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Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety



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To whom it may concern,

Attached are my submission and my social CV.

Summary

One of the central issues of the information age is the impact of people's values and practices when using technologies. Society is being challenged to come up with policies to deal with these problems, challenging us to re-evaluate our interpretation of values and ethics and the ineffectiveness of our policies to guide individuals while using ICT. Values and ethical practices when using technologies are important for the wellbeing of the individual and society, therefore fostering values and ethical practices are critical competencies in the cyber age. The solutions provided by most studies and organisations propose legal action, greater control and technical mechanisms to deal with these problems. However, these solutions avoid the central role of values in behaviour. Very little advice is given regarding this. Policies need to be guided by an understanding of the role personal values play in the unethical use of ICT.

Addressing the Terms of Reference:

- i. the online environment in which Australian children currently engage and stakeholders controlling or able to influence that engagement - parents and teachers
- ii. the nature, prevalence, implications of and level of risk associated with cyber-safety threats, such as:
 - abuse of children online (cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking and sexual grooming);
 - exposure to illegal and inappropriate content;
 - **inappropriate social and health behaviours** in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of anorexia, drug usage, underage drinking and smoking);
- iii. Australian and international responses to current cyber-safety threats (**education**, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, including business;
- iv. **opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders** and with international stakeholders in dealing with cyber-safety issues;
- v. **ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying including by:**

- increasing awareness of cyber-safety good practice;
- encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches; and

Cyber Safety – Are We Really Dealing With The Issue?

“Our time requires two moral stances: self-restraint and compassion. A new vision is needed in schools to educate the whole student, bringing together mind and heart in the classroom; the balance between the emotional mind and the rational mind.” - Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence

Information and Communication Technologies have a profound impact on our lives. How we learn, how we teach, get information, share experiences and entertain ourselves increasingly depends on technology. While ICT can improve learning and make us more effective, unethical uses have created problems. One of the central issues of the information age is the impact of people’s values and practices when using technologies. Society is being challenged to come up with policies to deal with these problems, challenging us to re-evaluate our interpretation of values and ethics and the ineffectiveness of our policies to guide individuals while using ICT. Values and ethical practices when using technologies are important for the wellbeing of the individual and society, therefore fostering values and ethical practices are critical competencies in the cyber age.

Most reported problems associate with the use of ICT relate to issues of property rights, accuracy, privacy and other negative social phenomena such as cyber bullying (Jung, 2009; Kuzu, 2009; Masrom, Ismail, & Hussein, 2009). The solutions provided by most studies and organisations propose legal action, greater control and technical mechanisms to deal with these problems. There many technical and practical things people can do to protect themselves and their families, yet we seem to avoid the central role of values in behaviour. Very little advice is given regarding this. Policies need to be guided by an understanding of the role personal values play in the unethical use of ICT.

Key Findings on Computer Ethics

The findings of one study (Kuzu, 2009) revealed that none of the participants (university students) had a working knowledge of what constituted computer ethics. Participants mostly explained computer ethics in terms of using unlicensed software and security problems. The author recognised this weakness supporting the need to examine computer ethics within the framework of personal ethics. For most ethical problems, participants resorted to legal sanctions and technical precautions as solutions.

The Importance of Personal Values in the Use of ICT

Participants in a study were asked to indicate which of the three codes (formal, informal and personal) was the most important to computer related ethical decision making, 80% indicated that their own personal code of ethics was most important. People are mostly driven by higher order values. Other studies reveal that social sensitivity, attitudes and social norms play an important role in determining individuals’ acts (Kuzu, 2009), therefore pointing to the importance of the acquisition of ethical skills for the wellbeing of children and society. We need to deal with the values that underlie behaviours in order to provide solutions, instead of adopting defensive stances and excessive regulations, which don’t address

the core issue. In order for individuals to be committed to ethical codes they must first be committed to the purposes of these codes.

Values Drive Cultures

We all understand that values drive culture. In any organisational environment people quickly learn “*how things are done around here*”. Regardless of any stated policy students and people quickly pick up on the real values that drive the place. Several authors have pointed out that the key to managing the risk of unethical computer use is creating, reinforcing and maintaining an ethical environment. Any effort to educate for cyber citizenship must include the wisdom that has been acquired through the ages. The wisdom acquired during the human pursuit for truth, beauty and goodness must be inherited for people to fully participate and contribute in the world in which they live.

Society values external resources such as economic, material and technical assets. Businesses value the technical and intellectual skills that individuals can contribute to their enterprises. However, many educators and business leaders also recognise the value of internal resources such as self-reliance, confidence, perseverance, resilience, being responsible, being able to motivate oneself, have self-control in order to reach an objective, be able to get along well with others, be empathetic and emotionally and socially intelligent (Gardner 2000), (Goleman 2004), (Reasoner 2004), (Bernard 2001).

Schools are now challenged to see the link between academic literacy and psychological literacy (Bernard 2001, p.2) (Gardner 2000, p.76). Academic success is fostered when students are able to set personal goals, be sufficiently optimistic and self-motivated to accomplish them, able to adapt to change, have good problem-solving skills and to manage themselves and their relationships well. These personal qualities are perhaps more valued today than they were in the past (Gardner 2000), (Reuven Bar-On 2004). Today teachers often comment on the steady decline of behaviour and learning, children in the most economically successful are not as well equipped to behave and learn as they were in the past (Palmer 2007).

In 2004 an English research foundation recorded that behavioural problems in young people at school have doubled over the last thirty years and emotional problems have increased by 70 percent. The effect of this has been an increase in substance abuse, binge drinking, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide in the teenage population (Palmer 2006, p 2). Susan Palmer argues that today’s educational needs often become tomorrow’s mental health problems, anti-social behaviour and crime (Palmer 2006, p 3). Parents, educators, community and religious leaders all over the world see the importance of educating people to acquire personal character skills in order to be successful academically, in a career and in personal relationships. The primary objectives of education is to foster student learning and produce children who are good, responsible and disciplined (Gardner 2000). After all parents and members of the community are hoping for the future generation to not only be competent at work but also to be good family members and good citizens. However, the proportion of children diagnosed with special needs has increased, but the proportion of students that are distractible, impulsive or badly behaved has also increased. There has also been an increase in rule breaking, violence and bullying. Schools are finding

difficult to teach distractible, impulsive hard to teach, therefore having the affect that teachers need to spend more time on discipline and less time on teaching (Palmer 2006).

Managing Ourselves – Social Capital in the Cyber Age

Self control is central to character education because this allows us to act responsibly and effectively (Goleman 2004). Our ability manage ourselves well is critical to all of life's pursuits, in fact self-control as been described as a meta-ability, which determines how well we use our other competencies, including intellect. Howard Gardner the psychologist who introduced the concept of multiple intelligences once told Daniel Goleman that the time had come to broaden our notion of the spectrum of talents (Goleman 2004). Developing character in young people involves understanding the multiple facets that allow human beings to manage themselves properly." Just as Howard Gardner has redefined intelligence as a complex of psychological characteristics in his theory of multiple intelligences, I attempt to redefine character as a complex constellation of psychological dimensions of a person" (Marvin-Berkowitz 2002). The ability to maintain attention on something that we don't particularly find interesting is critical to learning (Palmer 2007).

We cannot maintain long term relationships if we are not trustworthy. We cannot manage our finances, if we cannot control our desires for immediate gratification. We cannot achieve our goals if we don't learn to master ourselves and delay immediate gratification in order to achieve our objectives. Good character traits allow us to motivate and guide ourselves to get up in the morning, to do homework or achieve our goals. The foundation of good character is self-discipline (self control); the ability to defer immediate gratification and control urges is a fundamental skill needed to manage ourselves well and achieve our goals. We must have a certain level of self-control in order to do right by others; it takes will to keep emotion under the control of reason. The ability to control our self-centred emotions and desires has many social and personal benefits. This allows us to develop our empathy for others, which allows us to be more sensitive to the needs of others, to take point of view of others, which in turn allows us to make commitments to certain line of actions that improves our relationships to others and benefits our communities (Goleman 2004). The primary source of a healthy self esteem is the good management of our emotions, thoughts and actions (Boeree, 2004).

Managing ourselves involves our ability to manage our thinking well (managing our thinking processes and making wise decisions), to manage our emotion well (nurturing our emotional growth which allows us to create and maintain meaningful relationships) and to manage our behaviours which allow us to be affective, responsible, altruistic and caring (Bringing in a New Era in Character Education 2002). Negative behaviours are often the result of a lack of ability in self management, which is fundamental for healthy a self esteem and to be able to act effectively. There is ample evidence that people who are emotionally competent, able to manage themselves well and are able deal with other people's feelings well, have a great advantage in any pursuit they undertake in life. Building character involves developing the mind (attitudes, thinking and wisdom), the heart (emotional and social intelligence, empathy and altruistic and moral emotions) and positive behaviours (responsibility, altruistic and caring behaviours) in young people. Positive behaviours are the result of these competencies.

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