



Human Commonality: The Structural-Developmental Roots of Values¹

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Educators bear a large share of the responsibility for what happens to the world. The case for global interdependency of human kind has been well put. The consciousness is growing—not only in the “well-informed” Western nations but in the Third World: not only at the level of national policy-makers but in the rice fields, tractor cabs and at cradle-side.

Awareness is growing: what affects any of us affects all of us. Perhaps never before in the history of the world has there been so much latent motivation for learning how to help ourselves by helping others.

Educators may or may not seize upon this moment of high opportunity to form a sort of intercultural and international alliance for human interdependency. But at the very least those of us who care should sound the call.

The greatest enemy is human selfishness. Whether the form is deliberate, as in manipulative contrivance to control others to one’s own advantage, or unintentional, as in ethnocentricity and in chauvinism spawned by ignorance, education for human survival must come to grips with humankind’s natural tendency to think, decide, and act selfishly. But dealing with such matters is not our habit. We have elaborate intellectual quirks that insulate us from such irrationalities.

Scientism makes educators anxious. Since we really don’t know how to state objectives and set in motion instructional systems that can guarantee against doing more harm than good, we fret and hesitate.

Sociological objectivism makes educators impotent. It is enough to know how and why things are as they are. Interference in such matters is somehow beneath their dignity. Emotions are to be left to preachers and reformers.

Awareness of Interdependence

The argument for an interdependent world has been thoroughly and convincingly made. Hardly any reflective person needs further to be convinced that whatever is done socially, politically or technologically in one part of the globe has effects that are felt far and wide.

Though the phenomenon of interdependency is recognized, what is not so well understood is that there are profound educational implications. Not only *must* education be called to task for its responsibility, but there is reason to believe that education *can* perform a constructive service.

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“Global education” is one of the newer curricular themes. Emphases of this sort come and go; one is inclined to be skeptical. But since comparative and international education seems to be having its turn to steer a bandwagon, we have at least our parochial interests to motivate us. What will come of it?

Now that education is coming out of its period of chasing scientific rainbows, it is once again permissible to ask about more than behavioral objectives. Eisner suggests that all sorts of outcomes are important, whether or not intended (1979). Educators are once again more free to talk about the development processes and even to confess the emotional and spiritual commitments that make us able to *feel* and to *know* by faith’s insights that certain things are vital and other things are trivial. One can only hope that global education will be infused by that sort of commitment rather than trapped in an intellectual quicksand.

Appeals have been made for a new paradigm with which to conceptualize “global education.” Knowing about “other people in other places” (which usually turns out to be an emphasis on “strange people in strange places”) is seen as *passé* and counterproductive. What is suggested instead is an empathy-based paradigm in which the educational efforts are focused on becoming humanely sensitive—to learn to let the feelings of other people touch us. This sort of outcome depends, of course, on learners’ identifying with the common humanity shared among all people.

Robert Leestma, Associate Commissioner for Institutional Development and International Education (United States Department of Education), has concluded bluntly,

In no country today does education correspond sufficiently to the reality of world conditions, events and issues. Given the nature of the contemporary world and the foreseeable future, every educational system should reflect much more adequately than it currently does such matters as the unity and diversity of mankind, the interdependence of nations and peoples, and the need for international cooperation in shaping an acceptable future.

The challenge . . . is to develop a humanistic education appropriate to the reality of interdependence on an ethnically diverse and culturally pluralistic planet with finite natural resources. (1979, p. 1)

Humanistic education, in this context, demands far more than travelogue-level information about the people of the world. It demands a heavy emphasis on the moral commonality of humankind. This growing awareness is reflected in many ways; for example, moral education is one of the themes of the Fourth World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (Tokyo, July, 1980).

Global and Moral

The twentieth-century emphasis on scientific solutions for human social problems may have pulled us off the target. Social ills require more than technological “fixes.” Do we shrug cynically when less scientific voices, especially in Asia and Africa appeal to moral and spiritual virtue as the necessary road to a more promising world condition?

In my nearly twenty years of experiences as a consultant on education for development I see a pattern: my Third-world colleagues seem to be saying, “We’ve tried it your way and our problems are still there. Would you stand back, please, while we try it *our* way?” In this sense, “our way” is expressed in such words as those of Hiroshi Kida, “the new year has begun with . . . problems of energy and economy as well as military . . . thereby making the efforts being made for the promotion of international cooperation in education and the improvement of mutual understanding appear quite

inadequate. It is my strong belief, however that the final means to cope with all these difficulties and bring about peace to the world is to foster something mental and spiritual such as love and friendship among all the peoples of the world through education.²

Director-General M'Bow of Unesco has sounded the call for a global education with a deliberate moral core:

The time has come for Unesco, whose ethical function is fundamental to its purpose, to give considered thought to the drawing up of a moral code which, over and above differences of religion and doctrines and even ideological divergences, could serve as a basis for the education of the young people of the world.

Elaborating his appeal, M'Bow calls attention to the fact that formal education alone is not the answer. Other agencies of society, especially the family are basic:

. . . the family—for whose role in the education of the child there can be no substitute—and the school must attach fundamental importance to moral education based on mutual respect, tolerance and justice. The aim is not to produce passive beings who are ready to accept any situation. On the contrary, every endeavor must be made to turn the natural instincts and drive of children to good account by channeling them towards living together in peace and human fellowship.³

Developmental Structure as a Global Linkage

The common heritage of humankind is represented in the psycho-genetic structure of every person. We can imagine a global education for moral development that is carefully attuned to the universal characteristics of humankind. Hiroshi Kida, Director General of the National Institute for Educational Research of Japan. Letter from the Director General. *NIER Newsletter* Vol. 12, No.1, Tokyo, January, 1980.

. . . there is a developing 'rational' or 'natural' sense of justice that is universal to all, that is an awareness of "natural" law in light of reason. This sense of justice is the first objective of a public moral education that is religiously neutral. (Kohlberg 1978, p. 14)

Although social studies (especially psychology and anthropology) are valuable in helping us recognize, rationalize and respect individual and cultural differences, their greatest value is in helping us to identify and acknowledge our common linkage to all other persons.

Comparative education because of its heritage and identification with the origins of cultural anthropology persists in its preoccupation with human differences and social contrasts. The trend in both anthropology and in comparative education seems to be toward more emphasis on the common elements and characteristics of humankind. The rehabilitation of developmentalism may be accelerating this trend. The respectability of *structural* theories of development plays no small part. From Piaget to Chomsky to Kohlberg, structural developmentalism calls attention to the psycho-genetic common denominators which tie all mankind into a whole—more characterized by similarity

² Hiroshi Kida, Director General of the National Institute for Educational Research of Japan. Letter from the Director General. *NIER Newsletter* Vol. 12, No.1, Tokyo, January, 1980.

³ Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director General, UNESCO, in the opening address, Regional Conference of Ministers of Education and Those Responsible for Economic Planning of Member States in Latin America, Mexico City, December 4, 1979.

than dissimilarity, especially when one learns how to see the “deep structures.

In the matter of moral development, no one has done more to focus attention on structure and on the common origins and developmental sequence of moral consciousness than Kohlberg. A paper on moral issues is not complete without a reference to Kohlberg’s identification of the three major levels of moral judgment.

In regard to the need for a global education with moral content, levels of universal moral judgment can be seen as follows:

I. Ego-centric moral judgment. Moral choices made on the basis of self-interest; referent for moral good: rewards and punishments. The basis of judgment which all human beings use as they begin to make moral decisions. Responsive to one’s larger ecology if the threats or potential advantages of the relationships can be made meaningful to the person in concrete terms.

II. Socio-centric moral judgment. Moral choices made on the basis of social models, examples, rules and expectations from external sources; referent for moral good: significant others and the orderliness of society that results from reasonable rules and laws. The basis of judgment which for all humanity is the natural sequel to the ego—centric mode. Responsive to the needs of others and capable of responding to good examples and orderly interventions on the basis of moral and religious codes. Capacity for social commitments.

III. Principled moral judgment. Moral choices made on the basis of learned and “internalized” principles; referent for moral good: the principles of a life committed to human welfare and justice. The basis of judgment which for all humanity is the ultimate in human development. In no society studied is this level attained by a majority.

Looking at moral education through Piaget’s and Kohlberg’s filters, we see the developmental emergence of structures as the major concern. But in his recent reflections on the meaning of the research findings, Kohlberg has shifted significantly toward advocacy of a more deliberate moral education.

I no longer hold these negative views of indoctrinative moral education, and I believe that the concepts guiding moral education must be partly ‘indoctrinative.’ This is true, by necessity, in a world in which children engage in stealing, cheating and aggression and in a context wherein one cannot wait until children reach the fifth stage to deal directly with moral behavior.

I now believe that moral education can be in the form of advocacy or ‘indoctrination’ without violating the child’s rights if there is an explicit recognition of shared rights of teachers and students and as long as teacher advocacy is democratic, or subject to the constraints of recognizing student participation in the rule-making and value-upholding process. (Kohlberg 1978, pp. 14-15)

Thus the question is raised anew: what moral values should be taught? It is not coincidental that religions provide some answers. Religions, regardless of points of disagreement over supernatural matters tend to converge in matters of moral and ethical behavior. Certain common views of moral ethics can be seen across virtually all major religions; differences within and across religious groups are more in terms of breadth and form of applications of the principles of virtue. But there is a common thread of ethical responsibility: people are to be concerned about how they relate to each other.

The major hope for global education lies in a combination of home-based education, schooling and religious education coordinated around a lifelong insists that valid moral education must provide more than information—must provide for the development of formal operations, as well as giving experiences in role taking and social perspective.

I stress that attainment of morality or moral rationality, in processing and weighing social facts, rests on attaining Piaget's stages of formal operational reasoning and Selman's advanced stage of role-taking or social perspective-taking. (Kohlberg 1978, p. 14)

The Rewards of Altruism

In a heart-warming account of the life-changing benefits of VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), *U.S. News and World Report* quoted from interviews with volunteers, many of whom had experienced significant frustrations in life before joining the agency. The major question of the journalistic study was "why do [some people] reach out to serve at a time when others are preoccupied with solving personal worries? What are the rewards, and frustrations, of altruism in a world supposedly caught up in selfishness?"

"By helping others, I've won back my self-esteem." In this statement we see the basic answer: concern for others nourishes one's own sense of worth.

"I've had a chance to do things I didn't know I could do . . . I work for children and older people." Educators can easily recognize here the person whose "completed" education has once again been re-opened into a rewarding lifelong learning.

"I'm not making a lot of money, but I'm learning a lot." The materialism of our times demands a strong alternative. Money isn't easy to give up. Whatever takes its place has to be worthwhile. But so many people are finding that wealth, goods and properties are hollow accomplishments in life.

"I can help by showing them how make the most of what they have." The simple sincerity of the sharer is a timeless value. So many VISTA volunteers have little to share beyond their own commitment to people. And it turns out that this is the most valuable thing that can be shared.

"I grew up poor myself. After I became self-employed, I asked myself what I could do for society in appreciation for the help people gave me in getting over the hills and mountains when I was in need." Involvement in the lives of others is not a technological or "professional" task. It cannot be taught, but it can be *shared*, through experience.

"The experience has awakened my life and energy, and I wouldn't trade it for anything." People get "hooked" on service to humanity. What a pity that so many people discover it so late in life. And some not at all.

In the eagerness to teach children "all they will need" for competent living has schooling over-organized the information-gaining aspect of education and monopolized the core of childrens' consciousness on behalf of cognitive skills and processes at the expense of the development of social involvement? Is it possible that we are moving toward the time when educators—with no small sense of humility and awareness of the limitations of formal education in the modern world, may take a new stance—recognizing the importance of home, family, community and religious experiences in the

development of a sense of self-worth and purpose in life? There are some things that schools cannot do and should not try to do. We need a more limited ambition for schooling, accompanied by an interdependent relationship with other institutions of society.

In the United States, at least, the world can see a technologically advanced society gone sour on its own self-seeking preoccupations. Ours is an ethnocentric lifestyle of individualism and chauvinistic pride. What can educators do to turn this around and help learners get their minds off their own petty complaints by putting attention on the feelings and needs of others, as compassionate sharers? Or is this too much to ask?

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