



Teaching Values at School: a Way to Reach a Better Understanding in Our World

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“Teachers are permanently involved in values education... sometimes ... without even realizing that they are teaching values ...” (Kohlberg & Turiel in PORTELE, p. 7)

Therefore it is time for us to pay more attention to values education in both teaching and at school. The requirements, tasks, possibilities and problems connected with the topic of values education in teaching and at school must be thought about carefully. Considerations must be made which contribute towards conveying such fundamental understanding and allowing teachers to both justify their own behaviour rationally in the context of school and to critically examine it.

1. Teaching for Value Clarity

The aim of values education is to encourage young people's awareness of having values and their corresponding relationship to the world in which they live. It is therefore necessary to try and convey the idea of which values people in our society regard as necessary (and through which our society is shaped today). A democratic society demands that an individual should have many skills, among them the skill to deal with conflicting values and to take independent decisions. It demands a critical faculty as well as competence to judge based on your moral principles. Democratic societies must therefore take an interest in that such skills be encouraged.

Educators and teachers as well as parents are not just there to practise behaviour based on values, but are mainly there to help adolescents to understand the rules which society has developed, to be able to apply them independently and also to participate in political discussions regarding any possible changes to these rules. For this reason, we need educators who do not insist on their own interpretation of moral principles, rather educators who help adolescents to develop their own skills in applying morals to their lives.

School is of great importance when it comes to moral-cognitive development. Parents and other authorities should play a part in this process. However, it is in school that young people find themselves confronted for the first time with the fact that they are members of both a larger society and also mankind. This means that great efforts regarding the development of these pupils are necessary and that the school, together with the parents, must support these efforts.

School therefore promotes the moral-cognitive development of the individual and in this way, creates the democratic competence of society as a whole. School should give as many children as possible the best general education which will enable them to deal with a complex society and to form their own definite opinions about political, economic, legal and scientific facts. That is an indisputable contribution which school makes towards safeguarding and developing democratic society.

2. Values – a precious gift

Values are among the most precious gifts which a person can have: Persons have experiences: they grow and learn. Out of experiences may come certain general guides to behaviour. These guides tend to give



direction to life and may be called values. Our values show what we tend to do with our life and energy. A value is only produced by a person's own behaviour and has a lot to do with the person's own opinions. Having values affects a person's behaviour. Developing your own values is both an individual and a lifelong process which should be supported in the classroom.

School should take the development of individual values as seriously as the syllabus – you cannot have one without the other.

A teacher can convey the importance of the “values-clarifying-process” to his pupils, for example he can teach them about something which will be very useful to them for a long time to come.

He should, however, never attempt to either influence the pupils' concept of values whether auto-critically, inappropriately or secretly or to impose values of his own upon them. Pupils need freedom to practise leading their own life and to develop their own life-skill values. Of course, not everything is a value. The principles closest to values are known as “values indicators” and are directly connected to the process of developing a set of values, i.e. aims and objectives, wishes, feelings, interests, opinions and beliefs, attitudes, activities and fears. It is an educator's duty to help young people to develop these “values indicators” into values. Such an indicator can only then be called a value when it fits all of the following 7 criteria. Collectively, these criteria describe the “process of valuing”.

3. Process of Valuing

1. **Choosing freely:** Values must be a result of your free choice. Values must be freely selected if they are to be really valued by the individual.
2. **Choosing from among alternatives:** Only when a choice is possible, when there is more than one alternative from which to choose, do we say a value can result.
3. **Choosing after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative:** A value can emerge only with thoughtful consideration of the range of the alternatives and consequences in a choice.
4. **Prizing and cherishing:** We prize and cherish the guides to life that we call values.
5. **Affirming:** When we identify with our values, we are willing to publicly affirm them and even to fight for them.
6. **Acting upon choices:** Nothing can be a value that does not, in fact, give direction to actual living.
7. **Repeating:** When something reaches the stage of a value, it is very likely to reappear on a number of occasions in our life. Values tend to have a persistency, tend to make a pattern in life.

(Raths/Harmin/Simon 1966, p.28f)

4. Values and Teaching

Where teaching is understood as education organised in schools in the sense of an extensive help for enculturation, it also encompasses educational aids which are not only aimed at increasing knowledge and ability but also at acquiring norms and values. Teaching in its broadest form also includes educational aids which serve in a meaningful way to improve results and also to heighten the readiness for taking on responsibilities. Accordingly, school, apart from its main function as a place for teaching, also has the task of providing a moral education. School can be viewed as the precursor to achieving self-determination and taking responsibility for oneself. Pupils should be qualified to have both their own social life and to be in favour of a society in which everybody accepts each other.



That means that young people must develop their own values and own lifestyles within their social and cultural relationships. It is necessary to help young people to develop their own established set of values. It can partly be reached by telling them which values were or are important in our society in both the past and the present. We would, however, be denying them a basic human right if we showed these values to them as norms which they had to adapt themselves to.

One criterion seems to be particularly important when working with children and that is the final criterion of choice. It is generally disseminated that children are taught the difference between “either ... or”, although their own opinion of this rule maybe somewhat negative. In these cases, it is not surprising when the children do not take their own behaviour seriously. A pupil must also recognise the importance of all the possibilities which are open to him, otherwise the choice is meaningless. The teacher should also help the children to recognise the probable consequences of making a choice and to accept the possible consequences. Only when the child is prepared to admit freely to the choice he has made, will it have any significance. The child must be able to choose of his own free will. It must be clear to the teacher, however, that he cannot dictate to the children what their values should be or to tell them what experiences they will have. Only events which the children experience themselves will have any effect on their own lives.

Also, when the teacher asks the child to tell him about his own wishes, objectives, opinions, interests etc., in many cases the teacher will not really know what set of values the child already has. Teachers are also inclined to credit children with values which they do not actually have and to believe that each child must develop the skill to test their objectives, wishes, feelings, views etc., when really the child should be looking for the best possible relationship between his own life and the world around it.

What does a teacher do now when he wants to be of help in teaching children to clarify their own values? He helps them to apply *the process of valuing*. The teacher should encourage the children to get to grips with the problem of choice and help them to discover other possibilities, to weigh up alternatives and then to think about the consequences. The children should also get the opportunity to prize and cherish and publicly affirm their choice and the teacher should make them more determined to act in accordance with their choices. The adult can support this process of judging and can help the children to independently clarify what they perceive as having value. It should be increasingly clear that the adult should not force his preferred set of values onto the children or talk them into holding any particular values. Many people only reluctantly admit that a child freely chooses what he values because they as adults do not consider him old or experienced enough and do not spend time teaching him to find his own set of values.

5. Theory and Practice

The theory and practice of teaching about values are closely related to one another. In spite of having a packed timetable, using exercises in school which are based on a “values-centred” pedagogy is still considered to be a worthwhile investment, which brings even more worthwhile dividends with it. In many cases, teaching can become easier, more enjoyable and has more effect; the pupils become more focused, more active and more independent.

Interest and participation in lessons increase. Teaching about values is of cross-curricular importance; it is possible in all subject areas and for all content and can be implemented to its best effect in the form of open planning which allows the teacher to influence the course of the lessons. The subject matter can lead to values like this and questions about values can function for most subjects as a coordinating concept. All open forms of teaching facilitate a reflection of values orientation. Teaching effects are not only achieved through mere words, exhortations, conversation or regulations but also through behaviour and reflecting on this behaviour.



In this way learning through action makes an important contribution towards the process of teaching values. In open teaching, which is based on orientation on values, the pupils learn to choose above all and to make decisions.

The integration of values-promoting exercises in existing school subjects seems to be most interesting and means that the teacher need not use time from his regular programme. He uses the “**Value-Sheet**” as an introduction to teaching. This represents a particular type of motivation, but can itself be an essential component of subject teaching. The teacher should choose topics for his values sheet dealing with the problems which are important for most pupils.

Each pupil fills in the value-sheet him/herself and has a good look at the questions.

A value-sheet in its simplest form consists of a provocative statement and a series of questions duplicated on a sheet of paper and distributed to the class members. The purpose of the provocative statement is to raise an issue that the teacher thinks may have value implications for students. And the purpose of the questions is to carry each student through the value clarifying process with that issue. Since valuing is an individual matter, each student completes the value sheet by himself, preferably by writing answers on a separate sheet of paper. Later, that writing may be shared with other students or the teacher and /or used as a basis for large or small group discussions. Value-sheets can also be used as programmed instructional material. (Two examples will help make this clearer : Value-sheet “*Friendship*”, value-sheet “*Courage*”).

An exercise which is directly aimed at the interests of the pupils is the “**Thought-Sheet**”. Each week the pupil hands in a piece of paper on which he has written down his most important thoughts he has had. A thought sheet is due every week on Monday. It is be your ticket of admission to class on that day. Thought - sheets may be of any length, any style any form-all are acceptable. However, a few words are enough. A thought- sheet may be on any topic as long as relates to your values.

They will be written down only after suitable reflection and show something of the quality of ones way of life or his thoughts in the past week.

It contributes to the growth of values consciousness when the boys and girls sit down for a long time and systematically think about the week which has just gone by. After some time few, however, are aware of the slackness they have chosen and they have been satisfied with.

The teacher can introduce a “**Weekly Reaction Sheet**” as a supplement to the 'thought-sheet' about midway in the term. On this the teacher writes a list of questions which he feels will encourage the 'process of valuing and values-focused thinking. The 'Weekly Reaction Sheet' promotes an important method of helping pupils, to take responsibility for their own lives, for living in a more positive and meaningful way, with more self-confidence and in a more consistent manner checking the relationship between their thoughts and the way in which they spend weeks, days, hours.

A time to sit down and look back very systematically at the week just lived is helpful to value growth. Many youngsters are surprised to see the absence of activities which are personally selected and satisfying over the seven-day span, and some may come to question just how many weeks have passed in this manner. (Examples for 4 Weekly Reaction Sheets enclosed.)

The idea of the weekly reaction sheet is to promote value thinking.

There are many possible ways for a teacher who wants to work in the area of values. He is familiar with correcting written work as to grammar, spelling and pupils expressing themselves incorrectly. He can read through the work in order to gain an insight into the objectives, views and activities of his pupils. They will often mention a lot of things which either have value or no value to them.

In the exercise which is named “**Open-Ended-Questions**” the teacher writes a single question on each piece of paper, a question which will help the pupils to reflect on his writings. The open-ended-questions give the teacher a method of getting the students to reveal some of their attitudes, beliefs, activities and other



“value-indicators” in a one-shot effort. (Examples for open-ended-questions which have been productive enclosed.)

Naturally, there aren't only written lessons for learning about values. The “**Clarifying Response**” in which the teacher neither moralises nor criticises, as well as a “**Value-clarifying Discussion**” and “**Role-playing**” offer nourishment for productive thinking.

The strategy of the “**Clarifying Response**” is a way of responding to a student that results in his considering what he has chosen, what he prizes and/or what he is doing. It stimulates him to clarify his thinking and behaviour and thus to clarify his values; it encourages him to think about them. There are several responses that teachers who have worked with the clarifying approach have found very useful. (A list of some of these is enclosed.)

(Further stimuli and practical examples in Harecker, Gabriele: Werterziehung in der Schule: Wien:WUV, 1991)

6. Value Clarity: A learning- and a Teaching Aim in Education

Using the “Value –Theory” bases on the following hypothesis: *As pupils/students who present problems in their value-related behaviour are provided value-clarifying opportunities, those behaviour patterns will become less frequent and /or acute.*

Judging from their behaviour, some pupils appear to particularly need experiences from which they can learn about values and seem to need some special help in clarifying their values. **The apathetic, indifferent (listless), disinterested** child is passive and has no interest in anything. It daydreams, is difficult to motivate and must even repeat classes and is often a school drop-out.. The **flighty** child changes its interest frequently. Its attention span is short. It does not seem possible to the **very uncertain** child to reach a decision. It prefers others to decide for it.

The **inconsistent** child supports one thing today and supports just the opposite tomorrow. It seems unable to make up his mind and does not know what he wants. The **drifting** child with no aims lets himself be carried through life and is not motivated by anything. Nothing is particularly important to him, he never gets committed very strongly. It seems to drift through life. No purpose seems to guide the drifting child. The **overconfirming** child says or writes what adults demand of him. He does not appear to have his own point of view or ideas and focuses on what he thinks is the norm or the prevailing idea. When left in the lurch, he feels lost and scared. He needs to get direction from others.

The **overdissenting** child likes to be different. Maybe he finds his identity in opposing particularly those who embody authority; he has no values of his own. The **poseur** (class joker) is looking for his identity, in which he pretends to be somebody else. The child who only acts out one role is unrealistic and immature. We call this type of child a **role-player**.

But also the chronic **underachieving** child can belong to that category of children who have an unclear set of values although there can also be other reasons for being an underachiever.

Behavioural problems and learning difficulties are not necessarily an expression of having a confused set of values, only the majority of pupils who teachers believe to be apathetic, moody, inconsistent, insecure, aimless, contradictory or clowning around, would respond very well to a programme of teaching them values.

To the extent that pupils who display problems in their values-oriented behaviour are given the opportunity to clarify values, these different way of behaviour will appear less frequently or less pronounced.



The teacher's job consists of measuring the degree of behavioural problems in the area of values before and after the use of the theory of values, of comparing the results and finding out whether changes have taken place.

In this context the fact has to be considered that changes can also be due to a maturation process. One can take different paths in order to measure the degree of value-orientated behaviour. The simplest possibility for the teacher is to identify these children in his class who have problems with their values and to take some informal notes for about a week about each pupil as to the extent and severity of his behaviour.

In any case, it is important to delete all those pupils from the list of children showing problems in their values behaviour who are physically or emotionally disturbed. These children need medical or psychotherapeutic treatment and the teacher should help them to get it.

7. Conclusion

Confucius once noted that *ideas have to be turned into action if they are to be of any worth*. That is why the teacher should take up ideas from the "*Value-Theory*" and try to realise them in education and teaching.

Value-Sheet "*Friendship*"

1. What does friendship mean to you?
2. If you have friends, did you choose them or did they get to be your friends by accident?
3. In what ways do you show friendship?
4. How important do you think it is to develop and maintain friendships?
5. If you plan to make any changes in your ways, please say what changes you will make. If you do not intend to make any changes in your ways, write "No changes."

Value-Sheet "*Courage*"

1. What does the word "courage" mean to you?
2. Do you think courage manifests itself? How?
3. Do you think everyone possesses courage? How? If not, why?
4. Are you proud of your level of courage? Discuss.

Weekly –Reaction-Sheet

Example 1

- a. What was the best day of the past week? What made it the best?
- b. Are you happy with the way you spend your weekends? How could you improve them?
- c. Did you do anything this week which required more than three solid hours?

Example 2

- a. What did you do this week that made you very happy?



- b. Identify three choices you made during the week.
- c. How was this week different from the previous week?

Example 3

- a. What, if anything, did you do this week of which you are proud?
- b. List one or two ways in which the week could have been better.
- c. What did you learn this week, in or out of school, that you are likely to use in your later life?

Example 4

- a. Did you work on any plans this week for some future experience you hope to have?
- b. Were you in emphatic agreement or disagreement with anyone this week?
- c. Were there important contradictions or inconsistencies in your week?
- d. Did you act on any of your values this week?

Open-ended Questions

1. With a gift of € 100, I would
2. My bluest days are
3. I can hardly wait to be able to
4. My children won't have to..... Because
5. If I could have seven wishes
6. My advice to the world would be
7. I believe
8. Secretly I wish
9. If I could get a free subscription to two magazines, I would select Because
10. People can hurt my feelings the most by
11. If the next weekend were a three-day weekend, I would want to
12. If I had a car of my own
13. The night I stayed up later than before I
14. I've made up my mind to finally learn how to

Clarifying Responses

1. Is this something that you prize?
2. Are you glad about that?
3. How did you feel when that happened?
4. Did you consider any alternatives?



5. Have you felt this way for a long time?
6. Was that something that you yourself selected or chose?
7. Would you do the same thing over again?
8. Do you do anything about that idea?
9. Can you give me some examples of that idea?
10. What do you mean by? Can you define that word?
11. Where would that idea lead; what would be its consequences?
12. Would you really do that or are just talking?
13. Are you saying that(repeat)?
14. Did you say that (repeat in some distorted way)?
15. Have you thought much about that idea (or behaviour)?
16. Do you do this often?
17. What other possibilities are there?
18. Is that a personal preference or do you think most people should believe that?
19. How can I help you do something about your idea? What seems to be difficulty?
20. Is that very important for you?