

Effects on teachers

[NOTE TO TRANSLATOR: THIS HAS ALREADY BEEN TRANSLATED, IN THE BOOK INTRODUCTION. PLEASE CUT AND PASTE IT FROM THERE]

There is no doubt that whenever teachers begin consciously to be aware of the principles of Educare in their teaching it brings about positive changes in them. Over and over again we hear stories of teachers who have become happier and more fulfilled in their chosen profession as well as in their personal lives. In our Educare projects in Mainland China we ask teachers to write their personal reflections. Let us take a look at some of the ways in which teachers have described themselves to have changed*.

Changing their perception of education

One of the earliest transformations that happens to teachers is that they begin to re-examine their ideas about what teaching should be, and shake off some of their old philosophies that may have been making them unhappy:

Under the influence of the traditional ideas, I thought I was a good teacher as long as the students were getting results. Therefore in my teaching I would always strive for perfection and always thought the students had grasped the complete knowledge as long as they obtained good test results. But the fact is not so. You pay very much, but the harvest is actually very little. Facing this fact, I had become excessively sad, excessively disappointed and very tired. My teaching did not have any meaning. Then I started to participate in the values education training and we became aware of the theory to “awaken the child’s innermost feelings, thoughts and values”, “help the children to know they all have special qualities” and “the deepest impression the student has is of the teacher’s personality, not the knowledge which she teaches”. All of this touched me in a very big way and I blushed with shame when I recalled the past. Though I had thought myself to be a teacher, only pursuing the academic score was really superficial. I have learned the “humanist” side of the work, to “take the love as the starting point” even if the student’s outcomes are not so good. I try as much as possible not to look at the superficial things but to discover the students’ true intrinsic selves.

Next, take the teacher, an average person. The values education has allowed me to make a big transformation in my thinking. I have learned to forgive and forget, I have changed from hot tempered to restrained. Before in the classroom I would often scold the students but now I patiently guide them to speak the truth.

Teachers recognize themselves as being better people

In my own life I have changed to become calmer. For example when students are mischievous or quarrel or do not listen to me in class, I respond with repeated patience. With this “gentle mood” treatment I try to guide the students with kind expression, enlighten their thoughts and avoid the stiff teaching methods. I also reconsider myself frequently. For instance, with the moral education strengthened and my understanding more profound, I feel my teacher’s sense of mission more strongly, love the students more deeply, am more harmonious in my relationships with the students, and more artistic in my methods of work. In brief I have enhanced my ability to be a good person.

At that time my heart’s core did not have a foothold – I therefore became immersed in my own moods. Life and work can lose their direction. When the values education came to our school I was very happy to participate in the research. In the year of the research my impetuous heart has gradually become tranquil. Even if my husband does not come home for his meal, I am tranquil. I will watch television, prepare a lesson, perhaps practise writing some characters. I no longer get into a rage or slam down the telephone, but look at it from his point of view, understand, and forgive him.

As an average teacher, I think that the values education has changed me in many ways. The values education has changed my disposition when I encounter a difficulty. Instead of being irritable or having a fit of temper, it has helped me to learn to endure patiently and be tolerant.

In my family I am the only daughter, therefore I was often impulsive, did not consider others’ feelings and always expected to be the “centre”. If something happened to not meet my expectations I was unable to recover after a setback. But after participating in the values education I changed optimistically upward. I have become magnanimous, open minded and forgiving. I say frequently to myself that others must feel happy and joyful because of my existence. If I can make others joyful I can also be truly joyful.

Recognising the importance of love:

As a teacher I have grown. I have learned that in order to get the students to learn how to love, I have to give love first. I also know that giving is a blessing.

In the past teachers may just have taught children but not from heart to heart. My concept has changed. I use my heart, and am keen to build up a good relationship with students, and to use encouragement instead of punishment.

Controlling their own behaviour

A natural consequence of teaching about human values is that the teachers naturally become aware of their own values. We quickly come to realize that if we are going to encourage children to be truthful we cannot tell lies. If we want them to value love we

must be loving. If we want to convince them that it is important to cultivate inner peace, we find ourselves consciously looking for ways to cultivate our own inner peace.

I realize that as a teacher I need to put more effort into raising/enhancing myself and controlling my own conduct – that I have to be very cautious with my words and actions and try to set a good example for the students.

Practising the strategies

One of the first things we ask teachers to do is to introduce the strategy of silent thinking into their lessons. Very quickly they see changes in their students. At first these changes are outward – the children begin to become more settled and to concentrate better. Gradually the changes become inward – the children begin to recognize and tap into their own inner reservoirs of strength and resourcefulness. Teachers begin by letting the children see that they also benefit from using the strategy, and usually end up surprising themselves at the way it has transformed them as well.

Before the experiment I had a very serious problem of easily getting panicky, worried, irritated. When I got to know Educare great changes took place in my mind. It has been like a light guiding me out of the darkness. Every day early in the morning I close my eyes and breathe deeply three times and fully concentrate on today's work. Later I imagine my students sitting in the classroom and I put my focus on each student's face, imagining each of them as a beautiful flower or something beautiful. Then I have a sense of love from my heart. I feel full of strength and energy all over. Then the day's work goes smoothly – everything is under control and I feel full of joy. Gradually I have conquered my panicky problem.

As the teacher, I can also sometimes have mood changes and lose my temper. Sometimes I can say things that can injure a child like an arrow. But since participating in the study, whenever I want to have a fit of temper, I can look for a place – either go outside the classroom, breathe deeply, or imagine a golden-coloured cloud – and this lets my mood become more stable. Then I can carry on with my work. Sometimes when I am at home or in the office I may encounter an unhappy or worrying matter. Then I also use silent sitting. It is most often advantageous to me.

Becoming more valuable to their colleagues and families

As teachers become more and more conscious of their roles as models of Educare they begin to realize that their behaviour is transforming not only themselves but also others around them:

The values education has been like a light radiating to others. For a year I was like a honeybee taking honey, absorbing the nutrition from the values education. This led to

very good results in my work, and I have shared these experiences with other people. My younger sister....

The values education has changed me and my relationships with my colleagues. Before I would speak extremely candidly and had not considered the feelings of the person I was speaking to. Now I have learned to pay attention to others' feelings, which has helped to build a harmonious atmosphere with colleagues. Many look from the other's point of view, render encouragement and assistance and respect each other equally as one respects one's own family members.

A two-way process

The true impact of Educare is reflected in the following comment from a teacher, which shows that Educare is a two-way process of transformation between teacher and students. As she has tried to reflect human values to her students, they have reflected it back to her and this has enabled her to grow:

Since participating in the values education, the children in the class and I have grown together, letting me realize the value of the human values. Their pardon, forgiveness, loyalty, sympathy, love, selflessness, peace, patience, mercy and so on have given my own life a focus and has caused my life to have warmth, forgiveness and love.