



House of Lords Hansard, from a debate on 26th June

26th June, 2014

Lord Stone of Blackheath (Lab): My Lords, in peacemaking projects, interfaith dialogues and multinational businesses with which I have been involved, when people adopt universal values rather than exclusive ones, and respect others, better outcomes are achieved for all.

For me, mindfulness practice is helpful in working across varying and sometimes conflicting cultures with different values. This practice connects me with something greater than my habitual self, puts me into a place where compassion and empathy come to the fore, values come before self, and I am better able to see and understand other peoples' points of view. I am not saying that I am always successful in this. Mindfulness is complex to define. It is essentially an experience. Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts simply puts it that:

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally".

The successful Mindfulness in Schools Project is a collaboration between psychologists at Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter and Bangor universities. They have developed a curriculum and a classroom-based introduction to mindfulness for teenagers that adapts mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive therapy into PHSE lessons. This is called dot-be, which stands for "stop, breathe and be". It is an eight-week course written by teachers for teachers. This curriculum has been translated into eight languages and is now being taught in 38 countries—and not only in traditional school settings, but also in pupil-referral units, young offenders' institutions and even to gang members. Nearly 1,000 teachers internationally have been trained, 800 of them in this country. Evidence shows that even short periods of mindfulness practice reshape the neural pathways and increase the areas associated with kindness, compassion and rationality, and decrease those involved with anxiety, worry and impulsiveness.

Similarly, the Inspire-Aspire values programme has worked with 75,000 10 to 15-year olds around the London Olympics to enable them to reflect on and apply the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect, and the Paralympic values of courage, determination, equality and inspiration. They believe that whatever we define as British values, these values should be more universal and shared among different cultures. Inspire-Aspire is now working with global citizenship, focusing on the Commonwealth Games, and has engaged 52,000 young people this year in over 30 Commonwealth countries.

Both these programmes are greatly loved by pupils, teachers and parents. A systematic review found that when these types of programme are completed with sufficient intensity, using properly evaluated material and to a high enough standard, they increase children's emotional well-being, behaviour and academic achievement, all by over 10%. The programmes also have a huge database on youth and values with thousands of young people across the UK. Can the Minister ensure that Her Majesty's Government support these important independent education programmes that champion universal values?

Noble Lords may also wish to know that we now have an active and vibrant All Parliamentary Party Group for Mindfulness. Every Tuesday on the Estate, Chris Cullen, the cofounder of the Mindfulness in Schools project, runs mindfulness classes. Peers, MPs and Staff—96 of them already—have taken part, and enjoyed and benefited from them. There are a few places left for our course that is starting in October.



And this is what The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Lord Nash) (Con) said in his rounding up!

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The noble Lord, Lord Stone, talked about mindfulness. I thank him for his insightful and interesting comments, and for his commercial for the mindfulness classes. The values that we are asking all schools to actively promote are not exclusive. As I understand it, mindfulness chimes a very loud chord with me. I believe that children and young people should be taught about concepts such as mindfulness. Such concepts can be very powerful, particularly for children from scattered home lives. We use a similar approach with a number of our more challenged pupils at my own secondary academy.

For the full debate, please [click here](#)