

STUDY OF VALUE EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN A SCHOOL

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Abstract

A school is a place where children learn many things like knowledge, different beliefs, attitudes and values. An education without values is incomplete and meaningless, because an educated person should know what it means to be a part of society and should be prepared to be an active citizen of a democratic country. This study was done in a school that has been implementing a “value education programme” separately from the school curriculum. This programme was implemented in the school from fourth to ninth grade, with the aim of teaching values to the children apart from their regular subjects. To understand the programme, the study was conducted through interviews, focused group discussions and classroom observations. From this study, I have learnt that values and reasoning are different from person to person, but in some cases, persons with different values tend to have the same kind of reasoning. Children have inherent values even before they are taught by teachers; their engagement with the family, their culture and nearby environment influences their beliefs, attitudes and values. Most participants in the study gave higher priority to education as a primary source for gaining values, and they were of the opinion that it is only through education that we can make children acquire a good attitude and values. According to the participants, society teaches how to earn money and family teaches how to interact with society, but only education prepares children for what they ought to be in society. From the study, I understood that people follow utilitarian principles and conditional reasoning for their actions. From this observation, I understood that people’s reasoning behind their values is much closer to hypothetical imperatives and far from categorical imperatives. I learnt that culture, home environment, and family conditions have huge impacts on the values of children.

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Introduction

Educating children only on a cognitive basis is not functional or complete; education has to cultivate the behaviour of students. Education is naturally and directly related to a person's values and goals. The quality of education depends on the curriculum framing, which is why school curriculum should focus more on intrinsic values rather than extrinsic ones alone. Teachers are the key players in this process of making children think rationally and be as moral persons. Irrespective of the varied cultures of students, teachers are expected to treat everyone equally and teach them with the same goal without any discrimination.

The process of inculcating values that students get from education actually starts from the family and continues throughout their lives as being part of society. The values that students learn from value education subjects or otherwise in the school find reflection first in their immediate surroundings, like among friends and in the classroom, then with family members and, finally, in the community. Unfortunately, most educational institutions are not teaching values to children even though the aim of education, as emphasised by many educational philosophers, is to mould and cultivate human behaviour correctly. Due to the commercialisation of education, educational institutions are gradually neglecting the moral behaviour of their students and are focusing only on their cognitive development.

Shriram Foundation, which was started in 2013 as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, is working the education of underprivileged children, especially focusing on teacher training. The Foundation has adopted 25 low-fee private schools throughout the Krishna District (Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh) and has newly implemented a value education programme as one of the subjects in the school curriculum from the academic year of 2017–18 onwards for fourth to ninth grades. The vision behind it is to make education worthwhile and valuable for children and to mould every student as a good human being, irrespective of the background, culture, environment or family that he/she comes from. The value education curriculum was developed by LXL Ideas (formerly Edu Media) in the name of “school cinema”. It was designed to introduce life skills, values and attitudes to children, parents and teachers. It encompasses different spheres of a child's holistic growth, skills and character building. The Foundation has implemented the programme by showing movies selected by the curriculum designer. The curriculum is different from class to class. There are 12 films in the curriculum of each class, wherein 10 films are for the students for 10 months, one film for the parents and the remaining one for the teachers. Each grade had a one-hour class in

a week. It was a completely film-based curriculum. The Foundation believes that films have an unbelievable impact on children and society, indirectly educating and influencing thousands across the country. The films use a language and medium that the children are familiar with, subtly influencing their minds and their actions.

The reason behind selecting grades fourth to ninth is that it is an early adolescence stage, which is a critical phase of personal development, a period of accelerated growth and change. The behaviours that children acquire in this stage can have lifelong consequences, which can be both positive and negative. So if we mould their behavior and make them think rationally, then it will be have a lasting impact on their lives.

For my six-weeks fieldwork, I chose one of the schools (in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh) among the 25 schools under the Foundation. This school was established in 2003 with a vision of providing English-medium education to middle-class children with a low fee from nursery to seventh grade. It was located in a rural area where most people are factory workers, textile workers, lorry drivers and farmers. The school was adopted by the Shriram Foundation in 2014 and is being supported by the same. The school has been implementing the “value education programme” since the academic year 2017–18.

The value education programme, also called “school cinema”, has a well-researched film-based curriculum. It has been designed to introduce life skills, values and attitudes to the children, their parents and the educators (teachers). The programme was specifically designed with a focus on holistic growth and character building of the children. As a part of my study, I have focused only on the curriculum that was prepared for the children.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In my view, values are a set of beliefs and ideals, which are commitments made by an individual person. These are things that are worthy by themselves, are not influenced by external factors and cannot be compromised. For example, I am committed to being honest because I feel that it is the right thing to be honest and not because that my friends are being honest or that society will respect me if I am being honest. Here, I am myself committed and my commitment depends on my own reasoning capacity, which is not influenced by any other factor. I have used the Immanuel Kant’s moral philosophy framework to conduct my study. According to Kant, the supreme principle of morality is a standard of rationality, and he conceptualised this as

the categorical imperative. Here, imperative means something that we must do and categorical means unconditional. Kant argues that we must do an unconditional action. So for Kant, it is only when we act unconditionally that it is a moral action. Categorical imperatives are our moral obligations, and Kant believed that they are derived from pure reason. For example, if I am helping someone who is in a need, then being a human, I personally feel that it is my responsibility to help or it is the right thing to help. Here, my action draws from pure reason, which is not influenced by anyone or anything, and it is clearly unconditional. Therefore, my action is a moral action that is derived from my pure reasoning.

I use the following concepts in my study from the literature referred to:

- Value education must be part of the education system. Value education cannot be imparted as a separate domain of education. Education in its entirety has to be value education (NCERT 2006). This concept helped me to understand that education and value education are not separate and should not be separate, improving my understanding of values and education.
- We should encourage children to cultivate a scientific temper that helps them to follow their own reason beyond the dictates of culture, tradition and community (NCERT 2005). This concept helped me think deep and understand the importance of scientific temper in following one's own reason, without being influenced by any other factor.

Methodology

This is a qualitative exploratory study, in which I have used different methods like personal interviews, focused group discussions and classroom observations.

Interviews

To understand and analyse the school's understanding of values, I conducted interviews with the school principal, teachers and students. Specifically, I interviewed five teachers and the principal, who are teaching/are familiar with the value education programme. I interviewed students who are studying in fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grades. About 20 children have been interviewed in this study. I selected the participants based on their familiarity with the study and their own willingness to take part in the study. Interviews have been conducted in two ways—personal interviews and focused-group discussions.

Classroom Observation

Value education is being taught once in a week for classes in fourth to seventh grade. So to understand the teachers who are teaching it and what they are teaching in the classes, I observed the classes. Classroom observation enabled me to analyse what teachers were teaching and whether they stuck to the curriculum or went beyond it. It also enabled me to understand the responses that came from the students. I noted down the main conversations between the teachers and students with their consent for a better understanding of how values were being taught. To understand and analyse how values have been practised in the school, observation formed a key tool in my study.

Ethical Consideration

The fieldwork conducted for this study is a part of my academic learning. I did not judge either the school or its teachers or anyone who formed a part of this work. I am not going to reveal the information that I collected from the school to any third party. During fieldwork, I followed a questionnaire that was relevant to my selected topic, and I did not ask for any personal information from my respondents. I followed the rules and regulations that are prescribed by the school and as well as my university norms.

Data Analysis

Almost all the participants had the same understanding, that is, the purpose of education is to produce knowledge and good jobs. Only the school principal disagreed with this point and he saw education as the cultivation of knowledge, which should make a person understand what is good and what is bad. There are many reasons for these responses from the participants. Two of the teachers had no bachelor's or diploma degree in education and had not undergone any teacher training. Moreover, they came from poor backgrounds. So, possibly for these reasons, they viewed education as a tool to get a job, and lead a good life, without financial problems. The other teachers came from rural areas, where people gave more importance to jobs and financial security. The principal belonged to a rich family, with all his family members educated and in the teaching field. So, family and environmental conditions influenced these people's perception of the role of education.

All the participants agreed that values are important in education. They made a distinction between educated and uneducated persons, and emphasised that the latter are unaware of how to behave at certain times, and while

they may have values, these are often influenced by their families. The participants looked at education as the only tool to teach values and believed that families, culture and society have no positive impact on children. Their experiences influenced their reasoning to a large extent—in their experience, very few families took care of children`s education, their behaviour and their attitudes. The participants had a negative idea of their immediate society and surroundings. Hence, they claimed that education alone could have a positive impact on children`s values.

The data collected indicates that the values prioritised are gendered. I found that the values emphasised by female teachers are different from those emphasised by male teachers. For example, most female teachers emphasised that helping nature, honesty, equality, respect and sacrifice are important values for them. The following are some statements from the data:

Teacher 1 (Female): “For me, being honest, helping others, respecting everyone, treating everyone as equal and a sacrificing nature are important values.”

Teacher 2 (F): “I usually teach the children to help each other when they are in need, respect everyone even if the person is not a teacher or elder, be honest in every matter and treat everyone equally irrespective of their backgrounds.”

The male teachers emphasised some similar and some different values compared to the female teachers. For example, responsibility, judiciousness, empathy, perseverance, self-awareness, moral and problem-solving capacity were the main values emphasised by male teachers. The following are some quotes from the data:

Teacher 1 (Principal, Male): “Responsibility towards work and society, being moral in all situations, perseverance in never giving up on our goals and having the courage to solve any kind of problem are the necessary values to be human. Without these values, a person`s life will be complicated in society and in everyday life.”

Teacher 2 (MEO, Male): “When we talk about values, for me, a person should have moral behaviour, judiciousness and empathy with others in required situations. Understanding one`s own self is more important than having awareness of society, and a problem-solving capacity is most important for me because it is due to a lack of this value that most people fail in life or end up committing suicide.”

The responses of the teachers reveal the role that gender and family background plays in influencing an understanding of values. According to the participants, as is the case in society at large, the roles and responsibilities for women are different from those of men. Even though the participants are educated and have knowledge of society, equality and equal rights, their way of thinking and reasoning has changed. My study revealed a stereotypical way of thinking among the teachers, which may impact on their teaching and result in the same kind of thinking among the children.

Except for one teacher, the rest agreed that education has a primary role in the creation of values—family and society have an importance only after education. They justified their argument by pointing that children nowadays spend more time in schools rather than their homes. In our parents' generation, many people were told good stories or moral stories by parents or grandparents. They were told what is good and what is bad every day in every action. But nowadays, everyone is busy and spends more time with electronic goods, and children are not being guided or told anything by their parents. So in this situation, education has to take the initiative and should teach children what is good and what is bad. The participants in the study thought along these lines, and because they compared the present situation with that of previous generations, they gave more importance to education. The teacher who emphasised on the home is the first place for learning values had the experience of seeing family members taking initiative and guiding children from their childhood. She believed that children already have some values they have learnt from the home and immediate environment. The different beliefs of the participants made them give importance to particular things.

The participants had no clear definition of the word “values”, but they explained the term with the example of particular values. Except one teacher, the rest emphasised various values in themselves rather than seeing the values in relation to each other. They were unable to justify their understanding of values. It seems to me that generally it is difficult for people to define values through words, because there is no particular common definition for this term. Everyone has their own definition, even though they were unable to express it clearly.

Among the participants, only one teacher responded that education and values are the same and values are part of education, while the others responded that values and education are separate. The latter agreed with the separate curriculum for values. The participant who responded that values

are a part of education and not separate from it believed that education includes more intrinsic values rather than extrinsic ones. It is people's way of perceiving education that makes them differentiate or club together education and values.

According to the data collected, it seems that the teachers had no clear understanding of the curriculum, and they tended to just prepare for the next class. When I asked them what kind of values form part of the curriculum, most teachers could not respond even though they were aware of the extent of the syllabus that they had covered. Perhaps the teachers did not go through the whole curriculum, which is why they were unable to justify their understanding of the curriculum. Because of their lack of understanding of the curriculum, they were unable to see the relationship between different values in the curriculum. The teachers only had awareness of the curriculum of the particular class they were teaching, while being unfamiliar with the remaining curriculum.

The curriculum emphasised on values like courage, self-confidence, respect, integrity, health, hygiene, uniqueness, relationships, love, hard work, perseverance, unity, culture, diversity, kindness, honesty, responsibility, accountability, equality, judiciousness, goal setting, teamwork, trust, humility, selflessness, justice, leadership, contentment, acceptance, gratitude, citizenship, logic and reason, commitment, understanding, non-judgmental behaviour, individuality, forgiveness, self-assurance and patience. The curriculum has been prepared based on the understanding capacity (cognitive development) of the children. The way of introducing these values one by one according to the classes have been prepared well. But there is no clear rationale in the curriculum regarding the emphasis on particular values in the curriculum. And this might be the reason for the teachers' inappropriate justification regarding the curriculum. The teachers mostly depended on the curriculum and the manual that has been provided by the curriculum designers.

Among the students, 12 out of 22 saw value education as not a subject but about life skills and learning good values and attitudes. The remaining children saw value education as one of their regular subjects, with nothing special about this subject. They saw it as any other subject in which they secured marks. According to the first category of students, the subject is about courage, equality, giving respect to other religions and regions; values, education and good behaviour; good character, rules and laws, and how to behave. For the second category, the subject is one of the subjects introduced in this year; it is about a movie's lessons and the questions that arise after

watching a movie. This data indicates that the teachers did not introduce the programme as something different from the other subjects. The way a teacher interprets a topic or a subject can have a major influence on children's understanding of that subject and its purpose.

All the children agreed that value education was an important subject for them to learn. But they had different reasons for this—it is important because it teaches good behaviour and different ways to think in critical situations; the subject is about our life; it teaches how to behave and good behaviour; it is a useful subject for future; we can learn good words and good behaviour. Here, I am not sure whether these responses are coming from their understanding of the subject or because I am an unknown person to them and they did not want to take any negative stand towards the school. But their reasons convinced me somewhat to accept that these are based on their own understanding and their willingness to learn the subject.

Key Findings of the Study

The school understands education and value education as separate, and it did not treat these as the same. While different teachers had different kinds of reasoning, they more or less had a similar understanding. For example, one of the teachers said, "Education is about specific subjects and knowledge; value education is about values and life skills." Another teacher responded, "We have to teach subjects separately and values separately because both are different domains and not the same."

According to the teachers, education should play a primary role in teaching values because nowadays family, society and culture are not playing their role effectively. The school claimed that education should take initiative in the matter of teaching values to children. For example, a teacher responded, "Due to the existence of technology, there is a lack of social interaction among people; so education has to take more initiative to teach values." The principal said, "Society teaches you how to earn money, family teaches you how to be with others, and education teaches you what you ought to do in society."

According to the teachers, there must be values in education but that it constitutes a separate domain. All the teachers emphasised that they had insufficient time to teach values, and in their view, there are few or no values in the regular subjects. For example, a Mathematics teacher responded, "We have very limited time; within that time, we cannot teach values, and especially in my subject, there are no values at all to teach the children." A

social studies teacher said, “We have to complete the syllabus within the fixed time, so we cannot spend that time for other activities, and in my subject, except the rules, laws and rights, there are no values to teach the children.”

As per my observation, I found that the curriculum itself is well designed according to the age and understanding capacities of the children. For example, the following are the topics covered in different grades: fourth grade—understand rules and laws; fifth grade—discipline and responsibility; sixth grade—judiciousness, goal setting; seventh grade—citizenship, logic and reason. The duration and the depth of the videos part of the curriculum are appropriate for the students` age groups and is related to their understanding capacities.

The way in which students and teachers treat the value education programme is similar to how they treat their regular subjects, that is, in terms of marks and knowledge. For example, the teachers mostly asked *what* and *how* questions to the children and did not make them understand that value education is linked to real-life situations and experiences. The teachers promoted rote learning concept, focusing on the answers and not making the children to think and understand in their own ways.

The participants` reasoning was contextual or contingent and not objective or rational, that is, not categorical. Most participants had a conditional reasoning for their values and actions. For example, most teachers and students responded that we have to help others because they will help us back when we are in need. Here, their reasoning has a condition. I asked them, “What if others do not help you back, even though you helped them?” To this, they clearly said that they would not help them the next time. Here, their choices depend on the results/outcomes of their actions. So it is not based on pure reasoning and does not constitute a categorical imperative.

Teachers failed to see the relationship between any two values. This is because they do not keep the whole curriculum in their minds and they mostly think only about their next class at any point of time. For example, a teacher responded that there is no relation between respect and equality. She could not make the connection between these values while teaching. Every teacher believes that values exist in isolation and that there is no relationship between any two or more values. Another response from the teachers was that we should not compare one value with another because values are distinct and there is no relation between them. For instance, they believed that values of respect and equality are different values, which are used in different situations.

There is a gap between what the school (teachers and students) believed and its actions or practices in the school environment. For instance, while the teachers said that we cannot make the children follow values through the exertion of force or pressure, in practice, they punished or scolded the children. During their classes, the teachers would often tell the students that if they did not complete the homework, then they should not come to class or that they would be punished for not doing the homework.

I observed that gender played a role in the prioritising of values. Female teachers emphasised on the same set values, such as helping nature, honesty, equality, respect and sacrifice. Male teachers, on the other hand, emphasised values such as responsibility, judiciousness, perseverance, moral and problem-solving capacity.

Discussion of the Results

In the school's view, education and value education are separate. This understanding could be because of its limited awareness of values or because it views education as only a tool to get knowledge, marks and jobs. This understanding also impacts their way of implementing the value education programme. All the teachers believed that nowadays society, home and culture are not fulfilling their responsibilities. Due to this assumption, they did not think that children already had some values before coming to school. They believed that school is the first place where children can learn or acquire values. The teachers thus failed to understand that they have to facilitate the reasoning and rational capacity of the children instead of teaching them values.

Perhaps due to lack of awareness or their limited understanding, the teachers failed to see values in the regular subjects. It could also be because they are only concerned with teaching whatever content is part of the curriculum in the subjects. Moreover, their perspective on education is instrumental, whereby they are concerned about the limitations of time and syllabus, which make it difficult for them to teach values in the classes of regular subjects.

The value education curriculum was designed in a very good way, and being totally film based, it was not a burden to the children. When students saw the films, it made them think and feel emotional as they would in real situations. This kind of curriculum can help children to be involved more deeply in the purpose of the programme, to have a good understanding and to keep some commitments in situations they experience. It can also help the teachers

because they do not need to prepare separately for the classes since they also watch the videos with the children. So, it can be an aid to the children and the teachers to learn in an enjoyable atmosphere.

Based on my experience from the field, participants` reasoning was totally contextual or contingent. Their reasoning was far from objective or rational, that is, not categorical. It seemed to me that the participants were living in their selfishness and gave more importance to their own benefits. It made them act in a way where they could get some benefit from their actions, which tended to make them rationalise their actions in a hypothetical way. If this is the situation, we cannot expect real moral values from the people. We cannot compare this kind of reasoning and conditional action with Kant`s “categorical imperatives”. Such reasoning capacity and conditional actions can make a whole society selfish. When people`s relationships depend on some conditions, society loses its real moral values. All these things are barriers to national integrity, equality, respect among citizens, and the relationship between humanity and an individual.

Due to the lack of awareness of the teachers on the whole curriculum, the teachers could not connect one value with another or make the children understand that values are not isolated but interlinked. This limitation can result in teachers and students misunderstanding values and the reasoning and justification for values. Children are somewhat dependent on teachers. While some children may think beyond what a teacher teaches, as per my observation, most children are stuck with what a teacher teaches them in the class, and it is difficult for them to think beyond a teacher`s examples and reasoning. So, it would be better if teachers understand the whole curriculum and make connections between the topics covered.

I came to know that children are inquisitive— they can think and reason in unexpected ways. It is clear that they have some values before they come to the school, which they might learn from their family, culture or society. I have seen how their environment and the situations impact their reasoning. So, we cannot change their backgrounds, but we can change their way of thinking and reasoning a situation. This initiative has to be taken by schools, otherwise children will not be able to change the mindset and reasoning that comes from their respective backgrounds. Every child comes from a different background, then everyone will have a different reasoning that derives from their experience and everyone will act in different ways. Then there will be no common understanding of a situation, no common reasoning and no common actions among people. One cannot imagine what the future of

society and the nation would be in such a scenario.

Conclusion

Through my observation and experience, I strongly believe that you cannot teach values that you are not committed to. This is because you teach what you are. While you are teaching, you will invariably give your own reasons and examples, which limit the reasoning of the children. The kind of examples and reasoning that children come up with are related to their backgrounds and individual experiences. So a teacher's reasoning can limit the reasoning of children. Not every child has the capacity to think beyond a teacher's examples and reasons. Therefore, it is advisable that a teacher who is teaching the values should come out from the confines of his/her own beliefs, region and religious feelings; should have the rational capacity to reason a situation irrespective of external factors; and should treat every child equally.

Values should be taught in a manner that children acquire self-reasoning and rationality. We should make children think deeply and identify the reasons behind their thoughts and actions. This is so that they follow their practical reason, which derives from their own character. Unless and until we follow these principles in teaching values, it would be worthless and meaningless.

We can also follow other frameworks instead of Kant's framework in teaching values. But at the same time, we should be concerned about the implications that will emerge in the education. Kant's framework has a good justification and reasoning, and I strongly believe that there would be no negative implications in education if we follow Kant's framework. Children who are nine to eleven years of age may not be able to understand the categorical imperatives and unconditional reasoning, but it can be a starting point for them to understand and acquire a good reasoning capacity, which is not influenced by any external factor.

On the basis of this study, I would argue that values should not and cannot be separate from education. The word "education" itself has a value—when you are educating a child, it means that you are teaching him/her some values. Without having or following values, we cannot call a person an educated person. At the same time, if a person has and follows a good value but does not have any educational qualification, we can call him/her a "socially educated person". Here, education does not make any sense—you yourself make it valuable.

References

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