



The Scope of Values Development Education¹

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What is Values Development Education?

Values development education is concerned with what it is like to be a child, with the importance of being a teacher, with the basic purposes and goals of education, with the nature of justice and with the value of life. Does all of this seem important? Yes, it is *very* important.

The development of values can be approached four different ways. The *traditional-authoritarian approach* is the most widely practiced. This approach assumes that there are absolute values which must be transmitted to the child. Everything can be divided into clear—cut matters of right and wrong; by the application of punishment and reward the child can be shaped into a functional member of society. Values are constant, everywhere and always the same.

The second approach, the *cultural relativity approach*, is similar except that it assumes that each culture may have different values. It relies on social experience to induce guilt and anxiety within the child. These experiences and especially the feelings they produce shape the conscience and the personality. Thus, introspection and self-criticism coupled with peer pressure and social approval, are the forces that develop the child—adapting him or her to the values of the society.

The *absolute relativity approach*, the third approach sharply contrasts with the first. It rejects any absolute values, even those that have their roots in the particular culture. Everything is left up to the individual child. What he or she decides about good and bad is what matters. Presumably there should be no punishment or guilt-inducing sanctions; the child should have absolute freedom to develop without hang-ups. Values are all relative and changeable, according to this approach.

Each of these three positions seems seriously inadequate. In our attempt to find a position that takes account of more factors, we have suggested a fourth approach based on several significant precedents in social science and philosophy. We call it the *organismic-structural- developmental approach*. Every word in this long title is important. *Organismic* refers to the concept of humans as a functional whole, not divided into parts and dissected for study. The emphasis is on the integrated state of men and women rather than on the many parts and aspects of their being. To be human is more than body, soul, and spirit; a whole person is more than a sum of parts! The organismic view sees human beings as healthy and promising, rather than as sick and confused. Further, the organismic approach does not see men and women as passive victims of their environment, but as active, constructive, valuing organisms in a state of interaction with the environment. Thus, the human personality is not just a product of culture, but is seen as the producer and shaper of culture, influencing and being influenced. This stands in direct contrast to much of the popular behavioristic personality theory.

¹ Ted Ward and Duane Elmer. The Scope of Values Development Education. For Values Development Education Booklet: Section 2, 1976

Structural refers to the underlying rationales and cognitive processes of an individual's behavior. A structural view is as concerned about the *why* of behavior as about the *what* of behavior. For example, one person might answer "No" to the question, "Is honesty always the best policy?" and another person might answer, "Yes". From a structural viewpoint, we would want to know more before passing judgment on these people. Judgment about a person's morality must be based on more than the verbal response to a question about a virtue. No matter which way a person answers a yes-no, right-wrong, good-bad question, we have little indication of that individual's level or kind of moral reasoning. The answer would indicate only a superficial verbal behavior (the *what* or content of a value) and we know nothing about the deeper processes of rationale and thought (the *why* or structure of a value) underlying that answer. Thus, we conclude that it is difficult, if not impossible, to judge morality on the basis of *content*. Instead we must probe into structure and discover why the individual said "no" or "yes". A person's overall behavior is less related to the answers he or she has learned to give than to the reasons he or she has in giving the answers! To a person who sees the importance of structure, it makes a difference whether a student acts honestly because honesty is being rewarded or because he or she believes the principle of honesty is right and good. It makes a difference whether people see honesty as good because of what they get out of it, or because they have in mind the good of others. Even if they accept honesty as a principle larger than any rule about honesty, we would want to see what underlies their belief in that principle.

Developmental refers to the natural growth of an individual through a series of stages. Research in human development shows that all human beings grow up through the same basic stages, regardless of cultural differences. The most thorough and well-documented research in the development of human thought and reasoning processes has been conducted by Jean Piaget and his followers. Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, whose intense interest in children has led to a productive and influential career in the study of human development, sees four stages of cognitive (thought) development, regardless of national background, race, culture or language. Children's thought processes develop through four stages, each building upon the former. This means that at each stage the child is reasoning on a different level than at the previous stage. Every child begins in the stage of senses and physical movements (*sensorimotor*), developing to the stage of basic speech and elementary thinking (*preoperational*), to logical thinking limited to concrete ideas (*concrete operations*), and finally to abstract and hypothetical thinking (*formal operations*). Herein lies one of the implications for values development: Is a four-year old child able to understand the "adult" concept of honesty? How about "sharing"? The "Golden Rule"? "Fair play"?

In summary, the *organismic-structural-developmental approach* is based on a view of humankind and their relationship with the environment fundamentally different from other approaches. It is concerned about the developing human being: how a person develops cognitively, in valuing processes, the resultant behaviors; it is concerned, in a special way, about the relationship of the child to home, school, and other social institutions.

The Stages of Moral Development. Lawrence Kohlberg of Harvard University has provided a significant breakthrough in the understanding of how values develop within the individual. In a longitudinal study of seventy people, begun in the 1950's and is still continuing, he has observed six distinct stages of moral development. In the cross-cultural studies based on his own early findings, he discovered that the same six stages were the same in other cultures. Each of the six stages represents a different structural basis for making moral decisions. In effect, Kohlberg discovered that there are six stages of the development of the structure (the "why") of moral judgment.

In *Stage 1* (typical of children roughly 5 to 11 years old) a person will base moral judgments on what is punished or not punished. *Good*, *right*, and *moral* are determined by what is not punished. What

is bad is that which is punished. For this reason Stage 1 is called the *punishment and obedience orientation*.

Stage 2 is the stage of *instrumental relativism*, best summarized as a concern for “what’s in it for me”. At this stage what is right is what promotes one’s own good. Everything and everybody are viewed as instruments to promote one’s own well-being. In both of these earliest stages, people are egocentric; justice is seen individually—getting even or getting your share. Stages 1 and 2 are concerned with self-serving.

Stage 3 is called *interpersonal concordance*. Moral decisions are based upon a stereotypic role definition. That is, what would the “good girl”, the “good boy”, the “good administrator”, “good teacher” or “good student” do? Peer pressure is very important at this stage, so the expectations of other people often determine what one values. Whoever one sees as an important person is especially influential—for adolescents in Stage 3, peers are especially important.

Stage 4 is *orderliness through law*. Society is seen as being superior; people exist to serve society. Thus, moral decisions are based on one’s duty to society and the responsibilities of a law-abiding citizen. Justice is a societal matter and therefore the purpose of punishment is the improvement of society. Stages 3 and 4 are concerned with social law.

Stage 5, the *social contract orientation*, sees society as existing to serve people and to maximize human and individual potential. What is important is less a matter of what is best for the individual than what is best for the most people. The “best” state of human life is seen as a mutual interdependence of all people.

The top of the stage-scale is the *6th stage, self-chosen universal ethical principles*. The highest value is seen as human life itself, and moral decisions are made on the basis of what will maximize life—and particularly, justice in life—for every person. Both Stages 5 and 6 are concerned with social principles rather than with self-concern, social pressures or law as an end in itself.

What are Some Implications for Educators?

Even if all this sounds theoretical, its implications are very practical:

For the Curriculum: Most of the educational emphasis in the school is on the content level to the neglect of *structure*. Student often know the “right answer” (content) but not the reasoning for that answer; sometimes they do not even believe the “right” answer is right. Yet they know when to say it! It is also possible for a student to get straight “A”s in math and yet graduate hating the subject, never wanting to hear about it or work with it again. Is this education? All cognitions have accompanying affects. Knowing cannot exist without its accompanying feelings. Everything people learn they learn also to have feelings about. They learn what and whom to trust—when to be themselves, when to act a role.

For the Structure of the School: Our society trusts the school to teach “tomorrow’s citizens to maintain the democratic system. Thus, it is important to ask if the school is practicing the democratic principles of justice, freedom, and equality which it purports to teach. If not, which will the student learn—the school’s verbalizations or its practices? At what stage does the school operate: punishment and obedience, law and order, or on universal ethical principles? What sort of resolution does it offer to children who must deal *now* with this society’s persistent clash between integrity and aspiration to “succeed”.

For Communication: Is the purpose of the school to teach children what they ought to know and believe? Is “knowing” more a matter of facts or of processes? To what extent does the classroom encourage the spirit of inquiry, individual reflective thought, interaction, and problem-solving? To the extent that communication with the students is one-way and authoritative, real learning is retarded. If our learners were computers, the schools could be designed to efficiently program them: but since they are individuals in a developmental process, they need opportunities for continuing transactions with teachers, peers, and subject matter. They need support and encouragement.

Examine your responses to the following:

A five-year old child is playing with some other children. The child refuses to share the blocks with the others and the game they were playing is ruined. What do you think?

- a) *The child knows better but is selfish:* The child at this age is very egocentric. The understanding we gain from Piaget's research suggests that a child is unlikely to understand sharing before 6 or 7 years of age. Score yourself no points.
- b) *The child does not yet understand sharing.* Egocentricism is a dominant characteristic at age five; until the child develops cognitively, he does not understand sharing or cooperation, and probably can't be taught much about it. You gain three points.
- c) *The child has not yet been taught to share.* Your choice assumes that a child of five might have already been taught to share. But since egocentricism is so dominant at this age, many believe that he is not cognitively capable of understanding sharing. Score yourself only one point.

You are scheduled to teach a class in social studies. You are considering your goals for the course. Of the following, which would you consider most important:

- a) *To encourage curiosity and exploration of social relationships.* Your choice indicates that you place high priority on individual learners, their questioning, their thinking, their own discovering. Interaction with the students and discussion is likely to be an important part of your class structure. This is considered important for values development. Add three points to your score.
- b) *To convey the values of parents and society to the students.* By choosing this as your major goal you seem to be quite certain what the students ought to learn and how they ought to learn it. Further, we note that you see the teacher as being responsible for the transmission of the values and the students are responsible for accepting them. Add only one point to your score.
- c) *To equip the learner with knowledge and skills useful in the future.* So the teacher knows what the pupils will need in order to be successful? Do you really think that it is the teacher's responsibility to transmit this to the student? If so, it is the students' role to accept it and eventually to act upon it—accept it now and apply it later. Wouldn't it be better to think of social studies as having some sort of *today* value for your students? Add no points to your score.

What do you look for as strong evidence that learning is occurring?

a. *Listening and attention.* Both listening and attentiveness are passive and therefore untrustworthy. Even if apparently attentive and listening politely the student may not actually be involved with the learning task. Add no points to your score.

b. *Problem-solving and acting out new ideas.* Through observing the student in problem-solving, role play and in various other ways using new information in combination with previous information, it is possible to see evidence of genuine learning. What is important is that the student has the opportunity to think about things and come to conclusions and take actions based on his or her own rationale. You are right on target. Add two points to your score

c. *Responding in class and scoring high on tests.* Response in class and high scores on tests may

indicate learning but they are not sure indicators. Students may be telling you what they know you want to hear with the motive of getting a good grade. Do they believe it? Do they understand it? Can they use it? Have they made the ideas their own? A high score on a test at best indicates the student is able to give you the answers you are looking for. Add only one point.

Your class has just completed a study on social issues in your school. One of the points emphasized was equality and dignity of all people. The president of the student council, a member of your class, comes to you for advice on forming a committee to investigate racism in the school. The student wants your support in the project. How would you respond?

- a) *Support the president and suggest he or she develop it in his or her own way, or with some like-minded fellow students.* Your choice suggests that you think the school ought to practice what it teaches. You apparently think that students ought to experience the democratic process within the school. Add two points to your score.
- b) *Support him or her but suggest that he or she turn it over to the committee on faculty-student relations.* No doubt you have good reason for this choice and would explain it to the student. Yet will the student not sense that he or she must limit his experiences to the existing structure? Do you want him or her to conclude that the school is a closed system? Add one point to your score
- c) *Remain neutral and keep yourself out of the matter.* Help him or her to see why the issue is apt to get him or her into trouble. Neutrality can say many things. At best it is a lack of commitments and at worst it is bigotry. How does this square with what you have taught in class? Sorry, no points.

As part of a community-school study team, you are asked to help put a finger on needed improvement. Questions have been raised about the school and its relationship to the students, with special attention to the principles of democratic process. After careful thought, you have concluded that your school has some tendency to be like schools in general. Your opinion is that

- a) *The school is not as democratic as it could be.* You apparently believe that the school is not practicing the principles of freedom, justice, equality, in respect to the student as much as it could be. You must feel that the school's teaching ought to be consistent with its practice. This is a necessary condition for moral development in students. Add two points.
- b) *The school is about as democratic as it can be.* Your choice indicates that you either believe (1) the students are experiencing the principles of justice, equality, and freedom to the fullest extent possible in the school, or (2) the school's teaching of these principles is incongruent in its practice of these principles. Unless you are in the world's most unusual school, add one point to your score.
- c) *The school is more democratic than it should be.* You indicate that the school allows the students too much freedom, equality, and justice and that these principles ought to be more limited. Yet, no doubt, your school teaches these as important rights for every human being.

You are telling a story to a *second grade* class. The story: "One little boy climbed up on a chair and reached into the cupboard to take a cookie. His mother had told him not to. As he was climbing down, he broke one cup. In the house next door a second little boy heard his mother call him to help her in the kitchen. He was so eager to help that he rushed into the kitchen. He pushed the door open so hard that it hit his mother and she dropped four cups and they broke." Now you ask the class, "Which boy was more naughty?" You predict that

- a) *Most children will say "the boy who broke one".* You have expressed a common belief but it is not supported by research. Most children will answer in terms of the amount of damage done, not in terms of the adult view of right and wrong.
- b) *Most will say "the boy who caused four cups to break".* Contrary to what most adults expect, this is exactly what happens. Children's reasoning in matters of justice and morality is different from that of adults. If we are to help people develop in their approach to values, we need to use a developmental approach that takes account of their present stages of cognitive development and moral judgment.
- c) *The class will be divided on the issue.* Possible, but unlikely. Most groups of children would give heavily one-sided responses, and second graders would decide who was most wrong on the basis of the amount of damage done.

Because you are a conscientious teacher, you are concerned that your philosophy of education, teaching principles and classroom structure are consistent with good learning theory. You\ operate on the belief that . . .

- a) *The child is shaped and determined largely by environmental factors.* This is a common belief indicating that the child is basically a passive being which is shaped or to be shaped by manipulating the environment.
- b) *The child is born with instincts and drives which need to be controlled and molded so that he can become a good citizen and take his place in society.* It is fairly popular to believe that as children expresses their innate impulses they come into conflict with the environment and therefore need to be shaped and molded by the socialization process. This view is incompatible with values development education. This view as it stands is incompatible with the basic tenets of values development education.
- c) *The child is a participant in his or her own development; both the child and the environment shape each other.* You believe that the child is not a passive victim of the environment or the socialization process but an inherently valuing individual playing an active and constructive role in his or her own development.

A family of another racial group has moved into a house near yours. You would want to . . .

- a. *Make an effort to get to know them fairly soon.* You apparently see that they need you to show your interest and support. Your choice indicates that you are able to see things from another person's vantage point and attempt to act upon it in a positive way. This is a valuable asset in values development education. Add a point to your score.
- b. *Wait about a month until they can get settled.* You indicate some measure of interest in the other party but reflect a hesitancy to act upon it in a definite way. Waiting a month may be a step toward waiting indefinitely. But you want to think well of yourself for your good motives. Add no points to your score.
- c. *Casually get acquainted at a convenient time.* Your choice reveals little actual interest or intent since the "convenient time" rarely comes. This suggests that you see the situation in your terms but not in their terms. This tendency would be a serious handicap in doing effective work in values development education. Add no points to your score.

Some of the music students come to you with the protest that the athletes in the school are given preferential treatment. They state their case explicitly and want the privileges equalized or extended to all groups in the school. Your response probably would take the form of

- a) *Hearing them out so they can get it out of their system.* You hope the whole thing will blow over, right? Your passive attitude may be an indication of lack of interest in the things that affect the students—at least they may think so. Add no points to your score.
- b) *Offer to get their complaint on the agenda for a faculty meeting.* Since their problem relates to school policy and since it would probably affect many of the students, this would be a good route to go. It would demonstrate your faith in their judgment and your concern for their feelings. They have a right to be heard. Add two points to your score.
- c) *Suggest they take their case to the student council.* You may have in mind this step as a way to get broader involvement before taking the issue to a higher level. If so, fine. But what sort of a track record does the student council have as a means of getting things done? Add one point to your score if you weren't using the student council as a way to get the issue to blow over.

Imagine yourself teaching a high school history class. Things seem to have been going very well and you are happy with the progress of the class as you approach the end of the term. You estimate that the students had verbally interacted with you in class . . .

- a) *Enough—about 10% of the class time.* Your response indicates that either you did not believe the students had much to contribute to the class or you did not effectively draw out their participation. Add no points to your score.
- b) *Quite a lot—about 10-25% of the class time.* You apparently encouraged some student interaction believing it to be somewhat necessary to their learning experience. The sort of communication relationship needed for helping students is reference to values development will demand that you show at least this much willingness to listen! An important factor in a learner's cognitive and affective development is sharing and discussing things that are important *to the learner*. Add one point to your score.
- c) *Very much—about 25-40% of the class time.* It appears you believe that students should actively and verbally participate in the learning experiences and that you take steps to encourage them to do so. Even in a history class this is important. Add two points