

## **1986.7. Social Education**

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### **HUMANIST SOCIETY OF VICTORIA SUBMISSION: SOCIAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK**

The HSV is in strong support of the Social Education Framework P-12. The objectives of our organisation . . . are very much in line with this Framework. Our comments refer to the four sections of the Social Education planning: knowledge, skills, values and actions.

#### ***Knowledge***

Humanists stress that the scientific method is the basic tool in developing knowledge and an important part of this process is the presentation of differing views and their assessment. Essential to social education, we believe, is the study of —

- 1) *Human Relations*, i.e. interactions within relationships such as friendships, various kinships, group or team membership and citizenship. Aspects of relationships, such as solidarity, autonomy, power structures, domination, exploitation etc., could be discussed at various levels of the student's maturity and sophistication.
- 2) *Sex Education* in its physical as well as emotional aspects and with the responsibility for such consequences as unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmissible diseases.
- 3) *Basic mechanisms of communication*: language, oral and written, non-verbal signals and symbols, expression of feelings, distinction between fact and opinion, methods of clear thinking and presentation of ideas and initiatives.
- 4) *Comparative Religion*, to gain an overview of various faiths/dogmas and of humanist ethics without religion.
- 5) *Mechanisms for the resolution of conflict* in
  - a) one-to-one relationship[s],
  - b) the family,
  - c) the group/team,
  - d) the intra- and international arenas.
- 6) *The myths inherent in racist attitudes*.
- 7) *Human rights*.

#### ***Skills***

For a successful and positive participation in society one requires the skills of harmonious interaction and cooperation. The high degree of competitiveness encouraged in various forms at present does not enhance such skills. We suggest that in sporting activities the value of participation be stressed as higher than that of winning. Calm and rational discussion, i.e. the exchange of information, ideas and opinions are to be encouraged and practiced rather than debates with point scoring and a winner and a loser.

By means of discussion and assignments the following skills could be identified as essential: Mechanisms to handle stress, anxiety, loss, rejection, conflict and responsibilities. Skills of partnership such as marriage and those of successful parenting. The ability to evaluate critically and rationally the claims of the paranormal such as astrology, clairvoyance, psychic surgery etc., and alternative medicines such as iridology, homoeopathy, faith healing, etc. To offer constructive rather than destructive criticism. To practice periodic assessment .of one's own performance in the various levels of one's existence: as a student, a son/daughter, a brother/sister, a friend, a team member, a citizen (and later as a worker, spouse, parent.)

### **Values**

The teaching of human rights, comparative religion and humanist ethics would serve to develop sensitivity to and tolerance of other people's needs and values. The Common Law and the Statutes reflect the morals and attitudes of a community. The continual process of law reform testifies to the need for change of attitudes and values in our changing world. Therefore, the study of past and recent law reform would be instructive in the process of assessment of values. We believe these studies, i.e. human rights, comparative religion, humanist ethics and law reform would support values such as human worth and dignity, justice , free speech and participation in decision making.

### **Action**

Essential to many forms of social action is a well developed skill of communication and an informed consideration of consequences. Whether based on personal, local, national or global concerns, decision and actions require clear articulation of intent and its rationale. The rationale should derive from consideration and balance of benefits and harms such action would cause, i.e. the utilitarian approach. Initiatives in active learning, ("self-starters") , planning to make decisions about one's own life, moves to influence or change events by conveying views to the authorities or to the public through the media — such practice would train a valuable and responsible citizen.

### **In Addition**

In addition we wish to comment on the .problem that schools have to face. Where schools are developing programs that run counter to home values, special care and sensitivity is needed on the part of schools if the desirable outcomes of Social Education are to be achieved. But whatever we say and do in our school programs will be of little value if governments do not genuinely work towards providing social justice, eliminating poverty and discrimination and towards reducing conflict. *We enclose samples of resource material on Humanist information.*

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