

In search of the talisman: the theory

Chapter Three

EXPLORING THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF YEP

3.1 The philosophical underpinning

The philosophical foundations and the educational perspectives and principles of YEP will be explored and analysed in this chapter in an attempt to answer the second research question:

What philosophical and theoretical principles underpin YEP?

YEP is based on a complex mix of theoretical concepts and principles. As Clarke (1999:31) said, “*Programme theory is generally made up of a combination of hunches, beliefs, intuitive assumptions and knowledge founded on practical experience*”. A close examination of the theoretical foundations and practical operation of YEP has brought to light several basic philosophies and principles of this life skill programme.

During the last few decades the world of humanity has been governed by a few philosophical ideologies, hereafter referred to as the ideologies of the ‘old world order’. These ideologies are shifting, as they no longer meet the needs of the world we live in. In most cases these philosophies seem to have failed to bring the happiness and prosperity that humanity expected, and in some cases they have even contributed to the problems of the world. These ideologies are examined here to check the relevance of this statement.

3.2 The old world order

3.2.1 One-sided rationalism

Since the seventeenth century, the Western world has been strongly influenced by the philosophy of rationalism (Turner, 1990:6; Zohar & Marshall, 2000:26). According to this ideology, the rational faculty of man is the determining factor for success and advancement in the world. The emphasis on man's rational power has been far-reaching, to the extent that the 1800s were called the Age of Reason. Since the time of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, man's power of mind has been utilised to create wealth, commodities, industry, science and technology (Bertram, Fotheringham & Harley, 2000:94). Computers, the Internet, fax machines, telephones, and aeroplanes are just a few examples of advancement in science and technology. The impressive results of science and technology made many people believe in the rational faculty of man as the sole means for solving the problems of the world. Many people, especially scientists, believed that something was true and acceptable only if it was proven rationally and by the means of scientific methods (Bertram *et al.*, 2000:94).

The comfort and material prosperity that the Western world enjoyed dazzled the other countries and motivated them to follow suit. As a result, most countries of the world strive for advancement in science and technology and perceive their success to be dependent on their technological achievements.

In the field of education also, rationalism has played an important role. Division of the curriculum into different subjects has been the result of the influence of rationalism. Science divided the world and categorised reality so that it could be studied thoroughly (Plunkett, 1990:60-61). Often this division created the impression that there was no interrelatedness among school subjects and that reality was fragmented. As a result of over-emphasis on rationalism, science and mathematics were given more importance than other subjects in an attempt to prepare learners for a world governed by technology. However, as the Values,

Education and Democracy document (DoE, 2001:42-43) states, “...*the reduction of education to the market and jobs, important as that may be in some respects, commodifies education.*” According to Purpel (1989:10),

To trivialise education by obsessing on technical or superficial, symptomatic concerns is not only illogical but harmful: it distracts us from the responsibility to engage in serious dialogue on how the educational process can facilitate a world of love, justice, and joy.

In light of the massive scientific and technological achievements made during the last few decades, and the especial attention and emphasis given to it one would expect that most human problems would have been resolved by now, and that prosperity, peace and tranquillity for all would have been realised. Looking at the world around us, it is clear that this has not happened and is not happening. The world’s 225 richest individuals have a combined wealth of over \$1 trillion, equal to the annual income of the poorest 47 per cent of the world’s population (Christenson, 2000:8). The enormous gap between the rich and the poor, war and strife among nations, and the high rate of crime and aggression in the world point to the failure of rationalism single-handedly to solve the problems of humanity. In fact, the world seems very different from what one would have desired. Plunkett (1990:12) raised the question, “*What has happened to people to make the world so different from what the vast majority must surely wish?*” One would agree with Jaffe (cited by Plunkett, 1990:57), who seems to answer the question by saying, “*One-sided over-valuation of rational consciousness and of an ego-dominated world, as well as vitiation of instinct, lie at the root of many neuroses and psychic illnesses in modern man.*”

Therefore, rationalism needs to be balanced with a holistic view of man where all faculties of the human being are given attention and an all-rounded person is developed.

3.2.2 Individualism

Seeking personal interest, pleasure and permissiveness, and above all self-centeredness, seem to be the dominating value of our times. Individualism is the belief that

Each person is separate and apart from all other individuals and therefore, the frustration, unhappiness, failure, hunger, despair, and misery of others have no significant bearing on one's own well-being (Johnson & Johnson, 1995:111).

Zohar and Marshall (2000:31) are right when they say that falling into self-centeredness “cuts us off from wider meaning and broader perspective”. Mayson (2002:50) finds individual and group self-centeredness a cause for degeneration of our feelings for others and even for giving in to brutality and injustice. Self-centeredness and individualism seem to disconnect us gradually from our families, friends and communities, depriving us of a holistic and wholesome approach to life.

Individualism, however, is a modern-age phenomenon. Ryan and Lickona (1987:78) explain that the concept of democracy has been twisted by the *laissez-faire* liberalism of the last century, causing individuals to think of democracy as a private and personal possession. Comments such as “It’s my life ... my body ... my property ... my thing” – often heard from the youth – give the impression that individuals view themselves as isolated from the rest of the society.

In the South African context, the individualistic view of life is in contrast to communal life, a lifestyle traditionally dominant among the African people. According to African tradition, “a person is person through other persons” and “being human means first and foremost to belong” (Pato, 1997:113). In spite of this contrast, individualism is on the increase in South Africa and manifests itself in the loss of respect for adults, greed, dishonesty and poor work ethics (DoE & SABC, 2000:13). President Thabo Mbeki (in Mayson, 2002:49) showed concern in this regard when he said:

There was a collapse of an acceptable level of morality in our society, which resulted in the elevation of the self, and the serving of the interests of the self to the point that this becomes a religion. The self became the god we all must worship.

The fast spread of individualism needs to be countered by promoting values in the life skills programme such as caring, co-operation and mutual respect.

3.2.3 Materialism

Materialism is another dominant ideology of contemporary societies. Materialism – or in Brunton’s (1952:21) words, “*thing worship*” – has become a dominant mode of life. Preoccupation with accumulation of material wealth seems to be responsible for losing track of purpose and a balanced approach to life. Effendi (1973:14) explains the negative effect of materialism in the following words:

Concern for material wealth alone, finally can be seen to have entrapped all people in a maze of insecurity, doubt, and lack of freedom, as the competition to achieve positions of advantage and power intensifies.

Brunton (1952:177-178) sees a relationship between spiritual emptiness and materialism. He believes that there are people who experience a spiritual void within themselves, even though their homes are crowded with furniture, appliances and material belongings. He says:

People who are dazzled by the ownership of things while neglecting the ownership of themselves show they are emotionally and intellectually ungrown-up, a race of spiritually small boys and girls preoccupied with small toys.

Effendi (in Bahá’í, 1995:14) goes a step further and calls materialism the cause for the breakdown in spirituality:

The materialistic civilization of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind, that people in general no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. ...The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its cause.

In South Africa many youth view material possessions as a sign of power and respect. Their sense of self-esteem has become interwoven with the acquisition of material possessions, which are seen as a reflection of their self-worth (DoE & DoSS, 1999:41-42). Lourens Schlebusch of the University of Natal believes that one of the major reasons for teenage suicide is that many young blacks have very high material expectations of the new South Africa (*Sunday Tribune*, 6 July 1997).

The ideologies of the old world order prevalent in the West rapidly spread to the non-Western countries of the world with the hope that it would bring comfort and prosperity to mankind. Education systems became the vehicle to carry forward and implement the materialist, individualistic and rationalistic view of life. Schools used rationalistic methods and approaches to develop technological knowledge and skills, and in the process forgetting about the development of the affective domains of the learners. In the final analysis, however, the success and happiness that science and technology were expected to provide did not materialise. A great number of the population of the world still lives with poverty, war, crime and other kinds of problematique. As Brunton (1952:32) wrote, “*The naïve belief that science could so improve the state of man that utopian happiness would eventually be his, is falling rapidly by the wayside.*” Brunton (1952:34) then made a call that this study also tries to make:

The hour has come to wake to what we have done to ourselves, to what a one-sided science and an icy intellectualism have done to us, and to seek a balance which will rest on them, yes, but also on faith and intuition.

Considering the shortcomings of the ideologies of the old world order, and in some cases its contribution to the problems of the world, it was apparent that the ideologies of the old world order could not be the foundation for a life skills programme that intended to revive the *talisman*. It was logical, therefore, to shift from the old world order paradigm to the new world order paradigm.

3.3 The new world order

3.3.1 Introduction

The world is going through a period of fundamental change and transformation. The old world order is giving way to the new world order, as the old order ideologies are found more and more to be ineffective in dealing with the demands of the modern age.

Bahá'u'lláh (1978:113) wrote the following about the need for transition to the new world order:

The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective. Soon will the present-day order be rolled up and a new one spread out in its stead.

The phenomenon of change is nothing new; it is the nature of change that is new. Land and Jarman (1992:4) explain that the nature of change in the past was constant; that is why it was possible to predict change and prepare for it. At present, however, the nature of change is not predictable. Thus, young people need to be prepared for change and to develop those skills that help them to deal and cope with change.

3.3.2 Characteristics of the new world order

Several characteristics may be ascribed to the new world order: globalisation, democracy, and information overload or what is known as the “knowledge explosion”.

3.3.2.1 *globalisation*

According to Wells *et al.* (1998:323), globalisation is “*a complicated set of economic, political, and cultural factors*”. One of the characteristics of globalisation is exchange of trades, money, people, ideas, values and images across the borders evermore swiftly (Hurrell & Woods, 1995:447). The formation of international organisations, international conferences and world collaborative bodies denote the move towards globalisation. World events such as the Parliament of the World’s Religions (1999), the Summit of Religious Leaders (2000), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) fully support the concept of *one globe, one people*. The Earth Charter Benchmark Draft II Commission (in Barney, 1999:151) writes the following about globalisation:

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life.... The global environment with its finite resources is a primary common concern of all humanity.

The world is moving towards globalisation free from arbitrary segregation and boundaries. Senge (in Fullan, 1993:98) said: “*All boundaries, national boundaries included, are fundamentally arbitrary*”.

Globalisation affects everyone and every affair of human beings. Even the youth problematique has become a global phenomenon, cutting across borders. No programme can ignore the phenomenon of globalisation and the challenges it presents to humanity. Globalisation demands that educational programmes have world vision and prepare learners for living in a world society characterised by peace and justice.

3.3.2.2 democracy and human rights

Another characteristic of our age is the universal acknowledgement of the importance of democracy and respect for human rights. Like never before, humanity is aware and conscious of human rights. Minorities, children, women, the handicapped, prisoners and workers claim and fight for their rights. For 97 per cent of recorded human history, almost 98 per cent of humanity had no rights, whereas today even animals have rights (Land & Jarman, 1992:8). Consideration for human and democratic rights is a principle that needs to be clearly defined, properly understood, upheld by all, and considered in the planning of social and educational activities and programmes. In respect of South African youth it has already been noted that transition to democracy led to misinterpretation by some youth of democracy and its equation with liberty without a sense of responsibility (see Chapter Two, section 2.2.1.2). It is necessary, therefore, to develop in the youth an understanding of the principle of democracy and a responsible attitude towards it.

3.3.2.3 information explosion

The age of information overload requires people – especially the youth – to be multi-skilled and multi-functional in order to be able to cope with change. More information has been produced in the last 30 years than in the previous 5 000 years (Christenson, 2000:3). About 1 000 books are published internationally every day and the total of all printed knowledge now doubles every seven to ten years. To be compatible with the needs of the information age, educational programmes should develop a variety of skills in the learners.

3.4 The philosophical principles of YEP

Having opted to be relevant to the characteristics and demands of the new world order, YEP needed to adhere to a set of philosophical principles that would suit the characteristics of the new world order. The philosophical points of departure

have a major influence on the focus and the proposed outcomes of a programme. The philosophical principles of YEP are discussed below.

3.4.1 Humankind is spiritual and noble in nature

By nature, humankind is spiritual and noble. Being spiritual “*is the essence of being human*” (Tew, 2000:175). All human beings share this characteristic and are inspired and affected by it.

The word “spirit” originates from the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning breath. It gives life and generates life. Miller (2000: 140) defines spirituality as “*the connection we can feel between ourselves and something vast, unseen, mysterious, and wondrous*”. Plunkett (1990:83) gives the following description of spirituality:

The spiritual area is concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs; they affect the way people see themselves and throw light for them on the purpose and meaning of life itself. ...sometimes they represent that striving and longing for perfection which characterizes human beings but always they are concerned with matters at the heart and root of existence.

According to this study it is this quality of people that takes them to the heights of human perfection, and qualifies them as human and possessors of the *talisman*.

According to Miller (2000), spirituality should not be confused with any religion or sect, but rather as connectedness with the unseen, the mysterious and the supernatural. It refers to the connection that we feel with the transcendent world that many may call God, the essence that motivates man to seek for the good and the pure within.

The spiritual aspect of people is very important as it determines their attitudes and approaches towards life. As Brunton (1952:15) writes: “*...if inner attitude toward life is wrong the outer personal, political and economic affairs will go wrong*”. One can even say that the ultimate purpose of life is spiritual advancement,

realising the best in each human being and reaching the state of *supreme talisman*. Humankind “ *is here ultimately for spiritual development*” (Brunton, 1952:16).

In spite of its importance, societies and education systems have ignored the spiritual dimension of people. As a result, the spiritual and moral development of learners are overlooked and gradually excluded from the school curriculum. Ward (1986:23) said, “*We set our hopes on human reason, and human reason is not enough to save us from passion and power, greed and envy*”.

Neglect of moral and spiritual education has resulted in what this study calls *spiritual apartheid*, which is reflected in moral apathy, emotional insensitivity, lack of compassion, and personal and group alienation. To change the state of the youth problematic in South Africa, youth need spiritual transformation (ANC, 1998:3) and, in terms of this study, *talisman* rejuvenation. This implies that, as Singh (1996:226) maintains, spiritual education and moral awakening should be at the centre of our new educational thinking. Inclusion of spiritual education in the school curriculum tends to bring a balance that has been missing in schools, where most emphasis is put on the intellectual development of learners.

Gradually, however, societies are becoming aware of this void and are trying to bring affective outcomes back into the curriculum. The 1988 Education Reform Act of the United Kingdom requires schools to include spiritual and moral, social, and cultural outcomes in their curriculum as a matter of priority. Formulation of this act indicates that the British government has become aware of the importance of the spiritual and moral development of their citizens and the impact this development has on the general functioning of their people.

3.4.2 Humankind is one

The principle that drives humanity towards globalisation is that of the oneness of mankind. Human beings are interrelated and their well-being is interconnected. The need for unity and oneness of humanity is now felt in our world more than ever before. More and more people believe in the oneness of human beings as a

single race. The establishment of international organisations, gathering the world politicians in one room, and international summits and conferences held in almost every scientific and non-scientific field, point to people's need for unification. Singh (1996:226) believes that unity is an essential principle that must govern the world:

...that the planet we inhabit and of which we are all citizens – Planet Earth – is a single, living, pulsating entity; that the human race in the final analysis is an interlocking, extended family ... and that the differences of race and religion, nationality and ideology, sex and sexual preference, economic and social status – though significant in themselves – must be viewed in the broader context of global unity.

The principle of oneness of humankind is more than just an idealistic view. It is an essential requirement for the survival and co-existence of human beings, both materially and spiritually. Effendi (1938:42-43) wrote:

Oneness of Mankind ... is no more outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and false hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater.... It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.

Fullan (1993:99) agrees with Effendi, saying, “*Being committed to the whole is of essential practical value to surviving productively in complex global societies, and is the necessary component of meaningful existence*”.

Even the world of science now supports the concept of unity. According to chaos theory (Goerner, 1995:4), interdependence shapes the world at all levels, from the molecular to the societal. Chaos theory looks at the world as an ecological reality where everything has a relationship with others. Goerner (1995:4-5) explains that:

Global economy, world order, world environmental summits – ours is the age when the world's complexity has finally tied us all together in a way we can no longer ignore.

Viewing the world from this perspective, one would agree that humanity in essence is one family and has one civilisation to build (Bahá'í, International Office of Public Information, 1999:2). It is through recognising this principle that humanity can move towards unity of vision and act in pursuit of world peace.

Living in a world that is in the throes of strife and disunity, it is important to educate the youth to enable them to create a peaceful and united world.

3.4.3 Unity in diversity

The principle of oneness of humankind requires a belief in unity in diversity. People by nature are different and unique. Often diversity among people has been viewed as a negative factor and a cause for conflict and disunity. The shift to globalisation makes it necessary to re-evaluate this perspective and consider the principle of unity in diversity.

The principle of unity in diversity is becoming more urgent in our lives than ever before, given the global world we live in. Urbanisation and migration are common phenomena of our time, and have brought people of different races, status, nationalities, and cultures to a common place. In South Africa alone one can observe this diversity clearly after the breakdown of apartheid and the homeland system. Families and individuals from different racial groups have moved into cities and suburbs that were closed to them in the past. A look at shops and schools gives a colourful picture of the diversity of cultures and creeds.

Diversity in the human race is not something negative which needs to be illuminated as some may think, but a necessary requirement for co-existence and survival. Each different person contributes to human society in a unique way. As `Abdu'l-Bahá (1978:291) said, *“This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for*

each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole.” Globalisation has proved that we all are interdependent and need to rely on one another for survival. Therefore, diversity should not only be acknowledged but also celebrated as a source of enrichment. Abdu’l-Bahá (1979:53) further wrote, *“The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord”*.

Considering the importance of unity in diversity, learners should be taught about differences and helped to see the wisdom of diversity.

3.4.4 Human beings are equal

The root principle behind democracy is that all human beings are inherently noble and equal. Every person, by virtue of being human, is equal and is entitled to equal treatment. Article 1 of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes this explicit: *“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood”* (United Nations, 1948). People are equal and should have equal opportunities to practice their belief, religion, language and culture irrespective of their sex, race or any other kind of diversity. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:7) endorses the principle of equality, making all South African citizens equal before the law. Therefore, in education learners should be treated as equals and be taught to treat one another as equals.

3.5 Educational perspectives

3.5.1 The purpose of education

The dawn of the new world order and believing in the oneness of humans affects the way in which education is viewed and interpreted. As Stavenhagen (1996:229)

says, it is “...*necessary to rethink the objectives of what it means to educate and be educated*”.

Analysing the philosophical perspective of YEP, the aim of education is twofold. On the one hand, education should develop the capacities latent in each individual to bring out their *talisman*, and on the other hand it should prepare them to contribute towards the development and the advancement of the world of humanity. Singh (1996:226), the former Minister of Education in India, stated in a report to UNESCO:

We must mobilize our inner and outer resources, that we begin consciously to build a new world based on mutually assured welfare rather than mutually assured destruction.

Therefore, individuals should be educated not only for their own benefit and as the citizens of a particular country but also as citizens of the world. Global citizenship is not a new concept any more. Oxfam (1997) has already designed a Curriculum for Global Citizenship, with the aim of preparing the learners for living as global citizens. According to Lynch (cited by Bigger & Brown, 1999:39), there are three levels of citizenship:

- local community citizenship, which includes familial, cultural, and social groupings;
- national citizenship; and
- international citizenship.

It is important to note that as national citizenship does not exclude local citizenship, so international or global citizenship does not exclude national citizenship.

In education, however,

we must use the latest array of innovative and interactive pedagogic methodologies to structure a world-wide programme of education – for children and adults alike – that would open their eyes to the reality of the dawning global age...(Singh, 1996:226).

To achieve this, YEP has adopted pedagogic methods that help the youth to recognise the oneness of the world, and the fact that they and the people around them are interrelated and interdependent.

3.5.2 The aims of a life skills intervention programme

Jetto (1997:4) refers to life skills as those skills and competencies that people need to sustain and enrich themselves, as well as those skills that help them cope with the demands of life and assist them to have greater control over their lives. In the light of the above principles and considering the educational needs and background of South African youth, a life skills intervention programme that brings a balance to the lives of individual youth would be relevant. Such a programme needs to *heal* the moral, emotional and spiritual hurts that have been inflicted on youth by their past. At the same time, it should *build* and enrich them with those social, moral, and cognitive skills necessary to cope with the challenges of the modern world and in preparation for living in a united world. This implies that YEP life skills intervention programme had to be both a preventative/healing and an enriching/building programme.

3.5.3 The learner

The learner is the most significant figure in YEP life skills programme, and is viewed to have the following qualities and characteristics:

- **nobility and innate integrity**

Every learner is inherently noble and dignified and should be treated with respect and honour, as every human being is spiritual in nature and reflects something of

the Divine in him/her. Nelson Mandela highlights the importance of this when he writes:

Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished (Mandela, 1994:542).

Even the most humble learner in the class should be viewed as noble and dignified. As Erickson (1995:186) said, every learner is gifted.

- **uniqueness**

Learners are unique in respect of learning intelligence (Gardener, 1983) and in respect of past experiences and knowledge (Askew & Carnell, 1998:33). Each learner is endowed with especial talents and faculties, and has a unique *talisman*. Therefore, every learner should be allowed to be different and to learn according to his/her unique talents and *talisman*. This implies that different responses and paces of learning should be respected in the course of educational interactions.

- **ability to identify and solve problems**

Individuals have within themselves vast resources that can be tapped (Rogers, 1980:115-117). Therefore, given the necessary challenge and assistance, learners should be able to seek answers to life-problems on their own and to deal with them. Using their spiritual and mental potential, they should be in charge of learning and responsible for reclaiming the *talisman*.

3.5.4 Peers

Peers are very important ingredients in the learning process. Ward and Murphy (cited in Behr, 1990:35) wrote, “*The personality of the child is developed in the process of interaction between the child and his group*”.

In the ordinary classroom, the role of peers in learning is often overlooked and the dynamics of peer interactions are over-simplified. In the YEP class, however, peer pressure is considered to be an important and powerful educational tool that can be used not only for the teaching of academic outcomes but especially for the promotion of social and moral outcomes.

It is often presumed that peers exert negative influence on each other, which is commonly referred to as “peer pressure”. However, this pressure may be used for the benefit of the learners, if it is properly diverted and controlled as is done in co-operative learning groups (Brandt, 1991:12); in this case, negative pressure can change into positive pressure. Peers spend considerable time together in clique groups. Within their groups, they create an informal, natural, but powerful learning milieu where they exchange information, learn from one another and influence one another. Therefore, peers may be used to teach each other. Johnson and Johnson (1995:131) explain the rationale for peer teaching as follows:

- People learn better if they learn in order to teach someone else. This is because when students teach each other and explain issues to one another they learn by doing.
- Higher-level conceptual understanding and reasoning are promoted when participants have to teach each other a common way to think about problem situations. The way people conceptualise material and organise it cognitively is markedly different when they are learning material for their own benefit and when they are sharing their learning with each other.
- Peers frequently are able to teach their classmates more effectively than specially trained experts can. Slavin (1991: 4) attributes this to the fact that students are often able to translate the teacher’s language into “kids language” and explain difficult concepts more simply.

The ability of peers to teach and influence their mates is not limited to academic subjects. It can also be used for teaching and achieving of affective outcomes.

This is because peers in real life influence each other in respect of social and moral values and attitudes.

3.5.5 The facilitator

Facilitators of learning in the life skills programme should perceive themselves as instigators or motivators of learning. They support the learners in constructing knowledge, defining and exploring values, and acquiring skills. According to Wells *et al.* (1990:97):

Knowledge does not exist in packages that can be transmitted from one person to another. Being a state of understanding, knowledge can only exist in the mind of an individual knower.

Effective facilitators of learning do not preach and lecture to learners because receiving a message, hearing it and getting it does not necessarily mean learning (Marlowe & Page, 1997:10). Rather they create opportunities for individual learners to think for themselves and to look for solutions. The teacher's challenge is less than that of teaching children how to think than that of giving them opportunities to think (Nickerson, 1988:39).

In YEP, the facilitators realise that, like their learners, first and foremost they are spiritual beings (Smith, 2000:63) who are as much in search of the *talisman* as their learners. Therefore, they treat their learners with compassion and respect. As such, the facilitators of YEP and their learners co-learn, co-exist and co-develop together in search of the *talisman*.

3.5.6 The classroom

The classroom is the place where learning should take place. Creating a spiritual and caring atmosphere in the classroom is of especial importance to a programme that intends to heal the moral, spiritual and social hurts of the learners. In order to promote a spiritual and caring atmosphere, it is important to create a happy, relaxed, trusting and respectful – or a *soulful* – classroom (Miller, 2000:5).

In a soulful classroom games, jokes, stories and activities are shared and learners feel at ease to share their deep feelings and ideas with others. The soulful classroom could create a suitable platform for the youth to voice their concerns and talk about what is important to them.

Interpreting the statement of Johnson and Johnson (1991:129) – that “*it is time for classrooms to become more realistic*” – the YEP classroom is viewed as:

- a life-laboratory where questions and scenarios about life are improvised, investigated, and scrutinised;
- a place where learners contemplate their own values, feelings, and knowledge;
- a place where learners learn from each other, socialise and practise skills of co-operation and effective communication;

As such, the classroom should become a safe laboratory where learners try out their life skills, and act and react to life-like stories and case studies.

3.6 Educational principles

Based on the philosophical principles and educational perspectives discussed so far, the following educational principles apply to YEP:

- awakening the spirit;
- honouring the self;
- justice;
- honesty;
- caring; and
- holistic education.

Each of these is discussed below.

3.6.1 Awakening the spirit

The first step in helping the youth to heal and to deal with their past emotional and moral hurts as well as their spiritual void is spiritual awakening. To achieve this end, youth need to be reminded of the good and the divine in them. They need to become aware of their *talisman*, long for it, believe in it, and feel the need to achieve it.

One source of spiritualisation is through religion. Arbab (in Lample, Hanson and Noguchi, 1992:ii) defines religion as the system of knowledge that assists man to understand his own nature, in contrast to science that helps him to understand material existence. Science deals with his rationality and head, religion with his beliefs and heart. According to Arbab, religion is as essential to man's happiness as the sciences. In this regard, Desmond Tutu (2000) says:

We are created religious, and being religious really means being open to the mysterious, to the holy, to the good and to the beautiful. It would be a very, very sad day if there was not space for religion.

Looking deeply into different religions and their teachings, it becomes apparent that in spite of their diversity all promote similar values and teachings known as the "Golden Rules". Dr. Kofi Annan (quoted by Mayson, 2002:52) said in this regard:

All great religions and traditions overlap when it comes to the fundamental principles of human conduct – charity, justice, compassion, mutual respect, and the equality of human beings.

Brown and Brown, (1999:24) believe that learners need to learn about various religions and cultures, and that learning about multiple faiths can strengthen the process of unification of diverse people. As Singh (1996:227) said:

The world's great religions must ... co-operate for the welfare of the human race, and that through a continuing and creative interfaith

dialogue, the golden thread of spiritual aspiration that binds them together must be strengthened.

In South Africa due to the policies of segregation of the past, most people remained ignorant of each other's religions and cultures. Thus a gap has been created. A relevant life skills programme will hopefully pay attention to this gap.

3.6.2 Honouring the self

Learners not only need to be respected and honoured by their educators, but most importantly by themselves. *Honouring the self* is most important for individuals because, as Branden (1983: xi) explains:

Of all the judgements that we pass in life, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves, for that judgement touches the very center of our existence.... No significant aspect of our thinking, motivation, feelings, or behaviour is unaffected by our self-evaluation.

Honouring the self is nurtured in various ways. The components of honouring the self, which are displayed in Figure 3.1, include:

- *self-knowledge*: Honouring the self requires knowing oneself, one's feelings, one's thoughts, needs and desires. This knowledge will be of utmost importance to the learners, as it is based on this knowledge that they will build future learning and make decisions.
- *self-confidence*: Self-confidence is the demonstration of self-acceptance and believing in the nobility of man. The courage to accept oneself with all weaknesses and strengths prepares the person to accept other people more easily. Learners should feel accepted as persons, even if they do not live up to the expectation of others (Korthagen, 2001:117).
- *self-identity*: Honouring the self also requires the preservation of self-identity as opposed to moulding individuals into specific models. Learner are entitled to their own unique identity and, therefore, to grow according to their own

abilities and unique characteristics such as culture, language, value system, and potential.

- *self-discipline*: A person with self-discipline regulates his/her own behaviour not out of fear or encouragement from external sources but as a result of respect for self and self-dignity. Poon Teng (1998) perceives the role of education as cultivating “*rigid self-discipline and strong inner balance*”.
- *independent thinking*: Independent thinking is another requirement for honouring the self. To achieve this, learners need to become intellectually independent, think for themselves, and make decisions based on their own judgment. This would prevent them from being easily influenced and blindly imitating others.

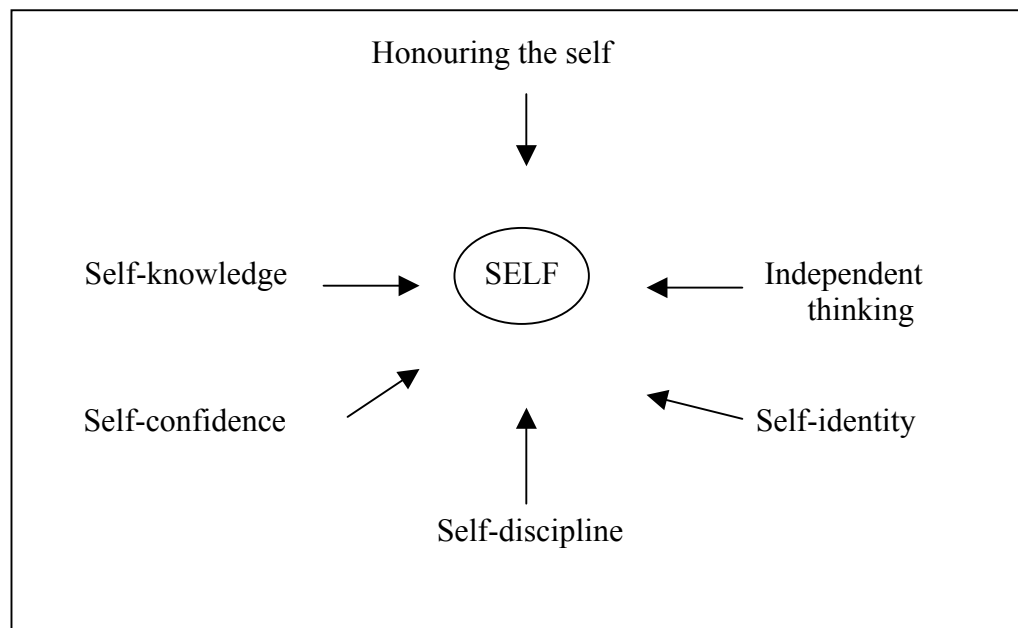


Figure 3.1 Components of honouring the self

Honouring the self and its components, therefore, should be nurtured through the life skills programme. YEP promotes honouring the self through giving every individual a chance to grow and develop according to his/her *talisman*, and avoids

moulding everyone into “one perfect” person. It also promotes self-confidence and self-discipline, by trusting learners to find their own solutions to problems and to make their own decisions.

3.6.3 Justice

Human beings are inherently free and equal and should be treated justly.

The principle of justice demands equality and fairness for all. In the learning situation, it requires that *all* learners be given a chance to learn, to speak, to participate in activities and to think. Moreover, the principle of justice is relevant to democracy and human rights. It is the democratic right of every person to learn.

3.6.4 Honesty

Respect for truth and honesty are fundamental for a programme that aims to help the youth to achieve their *talisman*. Honesty fulfils several functions in this regard:

- A prerequisite for the achievement of *talisman*: Being honest with oneself, and with others is a necessary condition for striving for excellence and the *talisman*. Honesty is the foundation for developing virtues (McPhail, 1982:36) and a source for self-respect. Honesty nurtures the soul (Miller, 2000:111). A person who hides behind lies is afraid to see his/her real self. Both learners and facilitators need to be honest with themselves and with others before they can think of achieving their *talisman*.
- A prerequisite for change and transformation: The first step for transformation in behaviour and reversing the youth problematique is the awareness and the honest acknowledgement that one has a problem, which needs to be addressed. Learners first need to be honest with themselves and to admit that they have a problem. Honesty is a prerequisite for self-knowledge. Being honest with oneself is the foundation for accepting oneself, for respecting

others for who they are and the world around them (Watson & Ashton, 1995:24).

- A way to release locked-up energy: Those learners who say what is expected of them instead of expressing their real feelings and ideas spend their energy wastefully. Honesty will give them a chance to release “*the energy they all too often channel into trying to hide their true feelings*” (Wagner, 1980:66).

3.6.5 Caring

Another ingredient that promotes spiritual and moral health among the youth is the existence of a caring community in the classroom, a classroom whose members show respect and concern for one another. Caring and compassion can nourish the soul (Miller, 2000:141). Some educators consider the development of care and fellowship among learners to be the primary goal of education. Nodding (cited in Jarrett, 1991:66) writes:

The primary aim of every educational institution and of every education effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring. Parents, police, social workers, teachers, preachers, neighbors, coaches, older siblings must all embrace this primary aim.

Caring can manifest itself in the form of respect, acceptance and affection. In a caring classroom, learners are encouraged to express their feelings, interests, and values (De Vries & Zan, 1994). With continuous nurturing of the sense of caring and co-operation in learners, small working groups could eventually change into *circle of friends*. A circle of friends consists of a small group of connected learners who care for each other deeply and are “there” for one another. In the circle of friends, the members come naturally together to share, to consult, to confide in each other, and to assist one another to excel and achieve the *talisman*. In this way they become natural life skills facilitators for each other and take over the nurturing role of the class facilitator.

YEP adopts the ground rules of respect, co-operation and acceptance of all ideas in the hope that they will help to create a caring community in the classroom.

3.6.6 Holistic education

The diversity of the educational needs of South African youth, as well as the need for being multi-skilled in an age of “knowledge explosion”, requires that the whole person should be developed. All developmental domains – spiritual, social, moral, physical and intellectual – need to be addressed and developed in a *balanced* and harmonised way. Therefore, life skills programmes like YEP have to adopt a holistic and multi-domain approach to educating learners.

Table 3.1 gives a visual synopsis of the principles of the new world order and the relevant philosophical and educational principles adopted by YEP.

Table 3.1
The relationship between the philosophical and educational principles of YEP and the characteristics of the new world order

| Characteristics of the New World Order | Philosophical and Educational Principles of YEP |
|---|---|
| Globalisation | Oneness of humankind Unity in diversity Unity in essence of religions |
| Democracy and human rights | Spiritual nature of humankind Justice – equal chance for learning Caring Honesty Honouring the self |
| Information explosion | Holistic education |

3.7 Conclusion

Every educational programme is based on certain theories and philosophical principles. YEP is based on a complex mix of theories and principles and sets out to be relevant to the developments of the new world order. Globalisation, democracy, and the information explosion have influenced the vision of the programme. Believing that humankind is first and foremost a spiritual being with a *talisman*, it seeks to find solutions to the youth problematique in spiritual healing. Having the principles of oneness of humanity, equality and unity in diversity, YEP attempts to prepare and build the youth to live in a united world as members of the global society. Based on these philosophical principles, YEP subscribes to those educational principles that promote a sense of caring, justice, honesty and honour. Table 3.2 illustrates the shift from traditional education to the new one as exemplified in YEP.

Table 3.2
Comparison of traditional education and YEP education

| Traditional education | YEP education |
|---|---|
| Teacher-centred | Triangle of learners, peers and facilitator |
| Teacher's knowledge and beliefs are determining factors | Learners, peers and facilitators' knowledge and beliefs are determining factors |
| Cognitive domain | All domains |
| Learners' personal lives ignored | Learners' total being considered |
| Academic/cognitive learning emphasised | Holistic learning emphasised |
| <i>Talisman</i> ignored | <i>Talisman</i> sought |

Having examined the theoretical foundations of YEP, the next concern in examining YEP is to identify the methodologies and teaching strategies that accommodate the process of building skills in youth, thus assisting them to become closer to their *talisman*. The methodologies and teaching strategies of YEP are discussed in the next chapter.