

# Executive summary

An increasingly uncertain and complex world requires agile embracing of opportunities and equally responsive solutions to the challenges provoked. Under such circumstances, it is time to think harder and ask ourselves about what it is to be a human and support students to develop the types of **attitudes and values that are inherent to being human and find a sense of purpose with their own moral compass**. In doing so, students will not need to rush to a single answer, to an either-or solution, but rather reconcile tensions, dilemmas and trade-offs – for instance, between equity and freedom; autonomy and solidarity; efficiency and democratic processes; ecology and economic logic; diversity and universality; and innovation and continuity – by integrating seemingly contradictory or incompatible goals as aspects of the same reality.

Curricula can provide the opportunity for students to develop knowledge, skills, as well as values and attitudes that can support them to thrive and shape a better future towards increased well-being at individual, societal, and environmental levels. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 sets out a globally shared vision for such competencies, which students can learn both in school and beyond it.

Embedding values into curriculum is a contested topic across many countries. It is often assumed or expected that students develop values and attitudes **informally and non-formally**, e.g. through the interactions with their peers and teachers at school, siblings and parents at home, and others with whom they interact in the community. Within school, the role of “**hidden curriculum**” is also important in fostering students’ attitudes and values. However, interrelated attitudes and values are increasingly identified in international agencies’ goals for social cohesion and sustainable development. So too, are they reflected in key policy documents and in educational goals and curriculum design. The OECD Learning Compass defines values and attitudes as follows:

- **Values** are the guiding principles that underpin what people believe to be important when making decisions in all areas of private and public life.
- **Attitudes** are underpinned by values and beliefs and have an influence on behaviour.

Similar terminologies include “affective outcomes,” “aptitudes,” “beliefs,” “dispositions,” “ethics,” “morals,” “mindset,” “socio-emotional skills,” “soft skills,” “character qualities” or “virtues.” The OECD Learning Compass further classifies attitudes and values into four broad categories:

- **personal** – those related to defining a person’s individual life goals;
- **social** – those related to positive interactions and relationships with others;
- **societal** – those related to promoting social and institutional cohesion;
- **human** – those related to promoting cultural and global well-being.

The attitudes and values articulated in curriculum differ across countries and jurisdictions; however, there is nonetheless a degree of commonality of purpose in that they all support and promote an equitable, humane, just and diverse society – e.g. respect, cultural diversity, personal and social responsibility, human dignity, tolerance, democracy, equality, integrity, self-awareness, justice, freedom, inclusion, global-mindedness, equity, and fairness. The precise values and attitudes, and how they are articulated in

curriculum to maximise student learning and well-being, vary considerably. They are integrated in curriculum, either **as part of general goals or subject-specific goals and content**. Countries make different choices about which attitudes and values to link to within a particular set of subjects/disciplines.

Children and young people’s development of attitudes and values begins before engaging in school and continues well beyond it. In a **learning ecosystem**, everyone becomes an agent for change and mutually influences or reinforces one another – intentionally or unintentionally – through their interactions. This ecosystem involves their immediate as well as broader environment of parents, community, peers and government agencies, and includes teachers and others within school and learning contexts.

The complexities of embedding values into curriculum can be understood in three areas. In **curriculum redesign**, for example, countries reported challenges: i) reaching agreement on whether values should be addressed as part of curriculum redesign; ii) building consensus on which values and attitudes should be included in the curriculum; iii) even when agreement to include them is reached, the dissonance between values instilled through media and social media and those intended to be fostered through curriculum; and iv) harmonising values intended for inclusion in curriculum and changing values aligned with societal and economic changes. Alignment is key to successful strategies: e.g. alignment of local, national and international priorities; alignment with key stakeholder views, and building consensus; embedding values into subject-specific content or creating specific subjects to teach values; and capitalising on students’ connection to communities and their social context.

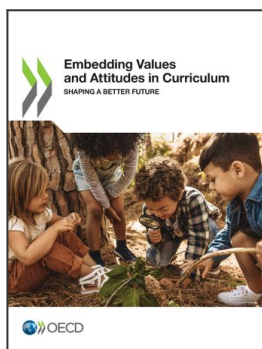
In **school and its environment**, countries reported challenges in terms of: i) variation in the levels of engagement among schools in designing and managing curriculum content on values; and ii) dissonance between teachers’ own values and beliefs and those values in the curriculum. Promising strategies were also reported, such as: i) providing some general guidelines to schools on the type of values to embed and how, either as part of the education legislation or the national curriculum; ii) embedding values into subject-specific content; and iii) rewarding good design and implementation practices that promote values learning across different schools.

With regards to **alignment with other policies**, countries faced challenges in: misalignment of values with those in pedagogies, textbooks and learning materials; and misalignment of values with those in assessment policies and practices. Countries reported a range of strategies, including: boosting teacher confidence and competence by articulating values education in teacher education and professional development; reviewing textbook content to align with the values promoted in curriculum; encouraging national and local initiatives to train and support teachers for pedagogies fit for purpose of instilling values; defining the purpose for assessing values and carefully considering the assessment methods that would fit for the purpose; and designing a “strategic package” or suite of measures to support the development of values.

Countries shared the lessons learned and some unintended consequences of embedding values education in curriculum design:

1. Acknowledge that some values are “caught”, “sought” and “aspired to” – not directly “taught”;
2. Prepare and support schools and teachers to be able to reconcile the tension and dilemmas associated with values and attitudes;
3. Reassure teachers by preserving the integrity of subject-area content and appropriately addressing values in their learning contexts;
4. Be aware of risks and opportunities in messaging through social media;
5. Make conscious efforts to reflect student voice;
6. Consider not only validity and reliability, but also authenticity, feasibility, sustainability, costs and scalability when assessing attitudes and values.

Research gaps are also indicated to further consolidate the knowledge base on values in the curriculum.



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