

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

TEACHING, ENACTING AND STICKING UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
An Evaluation Report on the Human Rights Commission's  
"Teaching for Human Rights: Activities for Schools"

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## INTRODUCTION

Very early in the life of the Human Rights Commission it became clear that developing practical materials for teaching for human rights in Australian schools would be a high priority. The number of requests for such material, plus the manifest paucity of comprehensive resources, not only nationally but internationally, prompted the Commission to develop its own materials.

A draft of a set of activities was devised for use in the senior level of primary and in junior secondary schools, and was formally appraised by Dr Don Williams, principal lecturer in curriculum studies in the School of Education at the Canberra College of Advanced Education. On the basis of his report, and the informal comments and criticisms of as many professional educators as could be prevailed upon to look at the work, that draft was revised and then placed for trial in selected schools. Short booklets written to explicate particular aspects of human rights were put out at the same time, as were two short films, to form a more comprehensive list.

The trialling process was in the hands of three curriculum design consultants, publicly contracted for the purpose. They were Professor David Cohen (for N.S.W.), Mr Colin Henry (for Victoria), and Ms Caroline Josephs (for the A.C.T.). Only six schools were officially involved, two under each jurisdiction, hence the trials were not expected to produce results of statistical significance. Rather, it was a formative evaluation, though as wide a variety of schools as practicable was involved - primary/secondary, public/private, rural/suburban, monocultural/multicultural.

The document that follows is the report of the Victorian trials. The other reports' - by Professor Cohen and Ms Josephs - were both excellent, and proved invaluable in recasting the draft materials before they were published in their present form. The Victorian report, however, because of the way it is organised, goes beyond the particular evaluative purpose and provides a glimpse into the development process as a whole. The Commission believes it should have appeal for a wider audience than the one that commissioned it, and is thus publishing it in its Occasional Paper series for those outside the Commission with an interest in the area.

There is a further purpose in publishing Mr Henry's paper at this stage. The next phase in the development of teaching for human rights is upon us. During 1985 schools within most State education systems, and many non-government schools, will be using the materials as so far developed'. There will be reports on the way the materials have worked both in the late stage primary years and also of other 'stages in the schooling process - the secondary years and the infant years. The Commission believes Mr Henry's paper will assist those involved in their use of the materials, in 1985 and beyond.

The Commission hopes this Occasional Paper will provide some insights into the thinking and the experiences that lie behind its current program to promote human rights teaching. It documents in a most engaging way the process of curriculum development in general. It also evokes a direct sense of what the Commission's materials, Teaching for Human Rights: Activities for Schools, are trying to do, not least because it allows so many of the participants, in the trials to speak for themselves. Teachers, parents, and students talk through these pages to other teachers, parents and students about what human rights teaching involves. It is a most engrossing tale.

Peter H. Bailey,  
Deputy Chairman, Human  
Rights Commission

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Throughout this report constant reference is made to the students involved in the study. The students who participated in the trial of Teaching Human Rights are :

at Laverton Park Primary

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## OVERVIEW

This report portrays the experimental trials of The Human Rights Commission's innovative curriculum, Teaching Human Rights : Activities for Schools, which were conducted by Michelle Michie and David Hitchcock with their sixth grade classes at Saint Brendan's Primary School, Flemington, and Laverton Park Primary School, Laverton, during Term Two, 1983.

The report begins with an essay that describes the principles that guided the evaluation study. It explains how evaluating a human rights curriculum presupposes evaluation procedures that respect teachers', students' and others' rights, and argues the case for democratic evaluation, involving participatory action research, as a means of enabling teachers to more adequately understand what it means to exercise human rights in educational settings. In articulating the aspirations of the evaluation, the introductory essay places the evaluation within the framework of teacher development. The assumption is that curriculum innovation necessarily requires in-service education, if it is to be effective.

The second part of the report is the first of two chapters which outline the context of the study. This chapter discusses how and why Laverton Park Primary and Saint Brendan's came to be chosen as the two schools in which to try out Teaching Human Rights. It highlights the ideological considerations which rapidly emerged as key factors in locating sites where the curriculum could be expected to be given a fair trial. Part III, the second of the two contextual chapters, concentrates on descriptions of the teachers who accepted the major responsibility for conducting the experimental trials of the program, and provides informed accounts of the classes and the schools in which the trials were conducted. This chapter is largely the work of David Hitchcock and Michelle Michie and derives its authenticity from their intimate understanding of the people with whom, and the places within which, they work. The proposition argued in this part of the report is that both of the two schools and classrooms that pioneered the innovation were exceptionally suited for the curriculum trial. The exceptional characteristic shared by both schools was staff sympathetic to the cause of The Human Rights Commission. However, given similarly sympathetic and enthusiastic teachers, there are no reasons to believe that thousands of other schools would be any less well placed to adopt a human rights program than were Laverton Park and Saint Brendan's.

Part four of the report consists of glimpses of the curriculum. Twenty cameos, along with explanatory notes, are presented as 'snapshots' of activities, events and products that represent the curriculum in operation. Although such a limited portrayal of what occurred cannot hope to capture anything approaching the total picture, glimpses of 'Teaching Human Rights' as it was enacted at Laverton Park and Saint Brendan's can evoke illustrations and images of the program. The hope is that these images are helpful in further understanding the educational practices the curriculum was responsible for producing and that they can convey reasonably representative examples of the teaching and learning it promoted.

'Glimpses of the Curriculum' includes a number of brief evaluations of particular parts of the curriculum. 'Judgements', part five of the report, continues this motif and concentrates on the responses and reactions of a number of evaluators of the program. David Hitchcock and Michelle Michie are the major contributors to this section, but Bruce Peake also makes a significant contribution as he records a principal's viewpoint. A collection of children's impressions is also included. A fourth perspective is represented by comments made by parents as replies they provided in response to requests for their views on the study of human rights in which their children were engaged.

Chapter six reviews the judgements made about the curriculum. It considers a number of the effects the curriculum had on teachers and students and a range of issues that was revealed during the curriculum trial. This section is intended to be a commentary on the evaluations made by others in part five; it tries not to repeat evidence already given but to record observations and reflections a critical friend might make in reviewing the program and its implementation.

The final chapter dwells on the future and what might be done to get the curriculum more widely used.

## PART I : ASPIRATION

### 1. On Principle

Any curriculum expresses particular values and value systems; implicitly or explicitly it expresses a social and moral philosophy. Few curricula, however, are as explicit about the values they represent or the social and moral philosophy they espouse as the Human Rights Commission's, Teaching Human Rights. Perhaps few can be; there are not many other sponsors of educational programs who can claim to have such an explicit, self-conscious and unambiguous commitment to advancing human interests.

The Human Rights Commission's mandate to promote social justice, human emancipation, tolerance, equalitarianism, human worth and dignity, creates the expectation that these principles will determine and guide its educational undertakings. That should hardly come as a surprise, because the ideas and principles The Commission "lives for" are more than laudable abstractions. They have practical significance because they indicate attainable forms of social life and definable interactions between real people in real situations. More simply, they specify actual ways in which people should relate to and treat each other. These principles are expressed, or denied expression, in the everyday experiences of teachers and students. They are also expressed, or denied expression, in the way teachers are treated by curriculum developers, researchers and evaluators. Curriculum evaluation has not always been characterised by recognition of the rights of teachers involved in evaluation studies, and it is only since the early sixties and the emergence of the "new wave" evaluators that the possible range of options available in evaluation has become widely recognised.

Barry McDonald (1976) has distinguished between three types of evaluation; "bureaucratic", "autocratic" and "democratic". The principal question which determines this classification is the question of who controls the pursuit of new knowledge and who has access to it. A central purpose of this report is to endorse "democratic evaluation" as the only type of evaluation appropriate for an evaluation of a human rights curriculum. "Democratic" evaluation, in McDonald's words,

... is an information service to the community about the characteristics of an educational programme. It recognises value pluralism and seeks to represent a range of interests in its issue formation. The basic value is an informed citizenry, and the evaluator acts as broker in exchanges of information between differing groups. His techniques of data gathering and presentation must be accessible to non-specialist audiences. His main activity is the collection of definitions of, and reactions to, the programme.

He offers confidentiality to informants and gives them control over his use of information. The report is non recommendatory, and the evaluator has no concept of information misuse. The evaluator engages in periodic negotiation of his relationships with sponsors and programme participants. The criterion of success is the range of audiences served. The report aspires to 'best seller' status. The key concepts of democratic evaluation are 'confidentiality', 'negotiation' and 'accessibility'. The key justificatory concept is the 'right to know'. (p. 238)

Although the evaluation study portrayed in this report almost certainly falls short of the ideal, it aspired to be "democratic" evaluation. And perhaps it attempted to be even more than that, for its "basic value" was an "empowered citizenry". "Empowerment" represents an extension of the ideal of an "informed citizenry", which in this context seeks not only enlightenment but also to activate "the political will to transform social conditions so that impediments to the rationality, justice and human solidarity of educational arrangements may be identified and rooted out" (Kemmis, 1983, p. 5).

## 2. The Study This Evaluation Tried To Be

Ambitious in the sense that it was guided by "democratic" principles, the study was nevertheless relatively modest in scope, intensity, and duration. It was set up soon after the middle of May 1983, and ran for just one school term, beginning in the first week of June and ending in the last week of August; it was concentrated in two schools and largely focused on two teachers and their sixth-grade classes. Because of its limited scope and brevity, the project may well be described in David Jenkins' (1980) words as "short, sharp, intensive, based on hit-and-run fieldwork and writing up quickly while hot" (p. 8). The course the evaluation took was not entirely accidental however, nor was serious injury done to those whose lives it touched.

Other indications of the kind of evaluation this study tried to be are contained in the proposal made to The Human Rights Commission. The most explicit parts of the proposal characterise the evaluation as

- i taking a strong line on participation, collaboration and self-reflection as guiding principles for its operation;
- ii expressing a commitment to safeguarding the interests of participants and giving them a genuine role in planning, conducting and reporting the study; and
- iii combining elements of two approaches to educational investigation, multi-site case study and collaborative action research.

Although less emphatically specific, the study also aspired to be:  
 iv more concerned with collecting definitions of, and reactions to the program than making judgements of it:

recognised as using techniques of data gathering and presentation that are eclectic as well as being accessible to non-specialist audiences; and

vi of interest to a number of audiences and concerned with trying to provide answers to the questions those audiences wanted answered.

## 2.1 Responsive to its audiences

In assessing who the evaluation report was meant for, it seemed obvious enough that there were three groups which were likely to constitute the most interested audiences. Ralph Pettman, Sylvia Gleeson and their colleagues in the Promotion and Information Branch of The Commission were the first audience; practising teachers likely to have an interest in education for human rights the second; and the third, teacher-educators, policy-makers and other potential supporters of the curriculum (including representatives of the Catholic Education Office and the Victorian Education Department who have already watched with considerable interest the trialling of Teaching Human Rights).

Each of these audiences has its own particular interest in the results of the evaluation study. The Steering Committee wants to know as much as it can find out about the suitability and effectiveness of both the curriculum and its associated materials in order to be able to make worthwhile changes before the curriculum is finally made available for general use. Teachers are likely to want to know what other teachers' experiences can tell them about the intentions of the curriculum, the teaching/learning possibilities it provides, and the match between its intended and actual achievements. Teacher educators, policy makers and other members of that audience will want to know whether or not trials of the curriculum indicate that it deserves more extensive promotion and wider dissemination.

Despite these differences in the questions particular audiences want to have answered about the curriculum, it is not unreasonable to suggest that each member of the three target audiences could agree on a number of propositions about curriculum : that a curriculum is most sensibly regarded as a set of actions and practices, that curriculum problems (like all educational problems) arise only as problems of practice and are solved only by doing something, and that answers to curriculum questions require studies of curricula in action. Working from these propositions

about the nature of curriculum, it requires no imagination to understand that the questions each audience was seeking answers to were questions essentially concerned with the practical problems and possibilities of Teaching Human Rights as these are encountered in schools and classrooms. As a consequence, the study was deliberately biased towards practical issues.

## 2.2 Critical

The priority given to practical curriculum questions in this study, particularly the decision to evaluate it by "starting it up and seeing how it ran" should not be interpreted as a pre-occupation with narrow, technical questions about teaching methods and teaching practices. The questions asked of the curriculum were not constrained by utilitarian (that is, narrowly "practical") teaching perspectives in which teaching is separated from its ethical, political and moral roots. Because it was conceived as an opportunity for school-based teacher development, and because it took a strong line on participation, collaboration and self-reflection, the evaluation of Teaching Human Rights simply could not be content with "technical training" or "personnel development". Although the professional development of teachers is often understood as

a technical matter of up-grading teachers' skills within a more or less stable view of the role of education in society. (Kemmis, 1983, p. 2)

this project could not be content with such a blinkered perspective. The image which informed the project was socially critical; it was the image of teachers

as critical analysts of both their own practices as teachers and as critical analysts of educational institutions in our society. (ibid, p. 1).

This view of teacher development is an expression of conscientisation the process in which people, not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-historical reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality (Freire, 1970. P. 27).

A conception of teachers as operatives, whose function is to implement some designer's "teacher-proof" curriculum, is plainly inconsistent with the spirit and principles of The Human Rights Commission. So much so, in fact, that it would be extremely difficult to escape the charge of hypocrisy if denying teachers the right to fully understand and control the work they do was to be accepted as unproblematic within The Commission's educational work. Again, valuing the development of students as rational and creative beings concerned to use their talents for the improvement of society, also has direct and compelling implications for teacher development. There are

few good reasons for believing that teachers who are themselves denied the right to exercise their own powers of rationality and creativity will find it easy to treat their students differently.

### 2.3 Action Research Driven

Being a teacher involved in trialling the human rights curriculum did not, therefore, mean merely being trained to implement the program. It meant considerably more than that. Agreement to participate in the project meant making a commitment to experiment with the curriculum, or more exactly, to subject the curriculum in action to critical analysis using the research process known as "action research".

What is "action research"? In an educational context, "action research" refers to a range of activities in curriculum development, professional development, school improvement, systems Planning and policy development. These activities have in common the identification of strategies of planned action which are implemented, and then systematically submitted to observation, reflection and change. Participants in the action being considered are integrally involved in all of these linked activities of planning action, implementing it, keeping track of its intended and unintended effects, and reflecting on the meaning of the consequences.

Recent definitions of action research stress three minimal requirements which distinguish it from the changes teachers are continually making to their practice:

- i spirals of planning changes, acting to implement those changes, observing the intended and unintended effects of such action, and reflecting on the consequences;
- ii participation in the research by the people involved in making the changes being considered; and
- iii strategic action, that is, studying things by deliberately changing them and seeing the effects.

Defined in this way, teachers involved in an action research project on curriculum innovation are key participants in a program of planned change designed to determine the effects of introducing a new curriculum by systematically and progressively acquiring the practical knowledge and insight which emerges from several linked cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting on the curriculum in practice. Action research on curriculum innovation is a systematic means of learning from experience; it proceeds by changing what is taught in schools and studying the effects of that change.

Action research has acquired the reputation of being both a powerful means of solving practical problems (such as the problems associated with developing and implementing innovative curricula) and of generating new understandings about familiar social situations (such as the real as opposed to proclaimed curriculum operating in a school, the social consequences of conventional teaching practices, or the political nature of curriculum changes). Action research certainly aims for improvement in practice but it is important to recognise that the improvement its proponents have in mind include improvement in the understanding of practice by practitioners and improvement of the social situation in which the practice occurs.

Action research has an overtly political agenda. It mirrors critical social science in that it

... is clearly rooted in concrete social experience, for it is ... explicitly conceived with the purpose of overcoming felt dissatisfaction. Consequently, it names the people for whom it is directed; it analyses their suffering; it offers enlightenment to them about what their real needs and wants are; it demonstrates to them in what way their ideas about themselves are false and at the same time extracts from these false ideas implicit truths about them; it points to those inherently contradictory social conditions which both engendered specific needs and make it impossible for them to be satisfied; it reveals the mechanisms in terms of which this process of oppression operates and, in the light of changing social conditions which it describes, it offers a mode of activity by which they can intervene in and change the social processes which are thwarting them. A critical social theory arises out of the problems of everyday life and is constructed with an eye towards solving them. (Fay, 1977, p. 109)

There is no disguising the common liberationist intent shared by action research and critical social science. Both seek to break the hold tradition, habit, bureaucratic systemisation, and individual expectations have on individuals. But the emancipatory interest is more than a bitter, destructive response which would take a hatchet to prevailing social (including educational) arrangements without providing any plans for creating an orderly process of intellectual and social reconstruction. Quite the opposite, action research and critical social science embody participatory processes for social reform.

Although no secret was made of the prominent place being given to action research in this study, and although attempts were made to explain what the process involved (in the proposal, for example, and during the discussions conducted with teachers before the project proper got under way), it would be misleading to suggest that the teachers concerned were

adequately enough informed to realise all the implications of what they were getting into. Before they had had the opportunity to try out the process for themselves it is hard to know how they could have been. Consequently, it seemed pointless to spend too much time on abstract explanation. Going on the principle that all genuine knowledge originates in direct experience, it seemed more than reasonable to expect that having an opportunity to implement planned changes to their practice (by teaching the new curriculum), and then systematically submitting those changes to observation, reflection and further change, would provide the teacher/researchers with the sort of personal knowledge of action research which would enable them to judge whether or not the claims made for action research are, in fact, sensible claims to make. Experience would reveal whether or not this form of enquiry could live up to its reputation for generating practical improvement and achieve its potential for enlightenment (liberating teachers from the dictates of tradition, habit, bureaucratic systemisation and individual expectations).

In less general terms, the expectation was that having been involved in action researching Teaching Human Rights, teachers would have concrete suggestions to make about the program (for example, the activities that worked successfully, and those that need improving) which would reflect a critical understanding of its educational purposes, its ethical, political and moral values, and the social interests it serves.

#### 2.4 Participatory

Enough has been said already to indicate that talking of teachers "participating" in this study may not be the best way of indicating the contributions they made to the evaluation. The evaluation depended on their researching the curriculum in their classrooms, on the evidence they collected about its effects, and the judgements they made of its intentions and educational consequences. The reactions and reflections of teachers as they enacted the curriculum over the course of the term constitute a major part of this report, but it also draws on others' views and perspectives. These include the reactions of children, principals, other teachers not directly involved in implementing the program, parents, a curriculum consultant and the external evaluator.

A deliberate effort has been made to capture the multiplicity of actions and reactions that the curriculum was responsible for setting in train. To that effect, extensive and detailed records were compiled.

These include files of students' written work, teachers' and students' diaries, records of interviews, field notes, responses solicited from parents, photographs and teachers' lesson plans and reviews. Without a Joint effort, it would have been impossible to compile such a complete portfolio of data and thus capture such a comprehensive picture of the curriculum.

In reporting the study a serious attempt has been made to refrain from assuming that one author has an exclusive right to speak. The report tries to permit as many people as possible to participate in reporting the study by reserving substantial sections of the document for different versions of what audiences need to be told. In opting for that form of discourse, the report had also tried to preserve the authenticity, richness, and potency of "ordinary" language and to resist the inclination of "academic" prose to iron out the wrinkles, creases and folds in others' accounts so as to produce some supposedly consistent and coherent portrayal of the curriculum in use.

Equality of participation is not achieved in reporting the study. Nevertheless it does recognise the right of all participants to be heard, as well as acknowledging the value of collecting and recording a variety of viewpoints and attitudes towards the program. The report has been negotiated with the teachers it portrays and has been cleared by them as a fair, accurate and relevant portrayal of the events that constituted the curriculum's implementation.

In aspiring to be the evaluation this study attempted to be, the project deliberately tried to respect the human rights of the people whose lives it affected. This is a point to do with principle, and practising principles, as has already been argued. But there is also a related pragmatic aspect to this study's particular form and function. It has to do with what these case studies might have to say about the possibilities of repeating the procedure by commissioning a second and further rounds of evaluation studies in which teachers would participate in action research studies in order to produce answers required by The Commission as it seeks to progressively perfect its curriculum. The centre/periphery model of curriculum dissemination has so repeatedly proved to be ineffective that there is an obvious and urgent need for alternative ways of getting schools to adopt new curricula. The results of this study may not be devoid of implications about the potential that involvement in action research might have as a means of bringing about genuine and lasting curriculum change.

## PART II : GETTING STARTED

### 1. Choosing the Schools

The two schools that became involved in trialling Teaching Human Rights, Laverton Park Primary and Saint Brendan's Flemington, were not chosen randomly. Apart from the Commission's specification that the trials be conducted in one school in the metropolitan area and one outside Melbourne, and its decision to concentrate its initial educational efforts in primary schools, there were few formal restrictions on the sites that could be chosen. There were, however, particularly real considerations that were of crucial practical importance in deciding which schools should be approached to participate in the project. The most significant of these considerations had to do with the political and educational climate of the institution.

Both Saint Brendan's and Laverton Park were invited to participate in the study for one predominant reason, and that was, that there were teachers and principals in each school whose educational values and philosophy matched the values and philosophy of the curriculum.

Neither the developers nor the evaluators of the Human Rights curriculum were unaware that such a program could be construed as radical and "too hot to handle" in some schools. It would be naive to expect that a curriculum explicitly designed to serve the interests of human emancipation "by revealing the mechanism through which the process of human oppression operates" and "offering a mode of operation by which people can intervene in and change social processes which thwart their humanity", to use Brian Fay's words, would meet with universal acclamation. Having said that, it did not seem unreasonable to expect that education for human rights would seem consistent with the principles of liberal democracy and that the curriculum would, in general, be widely supported in Australian schools. An incident early in the history of the program suggests that such an assumption may be somewhat more problematic than many Australians like to believe. The same incident also reveals that teachers cannot yet expect to enjoy equality of participation in curriculum decision-making as a matter of right.

### 2. "A Knock-back"

The principal <sup>of</sup> the first school, which appeared to be a likely site to participate in the study, unexpectedly declined the offer after seeing the curriculum document. The grounds for his unwillingness to be associated with

the curriculum were never very clearly specified, but enough was said to create the impression that he regarded Teaching Human Rights as raising too many sensitive issues and was therefore, likely to be controversial and uncomfortably risky. The decision came as a mild shock because the teachers in that school to whom the offer was originally made, had appeared enthusiastic about experimenting with the new program, and had been so right up until the principal indicated his disapproval. It was a sobering moment because no-one considering the offer seemed to have anticipated anything other than the principal's approval, support and encouragement.

This set-back was initially disappointing, but it was also enlightening because it illustrated the ideological differences that can exist between a curriculum's objectives and an effective school policy. Being "knocked back" highlighted in a very practical way the need to find sites in which to run the trials where the values of the curriculum were shared by principals and teachers. It showed that it was foolish to expect to be less than discriminating when trying to place the program because its explicit Political agenda was likely to be a barrier to its adoption, at least in certain schools. The immediate challenge was to locate schools where the values expressed by the curriculum were not regarded with suspicion.

#### 34 At Laverton Park

Where would Teaching Human Rights be best understood and appreciated? Where would' its emancipatory intentions seem least controversial? In response to questions like these, one school outside MelbOurne suggested itself immediately. That school was Laverton Park. One Melbourne school was also an obvious choice, and that one was Saint Brendan's, Flemington. The question of whether or not these schools would find it possible to be involved could not be answered until the question was put to their staff, but the reputation of each school's staff left few doubts about how comfortable they would be with a socially critical curriculum.

Anyone familiar with Bruce Peake, Laverton Park's present principal, will understand why Laverton Park was an obvious school in which to place a human rights curriculum. His reputation as an enlightened teacher, principal and teacher educator, and particularly his penchant for establishing positive and equalitarian relationships with children, students, teachers, parents and other members of the community, reflects a long-established commitment to human values. It was a fortunate coincidence that Laverton Park's 1983 Grade Six teacher, David Hitchcock, expressed similar commitments in his practice.

It was also fortunate that when asked, he was both able and willing to agree to take pp the task of appraising the human rights program.

#### 4. At Saint Brendan's

Laverton Park was located by tapping into an informal network of friends and colleagues. Saint Brendan's emerged as the other site in much the same way, although this time the network of friends and colleagues comprised a different set of contacts. Saint Brendan's was invited to join the evaluation on the advice of Sister Marie Kehoe (Director of the Institute of Catholic Education, Ascot Vale Campus), and Kathie Johnston (Education Consultant, Catholic Education Office). Sister Marie and the C.E.O.V. had demonstrated a lively interest in the human rights curriculum from the time an evaluation of its effects was first announced. In the same way as the reputation of the staff of Laverton Park went before it, Saint Brendan's principal and teachers were well known beyond the bounds of the school for innovative and vigorous educational practices, particularly in the interest of the underprivileged.

The work of Sister Noella Sullivan, Saint Brendan's principal, Brigid Bangay, the school's deputy principal, Michelle Michie, and other members of staff of the school, has earned Saint Brendan's unusual prominence in C.E.O. circles. It is necessary to be in the school for only a short time to understand the reputation its staff has acquired, and to appreciate why it would be advanced by those "in the know" as the obvious choice to implement a human rights curriculum. Part of Saint Brendan's achievements are expressed in the remarkable sense of community which comes through in the relationships people in the school have with each other; another part is the unusual degree of thoughtful deliberation and discussion which one notices in conversation about educational issues with staff members; and still another is the range of innovative teaching practices that is in operation in the school.

Once again, although she was already heavily committed to a variety of innovations both internal and external to the school, it was fortunate for the project that Michelle Michie was able to participate in the evaluation study and to share with David Hitchcock a major responsibility for testing the curriculum in practice, evaluating its effects and reporting on the experience.

The time which was taken to locate Saint Brendan's and Laverton Park, was time well spent. Michelle Michie's and David Hitchcock's enthusiasm for the curriculum, their commitment to giving it a fair trial, and their experimental approach to their teaching, created a great deal of confidence in their

capacity to provide answers to the questions the . study's audiences- wanted answered. In retrospect it is perfectly clear that that confidence was well placed.

#### 5. Choices and Agreements

The Size and sheer extent of the curriculum made plain the need to be selective about choosing sections of the program to try out during a one term experimental trial. There are enough activities in the handbook to occupy students over several terms, and at the start it was not at all clear what David and Michelle could "get through" •in the term. Three general decisions about content selection were agreed to during the preliminary discussions : the first was that David and Michelle should select from the activity bank those activities that in their judgement seemed most appropriate for their classes; secondly, that they should determine the sequence in which they introduced the activities and need not feel obliged to follow the sequence in the book; and thirdly, that two or three hours of each school week would, on the average, be devoted to Teaching Human Rights.

With regard to evaluation procedure, the action research cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting was rehearsed once or twice. Michelle and David were asked to gather as much evidence as they could about their students', their own and other's reactions to the program; and they agreed to having the external evaluator in their classroom for half a day each fortnight. The general understanding was that we would be working together for the term and that at the end of that time we would each contribute a substantial piece of writing on our reactions to the curriculum. This writing would be based on and supported by data systematically gathered over the course of the project.

1. Exceptional Schools?

It was David Hitchcock and his twenty Laverton Park sixth graders, and Michelle Michie and her thirty-two Saint Brendan's sixth graders, who shared the major responsibility for trialling Teaching Human Rights. Michelle and David are both teachers in their late twenties, but each already has substantial and varied teaching experience and still retains the energy, enthusiasm and idealism which older teachers seem sometimes to have abandoned.

In many ways both teachers have hard jobs. David's class is exceptionally small for a state primary school where classes of near thirty students are still the rule, but his students have a reputation for keeping teachers on their toes and being quick to react to over-zealous authority. Unlike David's class, Michelle's students come from an exceptionally wide range of economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds; some are the children of recent immigrants who speak and understand English only imperfectly and many know first hand the consequences of unemployment, political repression and social or ethnic discrimination. Many of these students have a well developed capacity for verbal duelling and vocal combat and they are not beyond vigorously negotiating the content and conduct of their education with their teacher, nor letting it be known when situations are not to their liking. Life in neither classroom is, without its aggravations, tensions and frustrations, but it is not all grim or serious either. Both teachers' professional satisfaction and evident good humour will testify to that.

There are many differences one could list between the classes; one consists of twenty students, the other has thirty-two; one is like a microcosm of the United Nations, the other has much less ethnic and cultural diversity; one is in a state school, the other in a Catholic school; one is in an inner suburban area, the other on the fringes of the city.

It is not difficult to find differences and it is not hard to find similarities. But it is hard to prove that either class is unlike most "normal" classes found in many typical Australian schools, and neither could be described as a hand-picked group specially chosen to participate in the project.

In the following pages David Hitchcock and Michelle Michie establish more about the context of this study as they outline their teaching careers and describe their schools and students. Apart from the educational and personal values of each of these people - and the significance of that crucial factor should not go undetected as has been noted already - it would be difficult to

sustain the argument that introducing the human rights curriculum in either of these schools was any easier than it would have been in thousands of others. Both schools and both grades were handpicked to pioneer the innovation because of their teachers, but in many ways they were not unlike most normal schools.

## 2. The Teachers

Michelle Michie (by Michelle Michie) :

My initial teacher training was at Toorak Teacher's College. I commenced teaching in 1976 at Saint Ignatius' Boys School in Richmond. This school catered for boys from Grade 2 to Year 8 - mainly disadvantaged and migrants. Many of the boys were sent there after being expelled from other schools, or after being released from 'training' institutions. A number of boys were physically handicapped. In my six years at Saint Ignatius' I worked as class-teacher with Grades 6, 4 and 2, as well as teaching 'remedial language' for one year. I had the privilege of working for an inspirational principal, Mr. Ronan McCaffrey, and with a remarkable team of dedicated, over-worked teachers. During my time in Richmond, I studied part-time at Melbourne State College (B.Ed.), but due to heavy school commitments my studies have been deferred.

In 1981, Saint Ignatius' school became co-educational, and dropped its junior secondary department. I taught a co-ed Grade 6 class in that year. Although it was an emotional wrench to leave Richmond, I considered that it was time I moved on. Saint Brendan's, Flemington, seemed to cater for the same type of children as those at Richmond so I was pleased to be employed as a Grade 6 class-teacher in 1982. My other roles within the school include that of 'Triple Co-ordinator', which means being responsible for initiation (student teachers), induction (being a tutor-teacher for beginning teachers) and inservice (whole staff professional development).

I am married, and enjoy travel, reading, embroidery, and scuba-diving. My husband and I are expecting our first child in December and I anticipate taking a full twelve months maternity leave, before returning to full-time teaching at Saint Brendan's in 1985.

David Hitchcock (by David Hitchcock) :

I am a teacher who has had nine years experience in the classroom. I am married with two pre-school children of my own and a twelve year old foster son who attends the local secondary school.

have taught one year at a large inner suburban primary school with a very large migrant population. Following that I spent five years as a head teacher of a small rural school, where the student population came largely from well established local families. In my later years there, an influx of children from welfare supported families began moving into the area seeking an alternative lifestyle to that which they were used to in Melbourne and its suburbs.

Following my term in the country I returned to Hopper's Crossing which is a rapidly growing new housing area not far west of Laverton. The families were in the middle income earning range, with a significant number of families having both Parents working either full, or part time. In my two years there I first taught Grade 3 and then Grade 6. In this my first year at Laverton Park I have a Grade 6 who are active participants in the trialling of this human rights course.

It has always been my belief that the teaching of correct attitudes to learning should be of far greater importance than a battery of reams of factual information. I have always endeavoured to give my students responsibility in determining what should be included in the curriculum, and therefore, ultimately responsibility for their own destiny in so far as their time spent in my classroom allows. Equality between teachers and students is, I believe, the ultimate aim which would allow the maximum benefit to be gained from the curriculum taught. To my mind an effective working classroom atmosphere should not be one which sees the teacher dominating proceedings both in the areas of discipline and input of ideas. Instead, a learning environment where children have the chance to communicate by both the written and oral word, as well as through creative media, should be encouraged. This usually necessitated a working noise level in the room which may be above the expectation of other teachers. However, I firmly believe that over the full term of a school year this environment enables children to develop more realistic and worthwhile attitudes to learning than would be possible in a more stifled classroom environment.

### 3. The Schools and the Classes

Saint Brendan's (Michelle Michie) :

Our school, in Wellington Street, Flemington, caters for the needs of the families in our parish, as well as for others who choose our educational and religious philosophy. The staff of approximately thirty teachers, including

part-timers, care for the needs of over four hundred students. The children are divided into two classrooms at each level from Prep. to Grade 6, although whenever possible the children work in small 'ability' groups. Flemington is an inner-city suburb of Melbourne which is noted for its racecourse, stockyards, factories, high-rise Housing Commission estates, high unemployment and crime rate, and mainly socio-economically disadvantaged population.

The class chosen to try out the 'Human Rights' program is fairly typical of all classes in Saint Brendan's. In Grade 6 Blue in 1983, there are currently thirty-two children aged between nine and twelve years. Most are from migrant families, in fact sixteen different cultures/nationalities are represented in this one room. In order of the size of the group, these cultures are Italian, Vietnamese, Australian, Maltese, Filipino, Croatian, Serbian, Lebanese, Indian, Chilean, English, Fijian, Burmese, Argentinian, Spanish and Libyan. Five of the children speak only English at home. Nineteen children speak a mixture of English and another language, and nine children speak only another language at home.

In almost every case, the children came from a low socio-economic family background. Eight children live in the nearby Housing Commission 'estate'. Most of the others live in rented terrace houses or flats. Six children have single parents. Two other children have no parents and live with older siblings. The Asian children are refugees, as are some of the others (for political reasons). Ten supporting parents are listed on the roll as unemployed, or as pensioners, although I suspect there is a much higher "hidden" level of unemployment. There are two 'professional level' parents - a teacher and an accountant.

Despite language and social handicaps, learning disabilities and behavioural problems, these children are generally happy at school. As well as a challenge, they are often a delight to teach. As a class group they are noted for their generosity, enthusiasm and sense of fun, capacity for work, as well as a highly developed sense of justice.

The diversity of cultural heritage provides an enriching dimension to the curriculum. For example, two community languages are taught to all children throughout the school (Vietnamese and Italian). This will hopefully increase the status and prestige of Vietnamese and Italian speakers in the eyes of their peers, as well as forming a solid basis for learning languages in secondary school. It also aims to facilitate greater communication with newcomers from overseas, and to dispel the feeling of alienation many new migrants suffer. The Vietnamese children also attend a 'Mother-Tongue-Maintenance' lesson weekly in order to continue developing the Vietnamese language at their own level.

Our overall school language program aims at showing the children and their parents that we respect and value all languages equally, despite the fact that we teach .mainly in English.

Laverton Park (David Hitchcock) :

Laverton Park is the smaller of two primary schools situated in Laverton, a semi-rural, semi-industrial suburb on the extreme western fringe of Melbourne. Although located in the Shire of Werribee, which suggests a country location, Laverton is normally considered part of Melbourne. Laverton is unlike most of "the city" in that it is surrounded by large areas of grazing land, although even that description is misleading, because the "grazing land" is rocky country of poor quality which supports mainly neglected horses and crops of huge Scottish thistles.

About 65% of the population of Laverton lives in the R.A.A.F. base which is the most prominent feature of the town. The remaining 35% occupy Housing Commission residences.

The Grade 6 class has twenty children; thirteen of them are boys and seven girls, which creates a ratio in favour of the boys of almost two to one. More than half of this class were part of the 1982 composite Grade 5/6 which had built a reputation in the school for being very aggressive, poorly behaved and generally anti "the system". Many of the children have had a wide experience of schooling both interstate and overseas and their ability to adapt to different situations is well developed. Within the class there are a number of children whom one would consider very good, all-round students. There is a fairly average spread of ability within the grade and only one child who has severe learning disabilities. The vast majority of the children have very well developed oral language skills, attributable possibly to the children's past freedom in the running of their classrooms. Their written skills are not as well developed and consequently they would much rather talk than write.

The natural exuberance they frequently show sometimes has to be curbed to allow concentration on set tasks. Going on their past records these children are not always easy to manage; two of them have been known to be aggressive, anti-social, and disruptive in class. The rest of the class are generally well behaved, but during discussion with other teachers it became evident that there is a general tendency among the children in this school to resent punishment and disciplinary tasks.

## PART IV : GLIMPSES OF THE CURRICULUM

An evaluation of a curriculum innovation in two classrooms for one school term is not a large project, judged by the standards of many evaluation studies. All the same, a great deal can happen in two classrooms during a term, even if one considers only a small part of the total curriculum. Consequently it is not at all easy to do justice to the variety, range and complexity of events which occur over such a period of time. Glimpses of the human rights curriculum as it was enacted in David Hitchcock's and Michelle Michie's classes cannot hope to convey all that happened in that lengthy and intensive educational experience. But snapshots of the real events that occurred in both schools can capture parts of the total picture and re-present events, situations and circumstances that provide an informative, if not complete, record of the curriculum in action.

This part of the report might be thought of as a series of literary photographs taken at various points of time. There are twenty glimpses in all. Each is given a title and followed by brief explanatory notes to provide it with a setting. If these glimpses conjure up pictures of authentic classroom scenes they will have served their purpose.

1. The Rights of Every Grade 6 Student

(The 'bill of rights' of the Laverton Park Sixth Graders. It was collectively drafted and displayed prominently in their classroom for most of the term.)

To speak to the teacher in private about private problems.

2 To be accepted as an individual person.

3 To whisper while working.

4 To eat our lunch at our own pace with a limit of 20 minutes.

5 To have sensible free time after completing our work.

6 To read out things to the teacher without anyone interrupting.

To go to the toilet once per session without asking the teacher's permission.

To sing, as a class, at least one song every day.

To change seats every fortnight when mutually acceptable.

## 2. Writing 'About Rights

(Three of Saint Brendan's sixth graders wrote these examples Of people being denied their human rights during the early part of the program.)

When Children are born, they are free and should always be treated in the same way not like in one case when a child was born deaf he lives in England himself and his family wanted to come to Australia so the parents went to the Australia house in England and asked if they could go to Australia but weren't aloud just because the boy was deaf. And our Government wouldn't let that family come.'

Once there was a group of kids that (stuck to) always work together and when a new girl came in and the teacher said to sit with the group and they didn't like her because she was brown. in this way she didn't get her right. articale 2 :

Once there was a boy named Romnel. Who was 5 years old. His mum and Dad sent him down to the shopping centre called "People are kind". The boy went into the shopping centre and bought all the things his Mum and Dad wanted him to buy. Then as he aproached the counter the Manager told him to get out because he was Philippines.

### • Reading About Rights

(David Hitchcock read these' pages (18-22) of the student text, Human Rights : A Handbook, as his students followed in their own copies.)

#### Human Rights in Australia

What about Australia? This is a rich country, where most people are well fed. We <sup>have</sup> houses, schools, hospitals and many other services. We think of ourselves as free and we like to believe that these good things are there for all Australians and that everybody gets his or her human rights. We like to think, in other words, that everyone who lives here gets a fair go.

Well, they don't. Human rights do not just .happen. They have to be made to happen. Laws have to be passed and they have to be used. For .example: the Aboriginal people of Australia have often found it very hard to get the kind of things they ought, as human beings, to have. The story is the same for many people who came to live here after World War II, for many poor and disabled people, and many women. Their lives are nowhere near as full and, as happy as they ought to be.

How do you think anyone would feel if they were not allowed to live a norms], .lufe because they or their parents came from another country? Row would you feel if you were always treated differently because your skin was a colour that those around you did not like? How would you feel if, just because you were a girl, there were things you were not expected to do, even though you knew you could do them and most boys already did?

Changing ideas about what is right, and changing the laws that go With them, can take a long time. People have to argue against what they believe to be wrong.

And the arguments go on. They have not stopped. It is pp to us to take part in them if more people (not just here, but in other places too - people like Maria, like Shanti, like Ben) are finally to get their human rights.

#### 4. A Day in the Life of Teaching Human Rights

(Michelle Michie wrote these cameos as an introduction to a draft journal article about her experiences teaching human rights.)

Lunchtime in a crowded inner-city schoolyard: Ducking flying footballs two Grade 6 students are collecting signatures on a petition which they intend to present to the Principal. The topic "Our school yard should not be separated into 'Girls and Boys' yards".

About 2.30 p.m. in an annexe to a classroom: Eight students from different ethnic backgrounds are involved in a heated debate about whether or not all Vietnamese people are rich. One boy offers to do a survey to find out "if they all drive Commodores".

Late afternoon in a classroom: A student "jury" finds a classmate guilty of a misdemeanor and administers six punishment strokes on the "upper deck" with "the Blessed Birch".

Tea-time in a family kitchen on the tenth floor of a block of high-rise flats: An eleven year old girl discusses, in Maltese, with her mother the problems caused by the low status women have in society.

#### 5. Tuesday Afternoon

(These notes were written by Michelle Michie as a record of one afternoon's events.)

Freedom of Conscience, Opinion and Expression      'Tuesday, 19th July,  
1.30 - 3.30 p.m.

It was after a wet lunch-time when the children had been inside for the full hour's break. I was therefore not confident of the children's response to the planned activities. However, we plunged in regardless, and the children's degree of response was much better than I had expected.

The room was divided into 4 corners labelled - YES, NO, SOMETIMES and NOT SURE, and as I read a list of statements, e.g. 'It is silly for boys to play with dolls', 'Rich people are more important than poor people', etc., the children had to stand in the corner that best expressed their viewpoint. The activity was done quickly, with very little time for the children to make a decision. The activity was then repeated, with a longer time allowed for thinking about each statement.

The children then sat down and discussed their observations. They seemed to really enjoy the 'game'. They were very keen for Mr. Henry and myself to join in I explained why I was reluctant to do this, that I was afraid they would try to please me by copying my opinions. They reassured me that this wouldn't happen, so we repeated the activity with Mr. Henry and myself as participants. (N.B. I needn't have worried. They didn't copy us. They were just curious.) Occasionally I would ask people the reasons for their decision. Often when the person had explained her or his reason, a number of other children changed their mind and moved into that person's section. Some children felt that another child was copying them, but they found this was not maintained through every different statement. Other observations by the children were that some people have a lot of trouble making up their mind, and that some other children change their minds a lot. Mr. Henry wrote some statistics on the board that showed how people's opinions had fluctuated between the two times the activity was repeated. He discussed with the children another classroom experiment he had heard about, where only one person in the class didn't know the rules of the 'game' and what happened, etc.

The next activity was 'The Teacher's Revolution'. I went out of the room briefly, re-emerged, slammed the door, screamed out that there had been a Teacher's Revolution and that things were going to be different. / insisted on marking each child's hand with an orange cross. I made the children repeat ridiculous statements after me 'because they were the new truths', e.g. 'Children are dirty smelly creatures', 'The world is flat', 'Worms are delicious to eat', etc. I insisted on silence, and sent out of the room anyone who disobeyed. When I sent Nga outside (who 'disobeyed' only because she speaks little English) the class were shocked at my insensitivity. Some children who didn't know whether or not to take me seriously began 'to be afraid'. I called a stop to the game. The children seemed relieved to be reassured that it was only a game. We discussed what had happened, why I had done it, and how they had felt.

The children thought it was a huge joke, and wanted me to do some more of the same, or to try it on 6G next door. They seemed to understand that I had wanted them to experience a loss of their freedom of conscience, opinion and expression. One child said, 'You wanted us to know what it would feel like to be denied our rights, like in a country like Poland'. Their feelings included puzzlement, surprise, shock, and doubt, even to the extent of fear.

Personally, for me to attempt such an 'acting' role-play is extremely difficult, and emotionally draining. If I was a more accomplished actress, I feel I could have developed the situation until I had successfully intimidated almost every class member. Unfortunately, I could barely resist the temptation to burst into laughter, which was certainly noticed by a couple of the more perceptive class members. Still, a valuable learning experience for all of us.

The final activity was begun but not completed, an essay, 'What I'll think when I'm 50'. The children were asked to finish it for homework.

## 6. Correspondence

(A note from your friendly neighbourhood evaluator to the Saint Brendan's children.)

The Girls and Boys of  
Ms. Michie's Grade VI,  
St. Brendan's Primary School,  
Wellington Street,  
FLEMINGTON, 3031

June 30, 1983.

Dear Boys and Girls,

Thank you (and Ms. Michie too, of course!) for making me so welcome at St. Brendan's when I came to visit you last Tuesday afternoon; I certainly enjoyed the time I was able to spend in the school, and I am delighted that you are taking so seriously the study of human rights.

How fortunate you all are to be together in a class which can boast such diversity! Being at St. Brendan's is almost as good as being at the United Nations! There are very many children in other schools who would give a lot to change places with each of you. When I thought about your good fortune and what it would be like to include Italian Australians, Fijian Australians, Vietnamese Australians, Chilean Australians and Maltese Australians among my friends I felt a little bit envious too!

Hearing what you had to say during your discussions on Tuesday afternoon and seeing you in action I could tell that you are all bright, personable and thoughtful students. You also care about each other and are prepared to share your different points of view. When we are ready to listen to each other, we are enabled to learn from each other's experiences and ideas. Sharing around what we know is a powerful way of improving our understanding.

I'm looking forward to seeing you again next Tuesday and continuing our discussions. Please tell Elvira I've been thinking a lot about cultural characteristics since she got me thinking along these lines. Stay well until we get together again and be good to each other.

Kind regards,

Mr. Colin Henry.

## 7. Field Notes

(Notes written and sent to David Hitchcock a week after the external evaluator's first visit to the school.)

Laverton Park : Monday, 6 June, 1983, p.m.

David was setting up the room when I arrived and we had coffee with Bruce and other staff members in the lunch room before the afternoon classes began. Sylvia had sent me extra copies of the curriculum guide and draft versions of the racism and sexism booklets so I passed these on to David.

Already David and his class are well into their study of human rights. Posters on the display boards indicate that the children have been considering their own rights ('I have a right to eat my lunch at my own pace', 'I have a right to speak to my teacher in private when I need to') and there are lists of wants and needs on the chalkboard.

Today's lesson is the YES/NO/SOMETIMES/UNSURE opinions exercise. David's plan is to give the activity a try to see how it works. He understands the notion of strategic action and appears willing to experiment with the new teaching idea without being certain of how it will work out in practice. To monitor what happens he has prepared a schedule I'm to fill in to show how many children (boys/girls) vote on the particular questions. (As it turns out I'm a bit too pressed to note how many girls and how many boys go to each location, but I do get some of it.) I've brought along some simple Likert scales and David agrees to give them to the kids at the end of the class.

This was a lot of fun	5	4	3	2	1
				not much	

I learned a lot of new things	5	4	3	2	1
				not much	

---

I've got a little action research exercise of my own. The plan is to involve one of the children as a data gatherer to see if that could be a useful form of monitoring. Aaron is given this job for to-day.

Going on the evidence we have - David's observations, my observations, the Likert scales, the children's comments and observations in their diaries - I think we are justified in believing that the children enjoyed this activity and learned quite a number of things about their own views, opinions and values that they didn't understand before. They liked being able to move around and having the opportunity to speak their minds.

I'm impressed by David's clear understanding of the action research process. He is particularly good at monitoring what happens and I think we can be very optimistic that by the end of the term he will be very skilled at keeping track of what occurs in these classes. During our reflections at the end of the day we talked over i) the positive responses of the children, and ii) the way he might try for a less lengthy, more varied, lesson next time

Aaron's skill at data gathering improved very quickly during the lesson. He noticed quite a deal about i) the way people change their minds, ii) about group pressure, and iii) how gender determines the answer we give to questions like 'Are boys smarter than girls?' The experience with Aaron suggests that children might be very helpful as data gatherers.

Questions to think about:

- 1 Are we getting parents involved in the way the proposal suggested we would? What to do about that?
- 2 Can we get the children involved in action research?
- 3 Do the staff feel well enough informed about what we are doing?

Reminders:

- file tabs
- peanut mike
- 'Studying Classrooms'
- more student assessment sheets
- video?

- A Parent's Reaction

(This is a translation from Vietnamese of a parent's response to a letter asking for her impressions of the human rights curriculum.)

I am very happy to know that my child has been learning about Human Rights at the school. And I hope my child will understand more about the above matter which can help her to become a good citizen in Australia.

Kham-Loi Trinh  
2/24 Victoria St.,  
Flemington.

- Enjoyment and Learning

9 9 (One of

the ways of keeping track of students' reactions to the curriculum was to have them fill out simple scales soon after particular activities. The following is one Laverton Park student's reactions to the freedom of opinion activity conducted on June 6th.)

I enjoyed this lesson

a lot 4 2 hardly at all  
1

---

I-enjoyed this because it gave Me a chance to learn about other people and things and it let me say what I thought!

In this lesson I learned

a lot of new things 5 hardly anything new  
1

---

It helped me to find out that some people can or maybe 'Prejudice'.

10. 'Stereotyping' in Small Groups

- (Kathy Johnston, a Primary Advisory Teacher with the Catholic Education Office, wrote this account after working with a small group of Saint Brendan's students.)

Reactions from small group work following class presentation of stereotyping.

During general class discussion, it became obvious that a small group of students had very negative attitudes to the Vietnamese. The most vocal were two Italian background students, who had also agreed to stereotypic statements about 'positive' aspects of being Italian, e.g. 'Maria loves to sing and dance', 'Maria is Italian', 'All Italians love to sing and dance'. The statements concerning the Vietnamese were along the lines 'Dinh has plenty of money', 'Dinh is Vietnamese', 'All Vietnamese are rich'.

The group was set up so that there were four students who agreed with the conclusion about Vietnamese and four students who did not. There was an initial, fairly heated and highly emotive discussion (especially on the part of the two Italian background students) of the topic followed by the invitation of the group leader to put points for and against the conclusion.

Michelle has the record from the group of the points made for and against.) From my notes they were:

FOR           One of the Vietnamese boys came to school with \$50.  
I have never been given \$50 to bring to school.  
Therefore he must be rich - This proves all Vietnamese are rich.

AGAINST He may have been given the money to buy something for his mother  
  
- She may not have had change - Having the money doesn't prove that the family is rich, and we know Vietnamese kids at this school who are not rich.

FOR           When Vietnamese people arrive in- Australia they are given \$4,000, therefore they are rich.

AGAINST Many Vietnamese people arrived in Australia with nothing at all. By the time they bought food and .clothing and Other essentials, they would have nothing left and could not be considered rich.

FOR           In my father's fruit shop, the Vietnamese don't buy the fruit and vegetables that are on special or slightly cheaper for some reason, they buy the best. Therefore they must be rich'.

AGAINST We are not rich, but my mother thinks good ,food is really important and always buys the freshest and best fruit and vegetables. Buying good food and being willing-to pay more does not prove that you are rich.

Other points that were made concerned the fact that the Vietnamese children don't have to pay the full amount for excursions and other school activities. The number of Vietnamese people who arrived at Mass on Sunday in new cars was also seen as a sign of wealth. When those students against the conclusion pointed out that only poor families were subsidised and not all Vietnamese drove new cars, the protagonists became emotional and refused to discuss the issues logically. They accused teachers of being biased in favour of Vietnamese students.

At the conclusion of the session it was decided to present the arguments for and against to the whole class, and to follow up the session with a survey of other students in the school.

The following week, I met with this group of eight students again and discussed the results of the survey. There seemed to be little if any shift in attitude amongst the students, even though the survey results showed overwhelmingly that most students did not believe that all Vietnamese were wealthy. The two surveys, one by those who believed all Vietnamese to be wealthy and the other by those who did not, differed in the construction of the question asked and the margins for and against. Once again there was heated discussion and allegations of improper practice in carrying out the survey, e.g. bribing or persuading. The allegations were made by the pro 'Vietnamese are wealthy' group to explain why the survey results went against them. They were hotly denied by the other group.

(Michelle has a copy of the survey carried out.)

#### 11. Notlg2ppssiroleforOtherslin'sIn!

(A paragraph or two from my field notes written on 15/8/83. C.H.)

I'm sitting in the large and comfortable staffroom at Saint Brendan's talking to Brigid et al about their impressions of the program. Others have been invited to comment but they don't seem to want to say much. When Michelle asks her specifically, Brigid starts to talk about the children's petition to outlaw dividing the playground into one section for girls and a separate one from boys. Brigid says she was asked to sign the petition but she refused. When asked by one of the 'activists' why she wouldn't, she gave the reason 'Because I'm a teacher'. I'm thinking to myself 'Why retreat to the party line?' What sort of a reason is that. 'A good chance missed to help kids learn how to enrich their power'.

When I think about my indignation later, I wonder if I wouldn't have done exactly what Brigid did. Queries about one's capacity to live up to one's rhetoric. Nothing's impossible for others!

Later on, in order to clarify the situation, Brigid wrote:

The reason for saying 'I'm a teacher' was meant to be interpreted as I have an ethical duty to my fellow peers - the teachers - to side with them on an issue which I believe to be the decision of all staff (seeing as we're liable when on duty) as well as a student representation. At the time I *said* to the children that I thought it would be a good idea to have the petition presented to the staff at a staff meeting.

12. Dear Maria Yours Sincerely Arthur

(Having read the simplified case study of Maria on page 3 of Human Rights : A Handbook, a student declares his sympathy for and solidarity with the oppressed.)

Your name is Maria. You are a journalist. You wrote a news story which made the President very angry. The next day the police broke into your home and you were taken away. You were beaten and put in a room alone. No one knows where you are. You have been there for six months.

26 Wright Street  
Laverton, Vic. (Aust.) 3028

24.5.83

Dear Maria

I feel sorry for you when you were beaten up by the police. I believe in expressing your opinions. Its unfair for you to be put in solitary confinement. The police have no rights to hurt you and I hope you will soon face freedom again. If the Prime Minister was a bad person I could really understand how you feel. I hope the whole world would read or hear this letter because it is really unfair on you.

Yours Sincerely  
Arthur.

13. Catechism

(Complex questions and 'childish' ('adultish'?) answers to them written by one of the Wellington Street Blues.)

Q. Could it ever be right to take your own life?

A. No it isn't right to take your own life because it is a sin to take your own life and you might upset other people by killing yourself.

Q. Could it ever be right to kill someone with compassion; someone, for example dying of an incurable disease?

A. No it isn't right because they might recover after wards and it is like murder.

- Should a society kill those it says are murderers?
- . No it isn't right because they might be innocent and there might be a reason why he/she killed a person.

Suicide is it ever right?

A. Suicide isn't right because of the same reason as the first one and your life may not be good now but it might be better later.

14. Feelings About the Students' Booklet

(When students' opinions about the curriculum materials were canvassed they frequently had diverse opinions. The two students who wrote these evaluations of the student text Human Rights : A Handbook had rather different perceptions of its value!)

My feelings about Human Rights : A Handbook

Elvira: I liked these things about the booklet:

The fact that it is small.

The fact that it is understandable.

The fact that it has not got a lot of writing on some pages.

But I did not like these features of it:

Because all the pictures were the same.

I don't like the pictures.

On some pages there is a lot of writing.

Some of the pages don't have enough writing on them.

Improvements I would make if I was rewriting the booklet are:

I would colour the pictures.

I would make the pictures different.

I would do the pictures a bit different.

I would spread the pictures out a bit more.

I would improve the pictures a bit.

Catherine: I liked these things about the booklet:

I didn't like anything about the booklet.

But I did not like these features of it:

I didn't like the small pictures they didn't explain what the writing said. And they only had a bit of writing on some of the pages and that is a waste of paper. I think on page 13 there was a great deal of paper wasted on that particular page.

Improvements I would make if I was rewriting the booklet are:

I think there should be more writing in the booklet. And there should be colourful pages. And they should explain the writing more clearly.

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15. Prospective Memories

(One student describes the things he thinks he will remember' about being involved in studying human rights.)

9/8/83

NAME : Ian Fisher

LEARNING ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

In years to come when I think about Term 2 1983 and what we learned about Human Rights, I think I will remember :

- 1 The debates, and how we argued over them and the points people gave from both teams and the way some of the answers that were given came out.
- 2 The games we played, like there was a game we played with seven people in a circle holding hands and people were trying to get in.
- 3 The work with the tape recorder and with peices of cardboard stuck on the walls, and when Mr. Henery came in.
- 4 The letters we got of Mr. Ralf Pettman from the A.M.P. building in Canberra in New South Wales.  
The work on ratial discrimination and the peices of paper saying did you enjoy this lesson and did you learn anything this lesson.

16. Lesson Plan

(Laverton Park's David Hitchcock wrote this lesson plan and review of his action.)

14/6/83

Aim - To stimulate discussion and enhance knowledge amongst class members about the controversial issues such as suicide, euthanasia and capital punishment.

- Children will be able to formulate ideas to the extent where they can form a stance on any one of these issues but at the same time respect the ideas of other students.

Plan - Introduce the topic of euthanasia from an infantile point of view by relating my personal story of my sister's baby. From this we will arrive at the question 'Do we have the right to end a human life?'

- Discussion will continue until we arrive at the three ways of ending human life in a cold calculated manner:

- (1) Euthanasia - young and old
- (2) Suicide
- (3) Capital Punishment/Murder

- We will gloss over murder as I believe it to be nearly universally accepted that murder is wrong, without going into great detail on the finer points of the law, i.e. crimes of passion, etc.

- General discussion of each point to be taped and the most controversial one to be formally decided by a class debate.

Action - As planned, however, it was found that children really had difficulty in understanding the 3 concepts of Euthanasia, Suicide and Capital Punishment. They understood and accepted my brief explanation of the terms but found it difficult to expand the topics, due I think to lack of personal experience in these areas. Each child read out his brief comment on one of the issues and the class was allowed to ask one question of that person who in turn had the right of reply.

These interchanges were recorded on tape to be reviewed at a later date.

Review - Not the most satisfying result of a lesson but at least it did introduce the three concepts to the children for discussion.

- One child brought up the topic of abortion with me privately as he was thinking about euthanasia and I opted out of that discussion due to the most sensitive personal views held by some people.

Change: - Probably best to introduce actual case studies for each concept first as this was where children's interest was high. From this point: the concepts could be worked through with a debate on one of them to follow."

Plan - Finish off these concepts with a debate on capital punishment after I give a few more facts about the realities of the concept.

Debate to be entitled , 'Capital punishment should be compulsory for:all'murderer8'.

17. Dear Mr. Pettman

(When students expressed a spontaneous interest in the authors of the Human Rights Commission's curriculum, they wrote directly to them to find answers to their queries. The letter below is typical of the letters students wrote.)

Wednesday, June 8th, 83.  
 .Ann-Maree Turner.  
 Laverton Park P.S.,  
 Armstrong St.,  
 Laverton 3028.

Dear Mr. Pettman,

I am writing to say that our grade 6 is involed in the Human Right Commision. I would like to ask you some questions - How many people are employed there? Will everyone eventually get a fair go? How many people are on the staff. If it is posible could I please have some photos of the workers and of the building. Could I please also have same further information and if it is posible some posters concerning Human Rights.

Yours sincerely,

Ann-Maree Turner.

18. Fairy Stories

(Another account by Kathy Johnston of an activity she tried with a group of children from Saint Brendan's.) •

The third session was with another group of students looking at stereotyping in folk stories. I had previously done some work on this aspect of early child socialisation with another teacher and was interested to **see** how this group reacted.

We read through a couple of well known fairy stories - Sleeping Beauty and Rose Red. We compared the attributes given as a sign of female beauty - long hair (in fact, every book we looked at had the princess or 'beauty' with long, usually blond, hair) slender bodies, kind, gentle dispositions and generally dependent on a male character to save or rescue them.

The students discussed the stereotyping and clearly defined sex roles in these stories. The King in Sleeping Beauty organised the party and organised the guest list - there is no mention of the Queen even being consulted. All decisions made in most stories were exclusively male - In times of crisis, the only reaction by any female character (Cinderella, Blue Beard's Wife, Gretel, etc.) was to fall down crying.

The inability of each heroine to extricate herself without male assistance was commented on by the students. The beautiful white cat in one story was used by one student to illustrate colour bias and other students gave many examples of black being seen as evil. Age was another aspect picked up by the children - mostly the evil characters were ugly, old and female, often step-mothers.

This was an interesting session and the students were encouraged to look critically at other stories and compile an annotated bibliography of fairy stories and books that they read. I have not been able to chase up whether the students carried out this exercise, but a number of them seemed very interested in the project.

19. Girls and Boys (One of Laverton Park girls wrote this case for gender equality after reading the draft of "the Sexism" booklet.)

Girl's are no different to Boy's  
I think this is true because boy's and girl's do nearly every-thing the same.  
Say if to boy's were going around holding hands you don't know what will happen, but if to girl's did it nothing will happen probably.

20. Playing Games (A Laverton Park student's description of a simulation game he was involved in.)

Yesterday we played a game. There were 8 Australians and other people from countrys like Chile, Veitnam and some other countrys and we had to try and stop them from getting in and we couldn't let the Maoris in because at 2.30 in the morning they might be doing a dance.

### 1. Criteria

In a brilliant, although short and unpretentious essay called 'Curriculum Research and the Art of the Teacher' Lawrence Stenhouse (1980) has argued:

- i) that curricula are not simply, instructional means to improve teaching but are expressions of ideas to improve teachers;
- ii) that students benefit from curricula not so much because they change day-to-day instruction as because they improve teachers;
- iii) that it is only in curriculum form that educational ideas can be tested by teachers - until educational ideas find expression in curricula it is impossible to tell whether they are daydreams or contributions to practice; and
- iv) that professional development is always associated with changes in ideas and practice because teachers, like actors who refuse to play new parts, become stereotyped or derelict when they cease to learn.

These ideas suggest important criteria to consider in evaluating Teaching Human Rights, and they highlight key questions to put to the curriculum. They invite among others, questions about the practicality of the curriculum's objectives, about its contribution to teachers' professional development, and about the impact it has on students' learning. More specifically they invite questions such as the following : Are the educational ideas expressed by Teaching Human Rights daydreams or practical possibilities? Does using the curriculum make a contribution to better (even virtuoso and highly intelligent) teaching? Do teachers feel more competent, more skilful, more interested, more powerful, because of increased confidence in their art? Are students better educated, better informed, more critically aware, more humane, more capable of acting individually and collectively in the interests of social justice - as a result of taking advantage of the learning opportunities the curriculum provides? Are they more confident that learning is something they can use to enhance their ability to act effectively on their own behalf or on behalf of others?

### 2. A Variety of Judges and Judgements

Only if the people who have been concerned with or involved in testing the curriculum can give positive Answers to questions like these, and can make quite clear 'judgements in favour' of Teaching Human Rights, is it possible to justify, defend, and support the program. Only when a variety of judges,

including students, parents, teachers, administrators, consultants and other evaluators are able to marshal convincing evidence in favour of the program is it possible to promote it with confidence as a worthwhile educational experience. The same can be said for parts of the program as well. By attending to a sufficient number and variety of judges, and by probing or cross-checking their assessments, it is possible to make reliable judgements about particular activities, content, sequences and so on, and make sensible decisions about what deserves to be retained, revised or removed.

The following section of this report gathers together a range of judgements about Teaching Human Rights. Michelle Michie's and David Hitchcock's reviews of their term-long experimental trials of the curriculum, which come first, are complemented by two versions of Bruce Peake's evaluation, by the reactions of the children at Laverton Park and Saint Brendan's, and by the responses parents provided when they were invited to contribute their perceptions of the curriculum. In the main the choice has been made to let each person speak for himself or herself. This practice is an attempt to recognise that 'the person who writes the story controls the version' and so tries to let each person have her or his say without being distorted by another's interpretation. The differences among the perceptions are not discrepancies to be resolved or compromised. They are facts to be learned about, for they represent various people's perceptions of the program.

The chapter which follows this one discusses these various judgements, draws out similarities and differences between them, and adds another, outsider's, perspective on the curriculum.

### 3. The Teachers' ,Reactions

#### 3.1 An Evaluation of Teaching Human Rights:1. Michelle Michie, St. Brendan's, Flemington.

Our school was first approached by Mr. Colin Henry of Deakin University in May'83. Initially we were informed of the broad concepts of the study and were asked by the Catholic Education Office if it would be a viable inclusion in our General Studies program.

I was eager for my classroom to be included in the study as I felt a great interest in the cause of human rights, and have always attempted to base classroom 'discipline' upon developing an awareness of the rights of.

everyone within the room. The program seemed to me to be very much in line with our overall school policy, and relevant to the issues affecting the children's lives at present.

Sr. Moella Sullivan, Mr. Colin Henry and myself met on Friday 3rd June to outline the material of the program and the evaluative methods required. It was decided that the techniques of action-research would be applied, with evaluation being continuous, and involving as much feedback from the children and their parents as possible.

My original plan for implementing the program was that for a ten week period, I would work through the ten key issue-areas, one area per week. It wasn't long before I realised the impossibility of achieving this aim.

Firstly, the content of the program is huge. I'm sure there is at least a whole year's work included, if a teacher attempted every activity in depth. (This is probably one of the good points of the program. A teacher has a wide range of activities to choose from in each section, and can find those activities which best suit the particular needs of her class).

Other factors also affected my original programming plans. At St. Brendan's, our General Studies themes are coordinated throughout the school, with occasional 'whole school themes' which were decided at the beginning of the year. Therefore my class was committed to one week's involvement in 'Heritage Week' (a multicultural theme) and 'Aborigine Week'. I attempted to continue the human rights program through these weeks by jumping down to issue area no. 7. (Non-discrimination of ethnic and racial minorities) straight after areas nos. 1 and 2. This meant I was keeping faith with the original whole-school curriculum plans whilst still making progress in the human rights program.

A further constraint to implementing the program as planned, was that due to my other roles and responsibilities within the school, / would be replaced by substitute teachers on a number of occasions. I felt that the human rights program was too sensitive an area to be programmed for unknown emergency teachers to develop in my absence.

Part of another week in the trial time was also lost due to my class's involvement in a school camp.

Therefore it became obvious that my original plans would have to be modified. Integration of the program into other subject areas became a necessity. With the approval of the principal and Religious Education Coordinator, I temporarily integrated my Human Rights program into the human rights

course for an eight week period. This seemed justifiable due to the compatibility of the human rights philosophy (respect for all individuals, pursuit of justice, fighting discrimination, developing awareness and depth of thought etc) with the philosophy of our Religious Education program.

With the encouragement of the language coordinator, I also integrated human rights discussions, debates, role plays, and written exercises into the language Program.

So, by combining same language time and R.E. time, with my general studies time, I was able to achieve almost eight hours per week of activities from the human rights program. Even so, it was still impossible to fit all the 10 issue areas into the available time. So priorities had to be established.

As the class had already completed an amount of work in the Non-discrimination : Gender issue area before the introduction of the human rights program, I felt it would not be harmful to skip over that area by reminding the children of what they had previously done, and perhaps watching again a video they had made of a debate on discriminatory practices by teachers in our school.

I was very keen to include area No. 4, The Right To Live and the Right To pie, in the available time. I knew the children would be interested in the topic, and that they had developed strong opinions already on themes such as capital punishment. This had emerged during some of the 'games' and discussions in area No. 2: Haman Rights and The Law. As we were planning to introduce a sex education course in Term 3 'The Gift of Life', I was keen to hear their ideas and opinions on abortion versus the right to life. Another reason for placing a high priority on the inclusion of this unit was that many of the children have had close encounters with the violence of suicide. (Which is not an unusual occurrence at the high rise flats). The <sup>trauma</sup> associated with these experiences seems to be something not to be ignored, but to be 'worked through' with the children.

The last two units - The Family and Education - just won't be dealt with adequately during the time limit of the case study. I hope to be able to go on with some of the interesting aspects of these issue-areas later in the year, constraints permitting.

These activities were completed during the program's trial-time:-

Introductory activities

- .pp. 2 ... 3a Classroom rights and duties.
- pp. 3 ... 4a "Three Children Speaking".
- pp. 5, 6, 7 & 8 Discussion questions for "Classroom Rights".

One: Human Rights

- p. 9 'Focal Questions' discussed.  
Handbook read and discussed.
- p. 11 'Being a human being : being a child'.
- p. 13 3 + 4 - Children write their own list  
of rights.
- (pp. 14 - 26) Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
Declaration of Rights of the Child.

Two: Human Rights and The Law

- p. 27 'Focal Questions' discussed. Video,  
'It's Your Vote',, viewed (twice).
- p. 29 c. The Blessed Birch.
- p. 30 d. The BMX'ers.
- p. 31 c. 'Who's to blame?'
- p. 33 4a 'Colour the country'.

Three: Freedom of Conscience, Opinion and Expression

- p. 36 1a 'What do you believe?'
- p. 37 b 'What do you think?'
- p. 39 e 'What do you see? -  
The '(Dis)agreeable Game'.
- p. 43 i 'What do you see? What I'll think  
at 50'.
- pp. 44 & 45 a 'The teacher's revolution'.
- p. 46 a 'Hurt cards'.

Four: The Right to Live (and the Right to Die)

- p. 51 2 'When does living begin?'
- p. 53 4 'When does the right to living end?'
- a 'Making an end'.
- p. 54 b 'Hangman'.
- p. 55 c 'What to do?'

Five: Freedom of Assembly, Association, Participation in public affairs

- p. 56 1a 'School rights and duties'.
- p. 63 4a 'Bugs'.

Six: Equality of Opportunity

- p. 65 'Focal Questions' discussed - Also  
posters from Vic. Equal Opportunity  
Board and Dept. of Equal Opp. in  
Employment, displayed and discussed.

Plight of Flemington's poor examined, compared with Flem's rich, and Toorak's rich, etc.  
Social welfare discussed - pensions, health cards etc.

Seven: Non-Discrimination - Ethnic and Racial Minorities: The Physically and Mentally Handicapped

p. 71	1	Racism booklet.
P. 74	b+c	'All A's are B' - 'Boasting Bruce'.
P. 75	d	'Fat people are thin'.
p. 83	c	'The Scale of Acceptance: ethnicity'.
p. 85	3a	'The Scale of Acceptance: colour'.
p 89	4a	Video, 'Don't Think I Don't Think'.
	b	'School for all'.
	c	'The Scale of Acceptance: handicap'.

Eight: Non-discrimination - Sex

p. 92	-	Sexism booklet.
	-	'Focal Questions' discussed.
p. 104	-	'Fractured fairy tales'.

Nine: The Family

Ten: Education

Adaptations of the material and extensions of the program

As my sister Pamela Michie works for the Department of Discrimination in Employment, she was able to lend me an interesting series of posters for display in the classroom. These stimulated much discussion among the children, and when displayed in the staff-room, also among the teachers. She also provided multi-lingual pamphlets explaining the operations of her department. The children took these home to give to their parents.

The role play on p. 29 'The Blessed Birch' was repeated on a number of occasions with different arrangements being tried out - e.g. different numbers of jury members, totally male juries, biased and cruel judges, soft hearted judges, etc. The children enjoyed the activity, and through it learnt a great deal about judicial processes.

The activities on pp. 36 and 37 involving the children expressing their opinions on various statements, was extended by adding 20 or so extra statements. Mainly these related to topics already discussed, or were direct quotations of prejudiced comments made by classmembers.

Current affairs topics were continually related to the program. Multiple copies of daily newspapers were delivered to the class throughout the program.

In issue-area 6 - we discussed pension entitlements, and the welfare system. Much discussion centred on the 'dole' and people's attitude towards 'dole bludgers' etc.

The scale of acceptance - ethnicity, colour, and handicap was combined into a single survey sheet.

The children couldn't get **the** point of some of the 'Hurt Cards' - so these were modified (made more obvious).

The children undertook their own school surveys to check the degree of prejudice and racial stereotyping amongst the children. A group of interested children surveyed opinions on whether or not all Vietnamese people are rich, and whether or not all Italians love to sing and dance. Debates were held on these issues.

'Fat people are thin' p. 75 d - was extended by adding 'tattooed people are tough'.

The children, on their own initiative petitioned the children in the yard to sign 'that our yards be not separated into 'Boys' and 'Girls'.'

I also added a formal lesson on the three levels of government in Australia and the responsibility of each.

#### The Impact of the 'Teaching Human Rights' Program

In my opinion, the 'Teaching Human Rights' Program contains powerful material. It proved to be a catalyst for changing the behaviour and attitudes of some of the children in the class. A number of staff members, the Principal, and myself, noted an overall increased awareness of human rights issues in the children. Over the period of the study, the children of 6 Blue became easily discernable from the children in 6 Gold next door.

The children of 6 Blue were the only ones to complain when the Principal banned the wearing of coloured leg-warmers with the school uniform. Whilst my class were saying 'It's not fair - We're cold in the yard - Sister doesn't think we have any rights' etc., there wasn't a whisper of dissent in the neighbouring class.

When the P.E. Co-ordinator introduced a whole-school 'Aerobics' program in July, one child from 6 Blue approached him to ask why the aerobics were compulsory? 'why can't those children who like aerobics jcdal in, and the others da something else?'

Other teachers reported that the children from 6 Blue were challenging their authority constantly-, mainly by asking 'Why?' when the teacher asked them to do a certain task or activity. Some children were actually rude to teachers and disrespectful in their manner on occasions. We discussed this problem in class, trying to help the children see that there were right and wrong ways to approach people, and that teachers had their 'rights' too. Most children, however, continued to be courteous and respectful in their attempts to protect their rights.

Another noticeable effect of the program was that the children in 6 Blue began to take their responsibilities and duties around the school more seriously. On one particular day early in the program, the vice-principal berated the class vehemently for their slack attitude in cleaning the yard on their 'duty-day'. She informed them that it was no use them 'going on about their rights', unless they began to show a more responsible attitude towards their duties around the school, especially as they were the senior class now. Since that day, the yard on Mondays has been free from litter. For weeks the children have needed no reminders. I have also recently observed them in the yard intervening in younger children's quarrels and attempting to sort the problem out by hearing both sides and attempting to make a fair judgement. Of course, there is no way of absolutely proving that this behaviour is a direct result of their participation in the human rights program.

An aspect of concern for me *seems* to be that the very nature of schools themselves tends to dis-empower the children to have their say about issues which directly affect them. Rarely are they consulted about anything. The teachers try to provide learning experiences which we think are important for the children in our care. The childrens' rights to determine their own self-development are often ignored. A program such as 'Teaching Human Rights' encourages the children to be more assertive, to protect their rights, to bring about justice (through implementing changes if necessary).

I therefore believe that the 'Teaching Human Rights' program, although valuable in content, would not be possible to implement, without obvious hypocrisy, in some schools. A class teacher who insists that the children listen to her with respect and without mockery or interruption, but herself interrupts and mocks the children when speaking, would not be an effective teacher of Teaching Human Rights. A principal who agrees to the introduction of the program but who becomes angry when children or teachers courteously question her decision-making, is not creating a school environment in which human rights are respected.

Any school considering the implementation of the course in a Grade 6 class should first be prepared to accept the possibility that the children, once aware of their rights, may attempt to bring about changes in the school's organisation. Any class teacher wishing to try the course must be prepared to abide by the same code of respect for individual's rights as is demanded from the children.

I found the material in the teacher's book well set out and fairly easy to work from. It would have been easier to use the heavy booklet if it had spirex-type binding. The copy I used tended to flop closed and I would lose my place. I don't feel that the cook-book nature of the guide was in any way de-skilling of myself as a teacher. I felt free to select suitable activities, skip over others which seemed too complex to develop within the time, and to adapt and extend activities whenever appropriate. As I was involved in a 'trailing' process, I made a conscientious effort to follow some activities 'word for word', just to see how they worked out. I was sometimes surprised at how effective these activities were in 'getting across' to the children fairly complex issues.

A lesson-plan can be seen at a glance and the materials needed are clearly listed. The 'Concept' heading was a frequent reminder of the need for explanations of unfamiliar terms.

The videos helped to provide essential background information. I feel they were effective in communicating this knowledge to the children. My class found it difficult at first to follow the language of the female presenter on the 'It's Your Vote' tape. We watched that film a second time to check the children's understanding. Ideally I would like to see a few more video's included in the program - perhaps on other issue areas.

The small text Human Rights : A Handbook was a good way of communicating an overall view of the concerns of The Commission. Despite my children's language handicaps, most of them quickly grasped what it was all about. Unfortunately the racism and sexism handouts proved too intimidating in format, content and vocabulary for many of the children in my class. They required extensive and laboured explanations, which soon meant the children lost interest. A video would have suited the needs of

My class more effectively - although I \_\_\_\_\_ realise that most Grade 6 children throughout Australia 'would have little trouble understanding the content of the pamphlets at a first reading.

## Recommendations for other teachers .

Don't be intimidated by the huge amount of material in the master sheets. I got through a surprisingly large number of activities by having groups working on different activities at once.

Don't think Grade 6 children are too young to understand the issues. They may not be able to express themselves fluently, but they are capable of lively debates, and can often manage a depth of profound thought beyond that which we usually expect.

It's important that the children enjoy the activities, so abandon an activity if they start to complain.'

Be very aware of the need to hide your own opinions etc. from the children. Because of their desire to please you, they may try to mirror your own personal views, without really thinking for themselves. (At times I found this difficult to maintain).

Don't push the children too hard to understand, or to be unprejudiced etc. Possibly not every class member is capable of developing the level of understanding and awareness which we would desire. We must accept the children's viewpoints and opinions, even if they are sometimes bigoted and offensive, because only by the children honestly expressing themselves can any progress be made.

Do go to the trouble of attempting to involve the parents. Any efforts are worthwhile. Parent feedback about the program is extremely valuable. Many parents have a great deal to offer the program in their own life experiences, and their involvement would certainly add an enriched dimension to the course.

Do encourage the rest of the staff and whole-school to be involved. Pin up posters in the staff room. Invite other classes to a display about human rights in your room. Hold demonstrations in the school yard.

- Always remind the children, that while it is commendable to protect their own rights, they must consider the rights of all others. Make sure they know that having rights also means having responsibilities.
- Integrate the human rights program with your language program. This will give more time, and certainly provides excellent opportunities for creative oral and written expression.

Continuing interest ,

After being involved in evaluating 'Teaching Human Rights' I would certainly like to continue working with the course. It was relevant to the children I taught this year, and I imagine it will always be of interest to children with the type of life experience of those in Flemington.

A number of other staff members at St. Brendan's have expressed interest in the course, and have inquired whether or not it would be suitable for adaption for younger children. I'm fairly sure that it will be included in both Grade 6 classes next year if possible.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to be involved in the trialling process. It's been a learning experience both professionally and personally; and it's been stimulating to make contact with educational researchers from both Deakin University and the Catholic Education Office.

### 3.2 An Outline of the Actual Program : David Hitchcock, Laverton Park Primary School.

Beginnings

With both the principal and myself in our first year at Laverton Park both holding positions of responsibility within the school, both caring for kids and also being the only males on staff, it was therefore not surprising that we quickly built up an excellent working relationship. Fortunately for me, Bruce had a long standing friendship with Col Henry and it was through this relationship that Bruce was able to put forward my name when Col was searching for potential 'trial horses' for the human rights course in which I had become involved.

Initial phone and personal contact was made prior to the first term vacation and immediate enthusiasm for the program and rapport between the three of us led to my Grade 6 children being informed by the three of us about the role they were to play on commencement of the program in 2nd term.

- Because none of us, and especially the children, had much knowledge of what 'human rights' as part of the primary curriculum was all about, I promoted their initial enthusiasm in the project by pointing out how they were one of only seven schools officially trialling the course. They were therefore, 'very special'.

The time factor

Because of a personal lack of enthusiasm for the existing 'Social Studies' type curriculum within the school, I was very grateful to seize upon the human rights course as a relevant, workable and worthwhile program. For the purposes of justification there were obvious parallels between their course and aspects of both the Social Studies, Health, and Language programs currently being followed. It was therefore, quite easy to set aside 3 hours a week for the whole of second term to allow the course to be given 'a fair go'.

The language experience of the children during the course in discussions, organised debates, formation and expression of opinions both orally and written, were virtually non-stop and extremely valuable.

Deeper understanding of themselves, the legal system, families, education and the problems facing people from other lands, are all well established concepts within existing Social Studies programs. This course covered all of these concepts and an extension of any, or all, of them would be a natural progression from the human rights material covered by my grade in 2nd term.

The rights of minority groups such as the mentally and physically handicapped, the poor of the 3rd World countries, the old and the sick were highly stimulating areas of study and would once again leave plenty of scope for extension according to the needs and wants of the teacher and children. The same areas could be taught with very little difference under the banner of "Community and World Health".

## The program

Because of the unknown size of the human rights course I believed it would be 'safer' and more worthwhile, given the aim of the exercise, to attempt to skim the surface of many of the issue areas, rather than tackle one, or a few, 'in depth'.

To this end I designed the course as a 13 week unit. Prior to the 'official' beginning of the course I thought it was important (and it did prove to be worthwhile) to introduce some of the vocabulary and concepts that would be used more intensively within the body of the course. This introduction was undertaken in situations such as the daily writing lesson where examples from the Human Rights : A Handbook were used and subsequently discussed briefly on their face value.

Children were encouraged to bring along newspaper clippings of articles which they saw as being significant with respect to human rights. These were displayed within the room, discussed and extension work carried out where student interest was high. As a teacher I was able to introduce appropriate language in the general day to day running of the classroom. Also, before the actual beginning of the course children had written letters to Shanti, Ben and Maria whose problems, as outlined in the Human Rights : A Handbook, had sparked general interest within the class.

As a result of all this 'pre course' work the children had begun to form opinions of what the course content might involve, had taken an interest in current affairs, brought articles and topics to school for further discussion, and if nothing else, had begun to use 'rights' as a word in all of their language work!

And so the program began. To firmly establish the concept of 'rights' our first lesson was devoted to drawing up a bill of rights for our own grade. This was mutually discussed between the pupils and myself and eventually agreed to, and in fact formed the basis of our class rules and codes of behaviour. Through work on 'wants and needs' children gained the skill of making choices. Although it was quite time-consuming, the children enjoyed the element of chance in the game-like presentation, and they were interested to see how their final list corresponded with the main points of the human rights bill, and therefore also gained an understanding of what it is like to be denied these basic rights.

Children really enjoyed the opportunity to express their opinions throughout the course and this idea was successfully introduced **one** again through an activity lesson 'What do you believe, what do you think?'

(Teaching Human Rights : Activities for Schools, pp. 36-37). The ability to form opinions and differentiate fact from propaganda was successfully extended through 'What do you see?', (pp. 42-43). Prejudices were identified, and although not always dissolved, were at least recognised by children and therefore thought was stimulated amongst those involved (see parents).

Probably the issues which were most frustrating for us were those involved in the 'Right to live and right to die' areas. Suicide and capital punishment were issues that children were just not able to come to terms with. Although we held debates and tried our hardest, these **concepts** appeared to be just too adult for the children to cope with at this stage. Euthanasia when thinking of both the very young, very old, and very ill, was grasped better and worthwhile opinions and arguments were evident. The issue of abortion was brought up during these discussions but as I was not prepared to foster discussion of such a controversial issue at this time, it was not pursued.

We tackled the rights concerned with 'Freedom of Assembly' on an on-going basis, using the school as a framework within which to act. At the time of writing, the children were still involved in the process of identifying problems that exist for some children within our school, and continued to be working: in conjunction with them and the appropriate people and organisations within our school that may be involved in the solution of these problems. While quite time consuming and requiring increased co-operation and organisation between members of the school community this activity has also been of great value. At this stage I implemented a P.E. game which I called "human rights kickball". The game required children to effectively organise themselves into groups in order to achieve winning results. When one of my potential 'behaviour problem' children took it as a chance to 'play up' the game was destroyed and for a short time so too was my belief in the work we had been doing. It was however, only the next day when children's writing in their daily diaries revealed they recognised their poor behaviour of the previous day, and showed their keenness to improve their efforts in the future. Failure turned into success!

When working on the issue of racial and ethnic prejudices, the children felt quite comfortable from the outset. I believe this was because of their everyday involvement with the issue in real-life situations. Just by walking down their street or to the local shop

children are constantly confronted with face to face confrontation with people of different ethnic backgrounds. Accordingly, work on this issue was very well done with many initial prejudices being discovered and subsequently talked about within the class.

Similarly, the work on prejudice with respect to gender was effectively tackled. This was one area in which concrete and immediate change in attitudes between boys and girls within the classroom was evident. Happily all of these changes were positive ones and have continued to shape the interaction between the sexes since first introduced. Because of the stage of emotional development at which Grade 6 age children are actually operating, we extended work in this area for longer than any other and the responses of the children seem to have justified this move.

Work on families had been done as part of our initial Social Studies program earlier in the year. Therefore we had the opportunity to extend work from that earlier starting point. Although students were well acquainted with the material presented, one issue which was raised was that of sex education. This arose through discussion of the point that families exist for the purpose of regeneration. Unfortunately due to the lack of any school policy on this potentially delicate area, we did not pursue the matter beyond the superficial treatment of the 'easier' section.

When the videotapes were available to be shown late in the course we were able to base our units of work on the handicapped, and also the legal system, on them. Both of these areas had been touched on incidentally throughout the course and the videos were able to round off those studies quite effectively.

Our final unit dealt with the rights of education and through discussion, report writing and debate, many valuable insights were gained into how our system should function best, according to the children. By looking at individual curriculum areas many different emphases were brought to my attention by the children. The overall impression being that children do have something to say about their destiny and education's role in it.

Page Numbers of Activities/Lessons Taken :

- |   |                            |                           |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Introduction               | pp. 2, 4, 5, 6            |
| 2 | Human Rights :             | pp. 11, 12, 13, 14-23, 24 |
|   | Human Rights and the Law : | p. 27 - 1 (a)             |

## b) Controversial issues:

Euthanasia, capital punishment and suicide are treated within the course. Arising from these and other issues children also raised the issues of abortion and sex education with me. In the current educational climate it would be folly for any teacher to express a strong opinion on any of these issues. Therefore, unless a definite school policy exists to cover such subjects, worthwhile discussion on any of those issues is most difficult, although not impossible.

## C) Age level:

Although I would love to see a course of study such as this one that was suitable to all levels of the primary school, I'm afraid that this isn't it. While best suited to Grades 5 and 6 in the primary area I see ~~no~~ reason why teachers at all levels could not be presented with the information, possibly in a more compact form which would enable them to begin tackling the concepts at a level more suitable to their grade.

While Grade 6 coped with all sections extremely well, except 'The right to live and die', I think that the lower secondary years would get great benefit also from the material that is currently available,

To be continued?

It would be ridiculous to present this course in anything but an ONGOING manner. The issues raised here are part of our everyday life and as such cannot be treated in isolation. Inter-relationships exist between the different issues so it would also be wrong to teach only one part of the course in isolation, e.g.

The Law -- The Right to Die

Family -- Education

Conscience/Opinion -- Freedom of Assembly

Prejudice

Cultural, ethnic, religious differences:

My classroom was naturally a very biased group in that because of their very similar backgrounds their experiences, as a group, were rather narrow. We really had no major cultural, ethnic or religious differences within our class at all. However this did not present itself as an insurmountable obstacle, as we had a number of readymade 'stirrers' who

were only too pleased to take the opposite view whatever the issues being discussed. Possibly because we had to 'imagine' or 'invent' any differences by role play situation, we were better off than in a class full of 'minorities' where too many differences may 'spoil the broth'. Our experiences could not help in this area of prediction. One would think that if mutual respect within the class did exist and children felt confident when expressing themselves, that the greater the number of differences within a class the more input, and therefore output, would result.

#### The teacher and the materials

The Activities Book : The book contained a wealth of ideas. The introduction *was* complete, without being ponderous and I believe provided a good outline of the course of study, an introduction to the basic philosophy of the course, and a sound rationale for teaching the course.

The actual activity pages provided excellent outlines of the work to be done, provided plenty of attractive activities for the same issue and the idea of setting out the focal question, activities, materials and concepts *was* a sound one.

More imaginative setting out of the pages with larger headings, illustrations and one or two COMPLETE activities per page would be practical improvements.

Human Rights - A Handbook : I believe this to be an excellent document, particularly suited to an introduction to the course. It provides plenty of stimulus for pre-course discussion. The articles within it provide a basis for further extension in the way of letter writing or research by the children about the institution and activities mentioned within the book.

Setting out of the material is excellent and the illustrations are humorous, interesting and challenging.

Interim Papers. Sexism and Racism : I found both these papers to be excellent. The way in which they built on a basic concept and developed it methodically and logically made their reading enjoyable, meaningful and easy.

	Freedom of Conscience :	pp. 36, 37, 42, 43
5	Right to Live and Die :	p. 53, no. 4; p. 55 (c)
6	Freedom of Assembly :	pp. 56, 57
7	Equality of Opportunity :	not taken (left out by mistake)
8	Non-Discrimination :	pp. 71, 72, 74 (h), 75 (d), 83 (b)(c), 84, 89 (a)
9	Non-Discrimination - Sex :	pp. 93 (b), 95 (d), 96 (a), 100 (a)
10	The Family :	pp. 108-109, 110 (d)
11	Education :	pp. 113, 114, 115 (a), St. Brendan's soon, 117 (c)

### What happened

When setting out to trial this course I formed certain expectations of what might happen. I was sure that 'something' would 'happen' but was never quite sure exactly what. I believed that primarily my children would become aware of how lucky they are, and therefore gain understanding and subsequent tolerance of other members of our local and global communities. My secondary belief (or was it a hope?) was that this understanding and tolerance would also manifest itself within the actual classroom situation.

Both of these beliefs were fulfilled to differing degrees. Possibly the most outstanding and tangible achievement was that of the children's ability to express themselves confidently and competently about a wealth of issues that I had never before seriously dealt with.

The children certainly became aware of the differences that exist in our world and the role they have in determining the course of events with which they are, and will be, confronted. It should be pointed out, of course, that most of the confrontations children had during the course were of a theoretical nature and whether their positive reactions to these will be transferred to the concrete, real-life situations that will greet them in time to come, cannot be accurately predicted.

My secondary belief, of course, did have the opportunity to prove itself as we were dealing with real kids, a real classroom and a real teacher.

The class rights developed for and by this Grade 6 as we introduced the course formed the basis of our class rules and the tone within the class. There was no need to amend any of these rights throughout the term and we were all very aware at all times of their existence and function.

The children's ability to work effectively in groups was improved by their work on 'Freedom of Assembly', 'Freedom of Conscience and Opinion', and especially the work we did on 'Gender'. Children learned the value and existence of differences of opinions within the class and they also learned how to cope with these in large and small group situations. Serious problems existed earlier in the year between boys and girls within the class, constant nastiness, aggression and a complete lack of positive interaction was the norm. Boys and girls have now progressed to a variety of stages ranging between polite tolerance and meaningful relationships between the sexes. It is a common sight in the playground now to see both sexes participating in mixed games of bat tennis, football, netball and softball. It really is quite remarkable! I recognise, of course, that school camps and the natural maturation at this age are also contributing factors, but I have no doubt that the good relationships which exist within the class now are due primarily to mutual respect arising from the human rights course.

#### Issues and concerns

##### a) Politics of the School:

There is no doubt that it would be extremely difficult for a teacher to implement this course in a school unless a number of factors were working in his favour:

- i) Class sizes should be small enough to enable each child 'room' to express himself/herself;
- ii) Staff must be aware of what the aims of the course are and respect the rights of the teacher and children to go about the work in the way they see fit.
- iii) The principal, as head of the school, must offer no less than total support for the program.
- iv) The teacher himself must have qualities within his teaching personality that co-exist with the 'spirit' of the course, basically the willingness to respect children and not dictate to them.
- v) A small school, e.g. 140, would be better than a large one, e.g. 700 children, so that all concerned with the course can build closer relationships with each other.
- vi) Parents need to be aware of what is happening and why, while also being willing participants by talking to their children and the teacher about issues as they arise.

The Videos : The parliamentary video 'It's Your Vote' showed the parliamentary system for what it is and the actual real life footage and personal interviews made it meaningful and realistic as an alternative to an actual visit to parliament in action.

'Don't Think I Don't Think' was unique in its presentation and because of its realism (you can't get much more realistic!), made its point in a very succinct and positive manner.

The children and the materials :

As previously stated, the activities book provided many valuable and enjoyable activities for children.

The handbook was valued by the children, especially the brief articles on Ben, Shand and Maria, which really raised their interest in the early stages. Many children expressed the need for more pictures, which I believe showed that the existing illustrations were a bit too subtle and beyond the comprehension of Grade 6 children.

The interim papers were read as a group reading exercise within the class and in both instances they held the attention of the children while reading and also provided many stimulating discussion points.

Children found the parliamentary video a bit boring but also agreed that it was of great educational value. On the other hand the handicapped video scored high level of approval for both enjoyment and educational value.

I personally believe that in the future any material provided that deals with actual case studies and personal experiences by those without certain human rights should be encouraged. For a Grade 6 level we must not fall into the trap of producing materials that are too far removed from reality. The more realism and personal experience the better!

#### 4. A Principal' s Evaluation

a) Some Thoughts About Teaching Human Rights : Activities for Upper Level Primary School. Involvement of Our Grade 6 Pupils and Their Teacher by Bruce Peake

It certainly was a most worthwhile exercise for our Grade 6 pupils and their teacher David Hitchcock to become involved in the trialling of some of this material. Likewise for me. The direct and 'spin off' benefits to our school have been really valuable.

The point was made in the rationale that children in Grades 5 and 6 are capable of sustaining discussions of considerable sophistication, etc. In my opinion this assumption is quite correct. Many parents and some teachers, I think, aren't aware of this. Sometimes our expectations of primary school children are unreasonably low.

The structure of the course is excellent. Feedback from the children was most positive about the activities, i.e. their constant active participation in various ways.

Classroom Rights (and Responsibilities) - an excellent piece. The children were given opportunities to really think about issues. Should we be given rights or do we have to earn them? A combination of both?

As a result of the trial work Grade 6 children behave 'better' both within the classroom and outside. Credit to David Hitchcock, of course, as well, but the various discussions, activities, etc. and general thrust of the Human Rights material have helped cause this, I believe.

I'm sure aspects of Human Rights could be taught at all grade levels in a primary school. Structured material goes so much further than say constant incidental work on teaching and reinforcing, ever harping on the 'golden rules'. The latter fails - guilty of insufficient depth. Children/people do really become aware of rights and form reasonable opinions after thorough consideration of issues.

Of the ten key issue areas I questioned the component about death and dying, thinking it would be more suited to older children.

The children criticised the course because -

- (i) 'We didn't have enough time'.
- (ii) 'There was too much writing'.

However when questioned further they indicated they wanted the course work to continue and that the criticisms in fact were another way of saying 'We wanted more'.

b) Edited Interview with Bruce Peake, Laverton Park Principal's Office,  
Tuesday, August 11th, 1983.

(MaryLou Holly recorded the interview in longhand notes; Ron Lewis was also present.)

Bruce: The invitation was handled in the right way; the People in Canberra were interested enough in the children to write them letters and send photos. That's not often done.

David was the right sort of person; caring and considerate which is important in a staff member. Another important thing was that the youngsters in David's grade need looking after.

As a result of going through this program, even in a short time we can see these youngsters are far less frequent problems - because of the thrust of this course, its emphasis on the rights of individuals.

This school, allegedly, would break teachers' hearts. There have been some important changes this year Seven of the nine teachers on staff are new. Despite its reputation it's the easiest school I've worked in.

Colin: David says the children were supposed to be hard to manage. The scope for them to argue about things seems to suit them.

Bruce: The girls were troublesome; they now seem far more mature. Without doing what they have done I don't think we would have seen such a change.

Of all the elements in here (the curriculum guide) the only one difficult for me to handle is the one on -death. My prejudice is to let it alidhe.

Colin: I was thinking exactly the same thing, Bruce, until I heard one of the boys at Saint Brendan's talking about his dying grandfather and the old man's wish to return to Italy to die. He seemed to want to talk about it; talking seemed to help him.

Bruce: It might be that I'm not able to look at death. I still feel uncomfortable. Teachers probably talk about death anyway, and if a kid has a problem why not let him talk it out? I guess they might be better prepared if they knew more about it.

Colin: Talking about death seemed to be therapeutic for the Flemington children who know about suicides in the flats, shootings and that sort of thing, and may be bewildered by it all.

Bruce: This curriculum allows teachers to learn about respecting human dignity at the same time as their students. I was talking to a colleague about teaching human rights. He says we always teach the golden rule; but we don't.

Colin: A "cataclysmic" situation developed at Saint Brendan's when a student refused to pick up papers in the yard when told to so, claiming that his rights included not having to pick up other's garbage. Such incidents are a real test of who has what rights.

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Bruce: The kids keep this school tidy voluntarily. Last year it was run on military lines, captains, badges, points awarded on Monday. I don't like kids being given marks for caring for their environment. We'll say, "The yard is tidy, very tidy." These youngsters have good intentions. One will say to me, "May I have the broom?" Or after a weekend, "May I clean up the papers in front of the school?" There is much less coercion. All I have to say is, "This is one of the cleanest schools I've been in. Keep up the good work." They are like us, they like to be praised. There are human rights there and dignity. Kids know it.

Colin: David just mentioned to me that he's found the cold second term this year less hard to get through than usual. That he feels, has got something to do with his involvement in the human rights project.

Bruce: David is developing the children in subtle ways. It is not possible for him to write about everything he does. We've been selfish and dipped into the activities where we wanted to. It's all been far more comfortable for me than for David. We talk about what has been happening. The impressions are good but the real test will be in six months time and later. I'd like to do it all more slowly and to integrate it better. I'm sure there's an opportunity for a human rights program to come in as an ongoing component of our curriculum.

Colin: Bruce, would you say the time and energy that has been expended during this project has been worthwhile?

Bruce: It's got to be. The world at large is becoming more aware of human rights. Take the new freedom of information act. Now you can go to government departments to see what they know about you. One weakness is the time-frame. It would be great at the start of the year. David would have been better prepared, so would you. We've dipped our toe in the water and therefore we have learned from experience that it would be a really good program.

Colin: Are there any interesting things that you saw happening?

Bruce: Two things I know. One parent was alarmed about one of the racism activities. She came around acting like a lion, but left like a lamb. The other occurred when David asked for feedback. One lady fired back "It's got nothing in it about rights for women."

Bruce: If you walked into David's room you might think, "This is not the flashiest room I've seen." It needs painting for a start. But what he does himself makes his room come alive. Some rooms are clinical and very neat. David's is of another kind. You can see that ideas and information are churning over, and he is obviously following threads that have come up- problems with particular children have been solved. After David's intervention, the kids worked out the problem for themselves.

Colin: I don't have enough evidence but my impression is that the children look a little gentler with each other; less aggressive.

Bruce: I think they are less physical, but still heavy on each other vocally. It is interesting to go to other teachers and ask "What's going on in David's room?" Some would say, "I don't know"; even the teacher on the other side of the corridor.

5. Children's Impressions.

## 5.1 The Laverton Park Children :

In years to come when I think about Term 2 1983 and what we learned about Human Rights, I think I will remember :

Rayleen Mackey: We had two games one when you had to get into Australia and another game you had to kick the ball and everyone had a number and you had to throw it to one the two and ect ect.

Ann-Marree: The games that we played human-Rights games; that every will eventually get a fair go; that some people do not get there human Right over in other countries; what other people think about excepting migrates from other places; that we have more Right that we think we have.

Jason Thorpe: We played a game and other people had to get in Australia and there were people stopping; we played a game outside.

Arthur Morgan: The rights of Mrs. B who wanted to die happily; the stories of Ben,- Shanti and Maria; the debate on Capital Punishment. Should it be allowed or not; the game that ended up in one big mess; the game of free beliefs.

Chris. Rapper: Mr. Henrys kindness and helpfullness and attatude to everybody; all the experaments we cared out with Mr. Henry and our teacher Mr. Hichcock.

Brenden W.: Darren, Sean, Ian, .Shain, Aaron and I walked around holding hands and taped the hole thing.

Holly: Outsider - a game that we played where we have Australia and people try to get in; the day we had St. Brendens came to our school.

Aaron.Scot-Dalgleish: When we had a game outside and Mr.. Henry watched us play kickball; when we had a debate on a news ishue; when we play a gate inside, people had to get in Australia; when wewent outside and held hands and see what the people said.

Georgina Paget: Outsider - 8 people were Australians, While the 'others tried to break through; Human Rights ball - 1 team was kicking the ball while the other team passed it around from no's 1to:9; there was four cards on the wall which read 'Yes, No, Sometimes, Don't Know'. Mr. Hitchcock asked questions and we had to go to one of the cards.

Natasha Hogbin: The games we played. We had a group of people join hands and pretend they were Australia, then someone <sup>from</sup> another country would have to try and break into Australia.

Sean McCartney: I learned that the building that the Human Rights Commission Headquarters is in is in the A.M.P.' building in Canberra; the game we played when there was a group of people linking arms in a circle and other people had to break in.

Tracy Scherini: The games we played. The one when you had to get into - Australia; Some of the lessons. The one when we had some questions and you had to answer on tape.

## 5.2 The Saint Brendan's Children :

In years to come when I think about Term 2-1983 and what we learned about Human Rights, I think I will remember:

Lisa Hoban: When Mrs. Johnson came and we had a slight argument about Vietnamese people are rich or poor; when Mr. Henry talked with us the first time when I seen Mr. Henry I bumped into him; when I found out that not all Vietnamese people were rich I didn't believe it; I will remember when Mr. Henry and his photographer took photo's of us; and when we played a game of YES, NO, SOMETIMES, NOT SURE.

Saverina: Discrimination against other people from other countries, and discrimination against the colour of your skin; the talk with Ms. Johnson about fairytales how they are stereotype against female and male; we played a game about some one being a judge and everyone has to do what the judge says, and if you do something wrong you get punished; we saw a film about the government; I especially remember the talk about sexism, how women are low in society.

Rita Mercieca: We learned about what was right or wrong; we learned about the right in Australia; we learned about new games; we learned about Racism and we learned about sexism.

John Stokic: I'll remember hay peopel got executed and all the horrobels way they kill crims; I'll also remeber a film I saw hay law was made. I also remeber hay ladies give their baby up; and I will remeber hay we made our on desisions in a game; I will remeber hay we discused storys and played games with each other; I'll also remeber talks with Mr. Henry and Miss Jonsen.

Fareez Mohamed: The talks we had with Mr. Henry; the games we played; the work we did on human rights; reading books; review books.

Tania Andraos: I remember the first thing my group did that was taking about predjudice; the second thing we did was about sterotyping that meet that. For example, Miss Michie's good, Ms. Michie is a teacher, all teacher are good; I remember we did about govemments by making new laws; I remember when we did racism. It is when you hurt someone by the way you look or act; I remember when we did about killing a person you loved.

Thang Nguyen: I'll remember about how to lieved a right thing and keep our laws; and I remember when I watched a film and the ladies was show a place of the judge; I also remember with Mr. Henry and talked about Human right; and once played a game about law of the judge; and we talk with Ms. Mickie .about how they kills murders.

Pina Nania: I think I'll remember people who are stereotyping about Italians, Veitnamese, etc.; and about euthenasia (mercy killing) when people fell sorry for other people and they kill them; a list of Human rights we listed up about one full page; we talked different types of ways of killing; and we talked about sexism.

Frankie Sreniloli: I learn about Human Rights that people should share their things around with other people; people in courts should have fair trials until proven guilty; there should be peace in the world, stop wars and killing people; people are not so rich without robbing other people sometimes; never call other people names because you mite hurt their fellings.

Rommel: That we played a court game with a judge, jewery and a victim; we learnt about youthenager; we talked with Ms. Johnson and argued that rich Vietnamese people weren't rich; we talked about sexism; we talked about we had the right to express our own opinions.

Russell: That we could all express our opinions; we played a game with a judge and jury; we met and talked to Ms. Johnson and Mr. Henry; we talked about sexicm; women can do whatever men can do. , Men can do whatever women can do.

Nenita Sabarillo: On the first few days of our human rights we made a list of rights; we learnt about the government and the laws they made, and we saw a film of the government; we got booklets and sheets about racism, predidice, stereotype, scape goating; we had a debate if we think Vietnamese people are rich or poor; we did games and talked about punishments.

Sheralee Patterson: Discrimination about what country you come from and what coulour you are and if your fat or thin; about handicapped people and bow we would feel if we had a handicapped people in our school; I will remember Mr. Henry and Ms. Johnson when they first came to teach us about human rights; we also talked about predjudice people and people with racism; we talked about sterotyping and we also seen a film on the government.

Patricia Them: I remember all the rights we wrote on the board before we saw the real ones on the papers; I will remember Mr. Henry and Mr. Johnson who came every Tuesday and taught us more about human rights; I remember we talked about how many people are predjudice in the world; we talked about the rights for handycap people; I remember we saw a film about the government, and what goes on in the parlament.

Lisa Borg: Nobody can take away my rights that I have to use; nobody is diffrent because of there sex or their nationality we are all the same; the things we spoke about during the lessons; we played 'hang man' when you had too pretend too feel if you were to be hang; we played 'judge' were you had to pick a punishment for someone who was in the wrong.

Catherine Lloyd: When We done the activity about if you believe something is true or not and if you said Yes, No, Maybe, Not sure, and sometimes a lot of people went to on place; when we said that everyone has the right to there own opinion and everyone can express there feelings the way the feel they want to; and we also had discussions with Mr. Henry and Ms. Johnston and Ms. Michie and I enjoyed talking with those teachers; and we said a few rights that were in the human rights booklet; and we had a game wich there was a judge and a jury and a few laws.

Sonia Morgan: When Mrs. Johnson took 8 children for a debate against Ventnamase people; when Mrs. Mitchie played a game with us about Human Rights; when Mrs. Mitchie talked about racism and sexism; I remember when we did uth and asia; we learned about stereo typing.

## 6. Parents' Perceptions

To : Ms. Michelle Michie, St. Brendan's Primary School

Impressions I have about how Teaching Human Rights has been going.

D. Hoban: I have not spoken to much about this subject. But I think it is very good for Lisa to learn about this. I am sure Lisa understands this and seems to be happy about it.

F. Andraos: I think it is a great idea because all children and parents should know their Human Rights. Your doing a great job. Keep on the . good work!

L. Borg: I think it is one of the best programs yet. If we all learnt things like this when we were at school there would be far less discrimination today.

P. Sabarilla: Nerita is old enough to learn human rights, and I heard about the grade doing things and talking about when people are not having their rights.

M. Astudillo: Perla has certainly shown a lot of interest in the subject. very often she has made comments about it and has told us in detail some of the conversations and discussions that occurred in class. She seems to be more aware of human rights issues which, although important at any time, she wouldn't even think of normally. I think the teaching of Human Rights should continue, because is preparing the children for their future life.

S. Desto: I, Mrs. Desto give consent to Saverina to participate in this exercise, since I agree that all children should understand what is happening in life around them. Not only racial rights but also discrimination in the human race, since Saveria often asks why woman are low in society or have a low status compared to men.

M. Esposito: My husband and I think it's a good idea to teach the children about Human Rights, and it was good that our school was chosen for this education. All children should learn about Human Rights because we are all children of God no matter where we are from or what we are chinese, maltese, italian, etc. we are still equal and we should not discriminate people before we judge them.

C. Mercieca: my mum like me learning the -human rjghts`becase, it is good to lean. If you get your human Right. My mum say that people under 11 should lean the human Rights becace they are to young to:leau, it,

N. Camela: My impressions are that the programme has had a very positive effect on Jane's awareness of problems related to Human Rights. It has been a real pleasure to hear at home a rehearsal of the arguments that she had put forward in class the previous days. I cannot express but praise for the teachers and educators responsible for introducing the Teaching of Human Rights programme at St. Brendan's School.

Mrs. Patterson: Gave me an awareness of the Rights and Problems confronting various races of people. You were given understanding of how ethnic groups learn to cope with being belittled by we Australians, e.g. being called names. My rights include freedom of speech, right to learn, right to be employed, right to enjoy yourself. My rights to live peacefully in my own home; to be able to **use** public transport, local shopping centres and church facilities are my civil rights. I can vote for whoever I want in government, so he'll fight for what I want.

M.Nanis: I think: that it is a great idea to learn about human Rights. Yes, my daughter did talk about learning human Rights.

P. Arandez: Equality amongst men and women; fighting for one's right; we should not ridicule disabled people.

T. Morgania: I think that it's a very good idea to teach the children about human rights. I don't think that they are too young to be learning about human rights because it will start to make them aware of the incidents that are happening in the outside world, especially all the discrimination that occurs.

J. Thein: I think learning about human rights is a very good idea, because when they grow up they will know what their rights and values are and if they learn about it from the young, they would treat everyone equally when they grow up. Patricia has told us about the barbeque that they will be going to and 'showed us a book about human : 'rights.

Phan Thi Huong: I applaud very much with the 'Human Rights Education' program, which is teaching in the School. I thought 'Human Rights' is a 'basic factor of human. I hope this program will bring faith and hope to the children.

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## FART VI : REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE

From a range of perspectives the educational impact of introducing Teaching Human Rights to Saint Brendan's and Laverton Park was a considerable one. The results of implementing the curriculum, as portrayed by David Hitchcock and Michelle Michie, Bruce Peake, the sixth graders at Laverton Park and Saint Brendan's, and the parents of those children, indicates that a tally of the curriculum's effects, including achievements, adds up to much more than a meagre score. Trialling the new curriculum produced significant learnings for teachers and students in both schools, not all of which were anticipated at the beginning of the project. This chapter is designed to review a selection of the effects of using the curriculum in the two schools and to raise a number of issues that may need to be considered in revising the program.

### 1. Effects on Teachers

Reading David Hitchcock's and Michelle Michie's accounts of their experiences while enacting the curriculum, one is struck, above all else, by two observations. The first of these eye-catching comments is Michelle's.

I therefore believe that the 'Teaching Human Rights' program although valuable in content, would not be possible to implement, without obvious hypocrisy, in some schools. A class teacher who insists that the children listen to her with respect and without mockery or interruption but who herself interrupts and mocks the children when speaking, would not be an effective teacher of Teaching Human Rights. A principal who agrees to the introduction of the program but who becomes angry when children or teachers courteously question her decision-making, is not creating a school environment in which human rights are respected.

The second comment is David's.

It should be pointed out, of course, that most of the confrontations children had during the course with respect to understanding and tolerance of other members of our local and global communities were of a theoretical nature and whether their positive reactions to these others will be transferred to the concrete, real-life situations that will greet them in time to come, cannot accurately be predicted.

#### 1.1 Understanding the curriculum's intentions

The "bottom-line" for effective teachers of Teaching Human Rights is the message conveyed in Michelle's paragraph. Her explicit understanding that

teaching for human rights means exercising and enacting human rights, is an insight that represents a critical understanding of the program's intention. It is an understanding she shares with Bruce Peake and David Hitchcock. Bruce is equally conscious of the problem of synchronising hope and happening in education; he recognises that it is one thing to claim to teach "the golden rule" and something else to actually establish forms of social life in schools that give expression to the principle of "treating others as if one were the others". David appears to be no less aware of the necessity of teachers living values that are consistent with the spirit of the course; he is also explicit about the challenge of respecting both students' and teachers' judgement and autonomy. Although there are many searching practical and ethical questions that need to be asked about how far teachers and children will, and should, be allowed the freedom to "go about their work in the way they see fit", there is no denying his recognition of the gap that can exist between teaching about human rights in the abstract, and actually observing human rights in the day-to-day affairs of schools and classrooms.

This shared appreciation of the demands that teaching for human rights makes on individual teachers and school-communities which adopt such curricula, must be seen as a crucial understanding. Successful implementation of the program hinges on creating conditions under which students can see and experience themselves as being included among those whose human rights are respected and observed.

The cause of these teachers' clearer insights about the necessity of practising the values the program espouses and promotes is not unrelated to the experience of trialling Teaching Human Rights. Its emergence in such explicit form signifies one of the most noteworthy aspects of the experimental curriculum's affects on its teachers.

That is not to say that contradictions between aspirations and actualities will be easy to eradicate, not even for those teachers who realise that teaching human rights has direct and immediate implications for the way people in schools treat each other. But it is to say that understanding the nature of the problem of observing human rights in schools is a major breakthrough in itself. Exactly what is involved in recognising and respecting the legitimate rights of children, parents, teachers and other people associated with particular schools will require continual exploration and interpretation, followed by revision and the adjustment of ideas and practices. Aspiration is likely to always outstrip achievement; but to understand the problems associated with harmonising hope with happening, to recognise the probability

of contradictions between the theory and practice of human rights curricula, and to strive to resolve those contradictions is to guarantee the possibility of their resolution.

In a Profession in which contradictions between rhetoric and reality so often appear to go unnoticed, and where a "hidden" curriculum ("what teachers teach but wouldn't want to know about") is frequently regarded as more influential than the curriculum in sight, it is worth observing the means by which this curriculum has enabled its users to grasp its intentions and relate them so perceptively to their work.

Three aspects of the curriculum document need to be taken into account in any explanation of how Michelle Michie and David Hitchcock were enabled to teach Teaching Human Rights so intelligently and to emerge from their experience of putting the curriculum to work with a critical understanding of its implications for school practices. The brief but "punchy" introduction to the teachers' handbook which avoids tedious explanations, seems to be one factor; the provision of detailed activities which show exactly what it means to be teaching human rights, another; and the repeated and consistent emphasis on student involvement in curriculum activities (including, but not exclusively depending on, those activities which specifically raise issues about children's rights - such as the activities to do with framing classroom rights and duties), a third.

It is worth emphasising the opportunities for experiential teacher learning that were made possible by expressing human rights objectives in curriculum form. Having been "told" in detail in the teacher's handbook, "this is what teaching rights actually means in practice", it was immediately possible for David and Michelle to test the ideas in their classrooms and as a result of that experience, to know very clearly the objectives the curriculum was designed to achieve, and *how* these aims impinged on relationships between children and teachers.

It hardly needs to be said that any curriculum document by itself will be incapable of achieving any of these results; unless they **are** taken up by teachers who have the inclination, talent and energy to avail themselves of the opportunities such statements provide for improving educational practice they will have no special magic. All the same, there are ways of presenting educational ideas which are more useful to practitioners than others, and the handbook provided with this curriculum is more accessible than many similar publications.

### 1.2 Realising this to be a curriculum for social change

David Hitchcock's comment about the long-term goals of the curriculum is a timely reminder of the need to recognise that the curriculum is about affecting personal and social changes of the kind that are very unlikely to occur rapidly. His considered observation about social change and the curriculum constitutes the broader perspective on the whole work; it encompasses the realisation that education for human rights means, before anything else, changing schools. Implicit in the observation that Teaching Human Rights has long-term goals to do with social transformation, is an understanding that teachers who adopt The Commission's point of view, and do so with commitment, are participating in the struggle to make Australian communities more just and more rational. That 'j' for it means a changing consciousness of the political nature of education and its influence on social reproduction. It means working as a teacher with a quite different perception of how schools might shape a better future through their influence on the next generation of adults. These are long-term objectives, the achievement of which simply cannot be determined in the short-run. They are a good example of broad educational aims that have proved to be too complex to be expressed as behavioural objectives or as limited forms of competency. But that does not mean it will never be possible to determine if they have been achieved; it only means waiting longer.

### 1.3 Daydreams or contributions: to practice?

More could be said as a review of the way working with Teaching Human Rights contributed to the professional development of Michelle Michie and David Hitchcock during Term II, 1983. (The new teaching strategies both teachers were able to add to their teaching repertoire; their improved personal knowledge of human rights issues and the work of The Human Rights Commission itself; their heightened appreciation of children's capabilities and the factors that "turn children on" to learning; for instance.) Enough has already been said in this chapter and the previous one, however, to provide a convincing enough answer to the question of whether or not the ideas expressed in Teaching Human Rights are "daydreams or contributions to Practice". The answer is not hard to work out; the curriculum's ideas have proved not only to be contributions to practice, but contributions to praxis (action with understanding). The educational advances made by the children taught by Michelle Michie and David Hitchcock testify to that conclusion.

## 2. Effects on Students

It is not indulging in daydreams, blind faith or flights of fancy to be impressed by the educational progress that was made by Ann-Maree Turner, Arthur Morgan, Elvira Andreoli, David Esposito and their classmates at Laverton Park and Saint Brendan's as a consequence of their participation in the human rights program. The evidence is substantial; it shows how students emerged from their term-long study of the program noticeably better informed; more critically intelligent; more concerned, sensitive and with a greater sense of what is just and unjust; and in a number of cases, even sufficiently confident to initiate personal and collective action in an attempt to change school rules and practices. The pattern is not uniform of course; some students learned more than others, some were more interested and actively involved than others, and some found it easier to see the personal implications of a program championing human liberation than their peers. This is to be expected; it is a rare educational event that produces identical outcomes. While involvement and interest varied from student to student and from time to time, few students remained untouched by the program (including Michelle Michie's Vietnamese students who, because of limited English, sometimes seemed to have difficulty understanding what was going on).

There is no need to repeat the details of what students learned in order to provide an adequate account of the dimensions of the educational progress that occurred during the course of the program. As a consequence of the opportunities the curriculum provided for students to study human rights issues, a great deal was learned. And not only about human rights, but also about human social behaviour more generally. If a catalogue of what children learned was drawn up, it would have to provide headings for both traditional cognitive and affective learnings, and social and academic skills as well. Such a list would need to include at least the following categories of learnings:

- \* increased interest in human rights and issues to do with human rights; increased understanding of human rights, and human rights issues;
  - \* a heightened sense of personal and collective agency and a more apparent willingness to engage in action to solve personally meaningful social problems;
- a more obvious inclination to listen to others' points of view and to refrain from shouting opponents down, interjecting and engaging in verbal aggression;

- a more lively sense of how to deal with, and how not to deal with, influential opponents;
- a more personally meaningful sense of what can be gained by establishing wider networks of social contacts, including those Adth .Other people interested- in human rights issues;
- understanding how information might be acquired and used in debate and argumentation;
- a deeper understanding of the relationship between rights and responsibilities;
- improved language skills;
- improved academic skills, including map reading and equipment usage skills;
- a greater, awareness that education can be enjoyable and that getting the world under rational control can be a satisfying and empowering process.

These educational achievements may prove to be transitory. In years to come when the Laverton Park and Saint Brendan's sixth grade classes of '83 look back on Term II they may remember very little, and have retained even less, of the understandings, dispositions and skills observers believed they had gained from Teaching Human Rights. That remains to be seen.

To a considerable extent what is retained will depend on whether or not the future education of those children builds on, or neglects, what they have learned already. However, even if it proves to be true that the educational effects of participation in the program are effervescent, it would be difficult to sustain the argument that what was learned in the short-run was unimportant. The marked degree of interest and excitement, and the feeling of being involved in an educational project that really mattered were not unimportant; the knowledge students were able to make their own about human freedom and deprivation and, what, can be done to protect and promote their own and others' human rights was not unimportant; and neither was their increased facility to think through and deliberate on problematic situations, or their increased willingness to assert their point of view about needed social changes. Achieving the long-term political objective of The Human Rights Commission of reconstructing the society so that it is "more directly responsive to the cries of human beings who suffer from the iniquitous defects of the social order" (Nash & Agne, 1972, p. 367) must not be forgotten. Ultimately that is what matters. But it would be a mistake to undervalue less notable more gradual progress in that direction. That matters too.

### 3. Curriculum Issues

In the hands of two talented and energetic teachers sympathetic to its objectives and working in schools where education is seen to include respect for persons and social critique, Teaching Human Rights has come through its first trial-run with impressive results. There are, however, a number of issues and reservations about aspects of the curriculum that should be considered. Some of these issues and reservations are to do with the roles the curriculum requires of teachers, some relate to the curriculum material themselves, and others concern the content of the course. There is also the issue of how to get the curriculum more widely used, but that will be discussed in the final chapter.

#### 3.1 Roles for teachers

##### 3.11 Social activist

Teachers considering adopting Teaching Human Rights should be aware that the program makes no pretence at all of being value-free. It is value-heavy (but so are all curricula, although that is not universally recognised), has explicit ideological commitments, and eschews the notion of "neutrality" in education. The ultimate intent of the curriculum is emancipatory and reconstructionist; it quite plainly directs teachers to help their students "to reflect upon the social, political, and economic contradictions in the culture and to take systematic political action against oppressive power blocs" (Nash & Agne, *ibid.* p. 367). For many teachers that project is political work that will seem entirely alien to the tasks of "responsible" and "professional" educators. Although not often stated very explicitly, the orthodox theory and practice of Australian education have conservative intentions; the schools are supposed to maintain social realities as they are; they are not intended to radically alter existing political and social institutions. That, of course, is also a thoroughly political agenda, but it is a political platform that is concealed within an invisible curriculum code whose contribution to maintaining the logic of the present sociopolitical system goes undetected by its proponents.

It is assumed, then, that teachers who adopt Teaching Human Rights can handle the role of social critic and political "activist". That might not be a major problem if it remained at the level of rhetoric. But the curriculum is action oriented. It expresses its intentions in such detailed practical form that it is difficult to see how it would be possible for teachers who implement it to avoid actually engaging their students in critical social and political analysis. The discussion of sexism, for example, contains so many learning strategies that support the cause of women's liberation by revealing

the mechanisms through which sexist discrimination and exploitation occur, that it is hardly possible to implement the activities without Challenging taken-for-granted : gender assumptions and practices.

And social and political questions are raised even closer to home, for the program "fastens upon a number of issue-areas that emerge naturally from the students' own immediate socio-political environment." (Human Rights Commission, 1983, p. 2) That "socio-political environment" includes schools, and the "issues-areas" deliberately include those to do with protecting and promoting the human rights and freedom of adults and children in schools. Once again, the curriculum is neither vague nor imprecise about the Means it adopts for exploring issues pertaining to human rights in schools. Contradictions are pursued, made explicit and revealed for analysis and resolution. The result is that it becomes extremely difficult to avoid recognising the need for schools to change if they are to contribute to a new social order that really embodies, rather than pretends to embody, authentic democratic principles. (The use of corporal punishment is one case in point, but not the only one.)

Joining in The Commission's political project through its reconstructionist educational work, will be appealing to many teachers; they will welcome the opportunity to engage in conscientisation with their students in the interest of social justice. Others will find such work far too "political" for their liking; they will regard the curriculum as too "radical" and too far removed from what they regard as "education" to feel comfortable with. Perhaps they will be the majority of teachers.

### 3.12 Negotiator

Even those who take on the work with enthusiasm will have new teaching roles to learn, tensions to live through, and judgements to make. The experience at Laverton Park and Saint Brendan's indicates, for example, that inviting students to negotiate, evaluate, and sometimes even challenge school and classroom roles and regulations is not without its down-to-earth difficulties. Others are affected when students refuse to pick up papers in the schoolyard and go docilely to aerobics, or to limit their choice of leg-warmers to navy blue. Not everyone welcomes that sort of "insubordination" for a start. Then there are the practical difficulties of negotiation. Having to work out solutions to recurring school problems in collaboration with students, rather than working them out in advance for students, can be a time-consuming task. Then again, there are judgements that will have to be made about how much objecting is tolerable, who is "jumping up

and down" without reasonable cause, and who is overly sensitive to his or her own rights but not conscious enough of his or her own responsibilities and duties. It is not easy to work out covering laws about what should be negotiable and what should be non-negotiable. There will always be a degree of untidiness that is not found on tightly run ships when consensus rather than control is the means used to create order in schools.

### 3.13 Provocateur

A related issue is how far parents and other members of the community will let a teacher go in raising touchy issues. David Hitchcock's reluctance to discuss abortion with his students displays his awareness of the taboos and the limits of acceptable discussion topics at Laverton Park. In the same vein, Michelle Michie is not unaware of the Catholic Church's official policy on euthanasia and she knows that straying too far from that line leaves her open to rebuke and criticism. It is not necessary to advocate abortion or euthanasia to get in hot water; merely opening up these moral issues for consideration can be risky in itself. Being "a gad-fly on the rump of the republic" leaves one vulnerable to being swatted and not only for stinging; making the wrong noises can be irritation enough to bring a swift reaction. This issue is basically a question of academic freedom, that is, what can and cannot be discussed in schools.

### 3.14 "Hurriers" of children

Bruce Peake's concern about introducing youngsters to death and dying and other "heavy" subjects is also an issue that merits careful consideration. His doubts about raising such complicated moral dilemmas with primary-school-age children could be a page from David Elkind's (1982) The Hurried Child. Elkind's theme is that hurrying children through childhood and prematurely burdening them with pressure, worry and anxiety, as if they were adults, is harmful. He argues that while the movement towards greater equality of the sexes, ethnic and racial groups, and the handicapped is to be applauded, "its unthinking extension to childhood is unfortunate" (ibid. p. 21). As Elkind *sees* it, treating children differently from adults is not discriminating against them. On the contrary, it is to recognise their "special estate" and accommodate their unique needs and "so ensure equality and true equal opportunity" (ibid. p. 22). It is the old point about injustice occurring *when* unequals are treated equally.

Elkind's principle is a sound one. Children should be Protected from pressures, anxieties and worries that belong to others. But their lives are not trouble-free and ensuring their well-being may involve discussing and

working through difficult moral and ethical questions that they confront in their daily lives.

The decision will always have to involve judgements about what is in the best interests of children. Michelle Michie and Sister Noella Sullivan would agree with David Elkind's position that children should not be burdened with adult worries. But they would ask how it helps children to exclude their real, everyday concerns from school. In places like Flemington where children already experience excessive violence (such as suicide, shoot-outs, and beatings), deprivation and anxiety, as a condition of their daily lives, it can be argued that to refuse to attend to their distress is to refuse to lighten their burdens.

### 3.15 Villains

In a more literal sense of "roles", the curriculum includes role-playing activities in which teachers are expected to play villainous parts. Three examples of activities that may require a good deal of rethinking are "The Teacher's Revolution" (Human Rights Commission, 1983, p. 44), "Bugs" (ibid., p. 63) and "Blue-eyes-Brown-eyes" (ibid., p. 77). What is questionable about parts like these is that teachers have to treat children intolerantly and harshly. They sometimes have to deceive children as well, in order to make the activity work. (Such as when students asked Michelle Michie during the "Revolution" activity if she really meant what she said about children being horrible, and she replied she did, although she really doesn't). These are tricky activities to carry off, but acting prowess should not be the major worry. How far one is entitled to go in tricking children, and how far one should go in treating children harshly just for effect, are more important questions.

### 3.2

#### Materials

Although it would be a mistake to equate the curriculum with a set of materials (because there is more to the innovation than that; a political ideology, assumptions about children's capabilities, views about how children should be taught, to name but three important components), the materials are the most tangible aspect of the curriculum. Activities for Schools, the teachers' guide; the "didactic booklet", Human Rights : A Handbook (and its draft equivalents on sexism and racism); and the video-tapes, Don't Think I Don't Think and It's 'four Vote, comprise the set.

### 3.21 The Teacher's Guide (Activities Book)

There are at least four or five issues that might be considered in relation to the teacher's guide or activities book. The first of these has to do with epistemology (or questions about what counts as knowledge), the second with abstraction, the third with role-playing (perhaps the most prominent generic strategy featured in the curriculum), the fourth with curriculum content, and the fifth with authorship.

#### 3,211 Epistemology (the nature of knowledge)

In the "Introduction" to the teacher's guide a central aim of the curriculum is stated as, "allowing children to see more clearly the distinctions between facts, values and opinions, between means and ends and the use and abuse of generalisations and inferences." These skills are advanced as examples of "analytic competence". "Analytic competence" is given particular prominence as the means by which students can learn to think for themselves. The emphasis is such that more perceptive thinking, along with feeling and acting, emerges as one of the three major objectives of the program. Consequently, activities to advance analytic competence are prominent throughout the program (for example, in the semantic study which begins the study of prejudice stereotyping and discrimination in Issue-area 7.)

Distinctions of the sort just mentioned between facts and values, and means and ends are now less confidently made by philosophers than they once were. Contemporary philosophers will point out how values determine what "facts" are regarded as relevant in investigations, that selection from among masses of information is always a major epistemological problem, and that different perceptions yield different "facts". They will also argue that means and ends are often so related that they amount to the same thing ("Disciplined enquiry is the means and ends of education" or "The process of education and the process of liberation are the same", for instance).

Improving students "analytic competence" according to this way of thinking about knowledge, is better served by recognising how people's values affect what they believe to be true, or showing how their experiences and theories determine what are "valid" generalisations, or revealing how a person's ends are often intimately interrelated with that person's means to those ends. To believe that facts exist independently of enquirers in a value-free way, is a difficult intellectual position to support. The interactionist alternative that "all meaningfulness is inseparably connected with values" (Freeman and Jones, 1980, p. 19) is a less misleading alternative. The interactionist concept of objectivity should

not be impossible for students to understand, provided they have the opportunity to realise that objectivity as neutrality is a myth and that knowledge always serves the interests of one social group or another. To enable students to understand the connection between knowledge and power would be an educational breakthrough of the first order. That breakthrough might be achieved if teachers and curriculum developers could make that type of analytical competency a specific objective. It is more than an abstract philosophical point to understand the connection between power and knowledge; it is an insight that has far-reaching implications for social renewal. Making that connection for students is not likely to happen if distinctions between facts and values and means and ends continue to be viewed in the conventional way. That is the recipe for continuing their mystification.

### 3.212 Abstraction

Another important concern is the somewhat abstract and impersonal way a number of the issues are treated in the teacher's guide. As well as discussions of students' experiences, and the enactment of representations of social situations in simulations and role-plays, there appears to be a need for relevant case study material to support studies of certain issues, events and situations. Specific examples of the type of case studies that might be prepared include:

- i) the recent (1982) court case which followed an accident resulting in serious injury to a boy caused by his falling from a goal-post at a suburban high-school football oval (to accompany "Who's to blame?", p. 31);
- ii) examples from Wendy Lowenstein's (1975) Weevils in the Flour (to support the study of "The Great Depression", p. 65); and
- iii) a case study of a contemporary human rights activist, such as Jack Mundy, (to launch a study of "Australian Human Rights Heroes", p. 59).

### 3.213 Role-playing

Role-playing is suggested as a pedagogical device so consistently throughout the teacher's guide that there may well be a need for giving more detailed attention to providing advice to teachers about using the role-playing strategy. That advice would be •advice to complement the pointers on preparing, playing and debriefing which are given on page 91 (and in a variety of other places)~ in the teacher's book. Unless one is a competent drama teacher, it is extremely difficult to use role-play effectively (that is, to generate insights about the feelings of other

people and the social logic of their situation). Observations suggest that the promise of role play has not been fully realised and that teachers need more assistance with sociodrama, which is notoriously difficult to do well. On page 169 of Chocolate Cream Soldiers David Jenkins writes, "The S.C.S.P. (Schools Cultural Studies Project) has produced an extremely helpful short handout on role play." It may still be possible to get copies of this handout from Jim McKernan, Lecturer in Curriculum Studies, University College Dublin. And, of course, there are other possibilities.

### 3.214 Curriculum content

Within the ten key issue-areas chosen for consideration in Teaching Human Rights, it is possible to detect more than one question to do with content that needs to be considered in any revision of the curriculum. Some of these questions have to do with paucity of information. One extremely obvious question is about the failure of the teacher's guide to indicate in the list of countries which have formally ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, those regimes which have proved themselves to be among the most vicious, repressive and blatantly anti-human rights governments in the world! It is a cruel travesty to even suggest that the people of countries like the Central African Republic, Chile and Korea enjoy the civil rights promised in the Covenant. An important question is why such contradictions are not expressly pointed out in the teacher's guide.

There are also fundamental issues about the structure of Australian society that are treated so generally as to conceal their import. Class divisions are one of these issues. The effects of class exploitation and class discrimination are hinted at (for example on page 19 of Human Rights : A Handbook, where we are told that the poor live "lives that are nowhere as full and happy as they ought to be"). But the overall impression is that the real significance of discrimination against the poor is concealed by lack of information. Failure to register the fact that the overwhelming majority of people in prison come from working-class families, for example, or neglect of recent compelling analyses of schools as the means by which the disadvantaged are kept disadvantaged and the advantaged maintain their advantages, are omissions which\* are not easily explained away in a program which is directed to examine human rights and the law, and human rights and education. It is not easy to understand why discrimination against the poor is not given a higher profile in studies of these issue-areas. As well as these omissions,

disturbing figures about the distribution of wealth and income in this country (for example statistics showing that the wealthiest 20% of the population gets 43% of the total income, while the poorest 20% earn only 6%; Source, Changing Australia, Anglican Social Responsibilities, et. al., 1983) are nowhere mentioned. Gross inequalities in the distribution of wealth and cultural resources, such as education, will continue so long as the myth of a classless society remains unchallenged. Lack of information hinders change and misinformation bolsters the maintenance of an unjust social order. Despite popular practical themes to the contrary facts, are not unimportant.

### 3.2<sup>15</sup> Authorship

The convention of attributing authorship of books such as Teaching Human Rights to organisations like The Human Rights Commission may also need reviewing. The function of that convention is to disembodify the work's creators and to produce the impression of some commissariat-like organisation with an impersonal capacity to produce curriculum material. This may be regarded as a form of mystification that The Commission could well do without. It is easily combated by publishing the names, photographs, and other information about the curriculum's authors. The experience <sup>of</sup> knowing who Ralph Pettman, Sylvia Gleeson and others involved in preparing the curriculum are, was a very positive experience for the children at Laverton Park; so much so that it makes a good deal of sense in future publications to inform students and teachers of who put the curriculum together and how the work was done.

### 3.22 The booklet

Going on written comments made by students about the "didactic booklet" Human Rights ; A Handbook, its authors can be satisfied that they have the size, length, vocabulary and interest level of the publication about right. Particular improvements suggested by students include making the booklet more "colourful", including "bigger pictures and more bigger writing", and "putting in a few more things about people who don't get their rights." If there is a general feeling of dissatisfaction among students it is about the illustrations. As one of the Laverton Park girls Put it, "I did not like the pictures because they don't make sense to me." The symbolic images chosen for the illustrations may just be too sophisticated for primary-school age children. On the other hand it may

be possible to add explanatory notes with the booklets which will make their meaning more accessible to students. It is not clear, however, that the best approach to illustrating the companion booklets on racism and sexism is simply to repeat the same style.

### 3.23 The video-tapes

Of the two video-tapes, Don't Think I Don't Think was regarded much more highly than It's Your Vote. It's Your Vote, a rather mechanistic portrayal of law-making at the Federal level, was often regarded as "boring" by the students who saw it. It is difficult to know why law-making continues to be presented in this old-fashioned civics manner. The legislative process is not simply a disembodied series of formal parliamentary procedures. The Dismissal and almost any edition of Nation-wide presents a much truer picture of how laws are actually made. A realistic film about the making of a law would be a valuable educational resource to have. It's Your Vote is not such a film.

Don't Think I Don't Think apparently appealed to students because of its human warmth, its humour and its moving personal stories. Its focus on articulate mentally disabled young men and women and their struggles to be treated like others, captured students' interest. Students could see, thanks to the film, clear examples of the social restrictions disabled people are up against (personal insults, disgraceful wages, boring work, inadequate education) and they were able to understand the way questionable assumptions about mental disability underpin discriminatory practices. In many ways this film highlights the advantages of case studies over more abstract portrayals of social phenomena.

There is almost certainly a need for more filmed case studies to be added to the materials that accompany Teaching Human Rights. (Specific examples, available from Deakin's School of Education Media Unit include The 'Susso' Kids, to complement the study of "The Great Depression" (p. 65); The Kibbutz on Tall Grass Mountain (a case study of community self-development in the Philippines) to add to "Village Life", p. 60; and Wet Earth Warm People around which to build a study of Indonesian Neighbours (p. 67). Creating an annotated list of useful and relevant films, and possibly a film pool or a network of borrowers and lenders, is worth exploring as a practical means of increasing the film resources

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available to teachers using the curriculum.

## PART VII : ± GETTING THE CURRICULUM MORE WIDELY USED

Quite some time has elapsed since 1916 when John Dewey tried hard to make it understood that

the democratic principle requires that every teacher should have some regular way in which he can directly or through representation participate in the formation of the controlling aims, methods and materials of the school of which he is part.

Over two generations later that ideal is far from recognised in schools. In fact, if Michael Apple (1983) is right, there has been a growing tendency for teachers to be included among those who are becoming deskilled and systematically losing more and more control over the work they do. Those trends, if correctly diagnosed, are subtle but dangerous; they threaten participatory democracy by putting the culture's collective capacity for social critique and renewal at risk. This evaluation study has shown how two teachers were able, and enabled, to gain a great degree of control over their work and to teach their students with a heightened awareness of the effects education has, and might have, on their students', and others', lives. It shows how David Hitchcock and Michelle Michie became more consciously aware of their educational work, how they were able to recognise their professional achievements more vividly and how they found it possible to think more imaginatively about future improvements to their practice. Their experience reveals how this professional development began and was sustained by their systematic self-reflection on their practice and the effects of their practice.

The opportunity to trial a human rights curriculum is a rare opportunity for recognising teachers' rights to participate in the formation of the aims they pursue, the methods they use, and the materials they work with. Such a value-explicit task so obviously requires evaluation practices that respect and exercise the autonomy and judgement of teachers that it "automatically" implies greater teacher control over curriculum decisions. Emancipatory curricula rule out the possibility of treating teachers as if they were technicians who should be trained to implement other's educational priorities. To treat teachers as if they were unable to exercise sound professional judgement is to reduce them to operatives, and thereby in turn to jeopardise the hope that they will treat their students differently.

The effects on teachers and children of involving teachers in action researching innovative curricula should not be forgotten when future decisions are made about disseminating the curriculum more widely. The record of

conventional dissemination procedures is so abysmal that to follow that route seems a certain way of condemning Teaching Human Rights to obscurity or being malpracticed. Engaging selected teachers to systematically study the curriculum in action and to report on the effects of the program in schools and classrooms should be considered as a viable alternative to relying on official endorsements, large scale adoption by decree, and haphazardly studied usage. Involving teachers in action researching new curricula has not been a procedure adopted very widely in curriculum dissemination up to date. What Michelle Michie and David Hitchcock were able to achieve during Term II 1983 with Teaching Human Rights suggests that The Commission might well consider issuing tenders for additional experimental trials of the curriculum as the way of gradually involving progressively large numbers of teachers in its educational work. Repetitions of the general procedures detailed in this report may prove to be a breakthrough in getting the curriculum adopted intelligently. If the work David Hitchcock and Michelle Michie were able to do in Teaching Human Rights' first trial run can be repeated, The Commission will have chalked up an exceptional educational achievement.

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