects, at the earliest possible age, should be an integral part of any serious attempt to teach ethics.



# FOR LEARNING

four IB teachers share their views on the best ways of bringing ethical thinking into the classroom



Sean Thompson, PYP teacher at the Early Childhood Education department of K International School, Tokyo, Japan

## Ethics in action for the younger learner

What place do ethics have in education? If you work in an IB school, this question has largely been answered for you in the form of the Learner Profile, which can be seen as the platform from which ethics are taught within the framework of the PYP. However, putting this into action still poses one of our greatest challenges. As a teacher in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) department of a Tokyo international school, I can see the importance of making the Learner Profile matter from the start.

As I came to terms with all I needed to understand to work within the PYP framework, making the Learner Profile work in practice seemed unlikely. But as the whole team in my year level began to grapple with this challenge, we started to see ways around it. We tackled the easy terminology first: we do little else at this age if not take risks, so that came naturally enough. Then we were caring: this is a conversation any ECE teacher has with their students whether in an IB school or otherwise. However, when it came time to address what it means to be principled, we started getting stuck. There is really no picture, song or set of words available to the ECE teacher to make this attribute engaging to students.

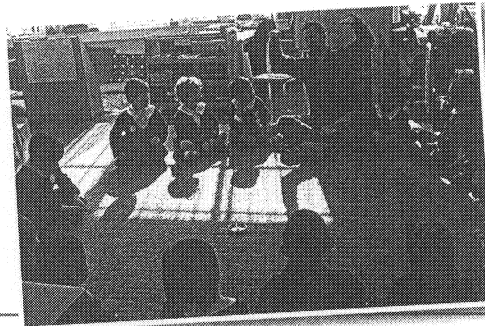
To keep it interesting we had to get more creative.

**To keep the Learner Profile interesting to younger students we had to get more creative'**

We came up with the idea of using pictures of our students and placing them up on our Learner Profile board under the heading of the attribute they had exemplified, explaining how they had done so. We were then promptly chastised by every student who felt they had acted similarly and not been recognized! We knew right then we were on to something.

When a colleague informed us how Takeshi (not his real name), who had difficulty expressing himself in English, told her how he was 'principled' and then explained why we all just about fell over. At that moment, I was wholeheartedly won over by the Learner Profile.

As a relatively new PYP practitioner, I would urge everyone teaching in the early years to rethink the use of the Learner Profile in their classrooms. Certainly we always do our best to serve students' needs, but the better an understanding students can achieve of this fundamental component from the beginning, the better it can serve them once they leave us.



Simon Murray, deputy head at St George's British International School, Rome, Italy

## Questions as ethics in IB programmes

The IB's paper exploring the criteria for a continuum of international education makes a Socratic commitment to the understanding of values, ethical or otherwise: "Encouraging students to examine critically their own and others' customs and traditions is a necessary element for an education that enables them to discern what is of value and what ought to be cherished and retained." [IB 2002]

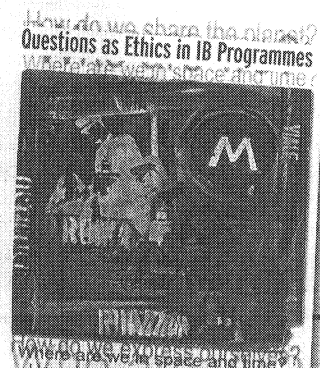
Quite how inquiry per se leads us to discern such thoughts remains unclear, but it is still possible to argue that it is an inquiry-based education that has the best chance of also being an ethical education. It establishes a structural relationship between learners and their world that has the capacity to allow ethical development that is much more flexible and wide ranging than an education driven by a perceived moral content alone.

A minimal set of attitudes emerge: knowledge of oneself or the other are products of inquiry and are worthy of inquiry; prior to inquiry, the self and other are undecided in terms of value, but can be compared; when developed in a group situation, communities of learning are capable of inquiring on the same basis. At the very least, such an approach seems capable of stimulating autonomy, empathy and solidarity as inquirers.

I would like to suggest that the statements that appear at the vertices of the PYP hexagon when turned into questions provide a very useful set of conditions for such an ethical education. Who are we? Where are we in place and time? How do we express ourselves? How does the world work? How do we organize ourselves? How do we share the planet? This list is not exhaustive, but the questions invite others that lead us further into the principal area with which ethics concerns itself: intersubjective plurality, the 'we' they all recognize.

It is difficult to imagine an education that claimed to be ethical that could not address these questions, regardless of the inflections in how they may be answered. Across the IB programmes, it sometimes feels that such philosophical questioning can wither away into discipline-based preoccupation, TOK being the most visible exception. Could all the IB curriculum models retain these questions at their vertices if only to function as reminders that they can all provide the conditions for an ethical education?

**It is an inquiry-based education that has the best chance of also being an ethical one'**



## ethical education a morality tale

### AN ETHICAL EDUCATION THE IBO WAY

IBO believes that an ethical education guides and supports students, and asks them to consider their choices and actions, the choices and actions of others, and how those actions affect others. Effective education in ethics does not come from courses but from approaching ethical issues through structured inquiry and critical thinking.

It also comes about through developing an environment for learning and a school ethos that addresses ethics in theory and on a practical level. The learner profile is fundamental to this thinking and leads students to develop their own code of values, bringing them to an understanding of what is good through reflection and debate. *For example:*

#### IB Diploma Programme

- **TOK:** one of the areas of knowledge is ethics – how we can know or justify what we ought to do
- **CAS:** learning outcome – students have considered the ethical implications of their actions
- **Group 4, Experimental sciences:** raises awareness of the moral, ethical, social, economic and environmental implications of using science and technology
- **Business and management:** identifies social and cultural factors, and ethical considerations in the actions of organizations
- **ITGS:** one-third of the course is entitled 'Social and ethical issues'. For every topic studied in ITGS, students are expected to look at the social and ethical issues
- **World religions:** what are the core ethical teachings of a religion and what significant interpretations of them exist?

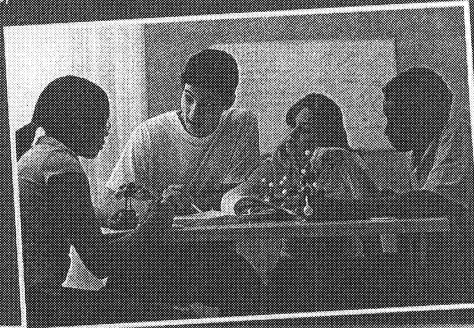
To what extent are ethics and moral conduct affected by social, political or cultural contexts?

#### Middle Years Programme

- **Ethical content:** students study and consider the ethical dimensions of issues throughout the programme
- **Areas of interaction:** through areas of interaction fundamental ethical issues are addressed across all subjects
- **Ethical issues are embedded in some of the subject objectives, for example:** discuss how science and its application interact with social, economic, political, environmental, cultural and ethical factors

#### Primary Years Programme

- **Making meaning is central to the PYP:** it applies to ethics as to all areas of knowledge
- **Action cycle:** Reflect/choose/act supports students in making sense of why they do or do not act in certain ways and supports them in building a personal code. Students begin to construct their understanding of behaviour that is accepted and expected in the community, and can justify to themselves and others the actions they take



The baroness even goes so far as to suggest that this concept of behaving well should be part of a teacher's professional training. But that's not to say that parents don't have a contribution to make.

"Common morals can be taught at school and home," says Warnock, "but sadly in some homes a moral vocabulary is not known, so then the responsibility falls more heavily on the school."

The baroness believes it makes no difference in the early years what the child's ethnic background is – that good and bad behaviour are the same throughout today's multicultural society.

"Basic principles, such as it is morally wrong to be greedy and violent, or to hurt and deceive people, are absolutely common to all cultures," says Warnock. "It's not until children are much older

that conflict between However, by then, wi difference between nic. already in place."

At primary years age, v. children can start to learn i through the concept of shan.

"Shame is enormously imp Warnock. "Very little children are disapproved of by their tea This is Aristotle's thinking and eventually you don't need othe shame – that there are things yo you were alone on a desert islar

Once children are a little bit the baroness says that the conc must also come into play.

"This is the age to make stu they are all in the same boat and pursue their own wishes without others," she says. "A child has t everybody is subject to temptati need to guard against that. Becau we are free to choose, but we mu not need to choose the bad thing.

The baroness also believes th. age will, by now, be interested in theories and moral issues within and government and those arou

"Teenagers love discussing the says, "looking at what the issues ar sense of morality comes into it. It's their eyes to global problems. The , infrastructure to teach not just gove international government; not just la international law. I find that very ex

International morality is evident that preoccupies Warnock.

"The question is whether we can public international policy which re she says. "The UN attempted this, real interest is the Universal Declar Rights. This presupposes that there morality that is superior to the diffe of morality that different cultures h

The hope is that what children l about good and bad, right and wro with them throughout life as they i into society and become global cit

"A good school," Warnock wr *Person's Guide to Modern Ethics*, " who want to go on with what the Whatever they do, they will wan it well. As they more clearly see of being human, they will wan specimens of humanity."

The baroness admits that grasp this in the same way: s some will be worse at succun

"But, if they know they can brightly, "it's more likely plus side of the divide, v society at large."

Basic principles, such as it is wrong to be greedy or violent, are common to all cultures

# ETHICAL PRACTICE

## IN THE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

The Diploma Programme requires academic rigour and active student involvement in all aspects of the curriculum. It places a strong emphasis on the ideals of international understanding and responsible citizenship. The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. Behaving and learning in an ethical way means students will observe the following practices. These are examples only and teachers will be able to add further examples of their own.

- Students will exercise academic honesty in all aspects of their work. They will acknowledge the work of others, including material taken from other sources. They will not claim as their own the work of others. They will not give their work to others to pass off as their own. They will observe the integrity of the examination room.
- Laboratory or field experiments and investigations will be undertaken in an ethical way.
  - No experiments involving other people will be undertaken without their written consent and their understanding of the nature of the experiment.
  - No experiment will be undertaken that inflicts pain on humans or live animals.
  - No experiment or fieldwork will be undertaken that damages the environment.

- No artwork, performance or film will be undertaken that damages the environment.
- No artwork, performance or film will include excessive or gratuitous violence or explicit sexual activity.
- All presentations will respect the personal, political and spiritual values of others and will contain no intention to offend in remarks about race, gender or religious beliefs.

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

All teachers must provide the following support to students.

- Give students clear guidance about the nature of ethical practice in the Diploma Programme.
- Prevent students from undertaking any unethical practice for any work that is going to be assessed (for example, for internal assessment, the extended essay or a TOK presentation).
- Ensure that no work containing any unethical practice is presented for assessment.