

Values education – a foundation for sustainability

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The paper emphasises that integrating values education into Australian university curriculum is crucial for the sustainability agenda. It is anticipated that the acquisition of moral values by students will help produce eco-citizens who will be culturally involved in the practice of sustainability.

The main message of this paper is: “Values are acquired, not learnt” and the role of the educator is to help develop/implant values, related to the social, economic and environmental facets of sustainability, in the hearts of students. The paper outlines a model of the teaching-learning processes, which complies with this concept. It is imperative that students first understand why a certain value should be acquired before actually learning about its meaning. Values have to be integrated and taught in a manner which enables students to intrinsically acquire them. The mere knowledge of values cannot ensure that people endorse them in their actions, which is fundamental in achieving sustainability.

The paper argues that theories, concepts and methodologies can be taught, however values cannot just be taught, they need to be implanted in the hearts of students; as the art of cooking cannot just be taught through texts and lessons but needs to be demonstrated and practiced. The conventional teaching-learning strategies alone are not sufficient for achieving the desired outcome – eco-citizens.

The paper concludes that the curriculum framework should provide students at all levels of education with opportunities to appreciate the indissoluble relationship between knowledge and values on the one hand, and eco-citizenship and sustainability on the other.