

## **Book Review**

### **The Six Virtues of the Educated Person**

Question 2 List the three virtues that are the most frequently modeled in your school community. Describe a time when each was modeled. (Virtues are defined on pp. 29-35.) List the three vices that are the most frequently modeled in your school community. Describe a time when each was modeled.

Imagination, understanding and generosity are the three virtues that are most commonly displayed at my school. Understanding as defined by Gardner (2000, p 119) is being able to apply knowledge to new situations. 'An individual understands a concept, skill, theory, or domain of knowledge to the extent that he or she can apply it appropriately in a new situation.'

Every term a staff developmental workshop is held, these workshops are usually conducted by other staff members and sometimes from ministry personnel. Whether it is in the area of Maths, Reading, Comprehension or Technology and I have seen where many classrooms have activities displayed inside the classrooms that showed what was done at the workshop. I, myself capitalize on the Maths games to play them with my students. Recently we have acquired a Smart Board and this is being used to enhance learning especially at the lower school. However the use of technology is being used among all grades.

The teachers are always looking for new ways to reach the children to see improvement in their academic performance. Each Thursday at planning session the coordinator will ask what new did you try. How did it work and we would share with each other. I mostly use role play with my slow students these are students who are performing below the grade level. Mrs. Henry their reading teacher and I are working effortlessly to ensure that they move to the next level. Many of the effort that is started in reading class is emphasised in their Language class. We have also decided to ask teachers on the grade to teach the subject that they are good at. Some teachers do not like teaching Maths as a result the children do not do too well either so as to alleviate this problem the more competent teachers teach Maths.

Generosity is the hall mark of a teacher. There is never a day that a student doesn't go to their teacher to complain that they do not have any money for one reason or another. Or that they are out of food and without hesitation the teacher will assist the student. It has become so prevalent that the school has set aside at least fifteen free lunches per day to be given to students who are without something to eat. Sometimes it may be more some days it may be less.

Some of the vices that will come up from time to time are pride, selfishness and weakness in character. Pride is most prevalent at graduation time, as the grade six teachers are being honoured by parents of the students who are graduating. The teachers are full of pride and take the glory for themselves instead of recognizing the work of all the teachers who have worked very hard in some cases to move the child from one stage to the next.

Selfishness can be seen when a teacher is absent from her class, we don't have assistants so if there is no prior notice from the teacher that she will be absent. Then the students will be in class making a lot of noise and disturbing others until the coordinator goes to the class to give them work and quiet them down.

Weakness in character is sometimes seen at staff meetings when an issue may arise example that of lateness and the general comments are made 'teachers you must be early for work,' they know who the late ones are but they do not approach that teacher and speak to her or him directly so the problem continues.

3. I claim the Jamaican core belief is that "elected and appointed authorities are responsible for citizen welfare" (p. 40). Discuss the significance of this belief to the improvement of Jamaican education.

I have been trying to think of another core belief since I was made aware that there is one but I will have to agree that one thing that goes without saying is that government and other appointees are responsible for the improvement of all public organizations. Principals are appointed in schools but the board and the Ministry are the ones who have the final word. This is proving to be a sore point for myself and other teachers who are trying to improve the school and education in ways that will improve the lives of students and the school plant. The first road block is the principal does absolutely nothing without the school board's approval and if they say no I don't think it is refuted, the word just comes back to us 'it was not approved.' This is very frustrating, recently the board came up with this wise idea that the teachers' bathroom's door should be closed from the outside and that the teachers should walk through the office to access

the bathroom. The reason; for security purposes, as much as we pleaded - they insist it is for the good of the school. Another example, I am in charge of the Welfare Club and to earn money we sell ice-cream on the weekdays. The board met and decided that Welfare was making too much money and therefore we could only sell ice cream to the students on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Notwithstanding the Club is still expected to cover the same things that they were doing with three-fifth less money. All the fund raising activities ideas that have been presented so far is getting a fight, the acting- principal insist that the board is not going to approve these improvement plans. If it requires any changes to the infrastructure don't even think about it as that needs government's approval and that's like flogging a dead horse.

Government gives schools fifty thousand dollars for water bill for the year, seriously that is less than one month's bill. They will tell you what they have is to stretch for all the school and that's the best they can do. So why then make it difficult for the schools to help themselves? If corporate Jamaica is not involved and they are not going to get recognized on television it isn't going to happen. It gets even worst if the school board or principal is not affiliated with the ruling party. It is very sad that politics has to be put first over the business of education.

They have also taken the books from the students, saying it is too much and that the parents cannot afford it. As far as I know when the slave owners wanted to continue to oppress the slaves they took the books from them. How can you as a government take books from the people? Because you do not want them to be liberated, to be emancipated from mental slavery, you want to be able to control them so that you can get their votes on election day.

What good is government and appointed officials doing for education absolutely none. They are the road block to the future of the education and the overall welfare of its citizens. Government's solution to problems is either sell out or privatise.

#### 4. Write a critique of Chapter 8 (pp. 105-128).

I have read chapter 8 a few times and I think it could have been more effective doing a direct comparison of the three. You spoke of natural sciences and the fact that they are directly connected while school teach them separate. How then does this compare to the social science or the aesthetic paradigm?

Even though the social science is research based it shows what has been in place and has shown some amount of results. Why would we then want to move from the known to take on the aesthetic paradigm. Is there a graph or table that shows a comparison of what possible results can be ad from using this new paradigm. Not many persons will gravitate towards this; it does not tell how much improvement can be achieved or at what point to look for improvement.

On further reading I realize that the aesthetic paradigm that is being recommended is absolutely nothing new. Teachers will tell you they have been doing these things, to what results? No one being faced with a situation goes to Marzano's book and look up what will work in this situation. It is their own imagination and based on how they were educated that will come into play. I see the aesthetic approach as one that draws on other paradigm such as the moral which speaks of generosity and humility.

What would best serve the purpose is an inclusion of all the sciences, moral and aesthetic paradigms.

*OK Colleen. I guess I did not make my points clear in Chapter 8.*

*I know everybody in your class says Jamaican teachers have always used the aesthetic paradigm because they use music, dance and poetry in their classes. That is not the definition of this paradigm. It is called an "aesthetic" paradigm because it is about bringing the six virtues to teaching/learning situations. Bringing the six virtues makes every situation more beautiful. And bringing the six vices makes every situation uglier. That is what makes it an aesthetic paradigm. When teachers use music, dance and poetry, they are using their imaginations to improve student learning. So, that is bringing one of the six virtues. That is good, but what about the others? If they do it without understanding their students, it is of no use. If they do it to make it easy on themselves (weak character), that is of no use. If they do it to look good to others (pride), that is of no use.*

*I guess none of this was clear in Chapter 8, even though I stated it at the bottom of p. 127.*

*Your grade is 3.*