

NEED OF VALUE-BASED EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Education is an effective tool to social uplift, change and empowerment. It transforms society and brings civility. However, it has been observed that despite high literacy and higher education there is a considerable rise in crime and corruption among the educated. This calls for introspection and analysis. Studies have found that a system of education lacking values has been triggering wrong and violent tendencies leading to conflict and extremism. Educators and scholars are suggesting that in order to counter this negative tendency gaining currency among school children and the educated youth, value-based education must be provided from very early age to instill positive ideas, create an environment of peace and foster an attitude of tolerance, forbearance, peaceful co-existence and communal harmony. This, apart from socialization and cohabitation, can be done through a change in the syllabus. For this purpose, value-based education should be made part of the academic curriculum as well as practiced by the teachers.

Key words: Education, ethics, socialization, value, value-based education, value transformation.

Introduction

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

– Nelson Mandela

Most will agree that education is one of the most powerful tools to uplift an individual, society or country. But very few can provide a concrete definition of it. This is because there is no single definition of education which is exclusive and, there is no problem with that, for defining sometimes amounts to confining a thing to a particularistic understanding. However, one must differentiate between education, information and knowledge.

Education is a dynamic life-long process. To make it easy it should be noted that knowledge can be gained through different sources both by the educated and the uneducated. Similarly, information can be availed both by a literate person and a layman. But acquiring education requires a sustained effort, good planning and investment of time, energy and resources, and it is transformed by an educated person to one who is either non-literate or is un-educated in a specific aspect of a subject.

There are a number of ways and procedures to transform education from one person or generation to another. Likewise, there are different methods adopted and various resources used to educate. There can be no disagreement about these and other related methods and techniques to facilitate the process of teaching and learning that we call education. But there are certain aims and objectives behind things that human beings generally do. Similarly, education, whether formal, informal or non-formal, has some objectives. The primary aim of this paper is to highlight the objective of education especially the objective of education in the 21st century. Located within that is the discourse of value-based education.

Value-based education

In view of its significance the many Committees and Commissions set up to look after the different issues of education in India have recommended the need of value-education for moral training and character formation. For example, the Sargent Scheme report [Sood and Kavita quote] in 1944 had this statement: Religion in the widest sense should inspire all education and that a curriculum devoid of an ethical basis will prove barren at the end. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) emphasized that moral education and inculcation of a sense of social responsibility must be stressed in educational system and schools should recognize their responsibility in facilitating the transition of youth from the world of schools to the world of work and life. The Secondary Education Commission (1953) known as “The Mudaliar Commission” linked education to life in such a way that certain values could also be brought in. The 1986 National Policy on Education also reflected the light on value-based education.

The Catholic Bishops of Tamilnadu, which came up with an *Alternative Education Policy* proposed by the Tamilnadu Bishops’ Council (TNBC) following release of the Draft of the New Education Policy by the BJP-led Central Government in June 2016, had noted that education needed to be viewed as a “process” rather than a “product” and that it needed to be “much attentive to values and character formation.” Although the New Education Policy puts lot of emphasis on language including sign language and vernacular, arts, sports, “extensive use of technology” and building of “digital infrastructure” throughout the policy document which was approved by the cabinet without Parliamentary discussion on 29 July, 2020, reported to come into effect by 2030, it does mention briefly among its fundamental principles about “ethics and human & Constitutional values” such as empathy, justice, pluralism and, about “respect for diversity.”

According to Monika Sood and Kavita “Value education refers to planned educational actions aimed at the development of proper attitudes, values, emotions and behavior patterns of the learners. Value education is the education that is concerned with the transformation of an individual’s personality”.

Having flashed the need of value-based education, the foremost thing to first understand here is the meaning of value, because, as Henry says, “Meaning and value are fundamental to human coexisting in civilized societies”.

The quest for value must be an integral part of education because, as I mentioned earlier, education is the most powerful and effective tool of social transformation and, if it remains bereft of value, it may lead society to a wrong direction which, unfortunately, is the case in most countries now. Despite many countries having a considerable literacy and many of them having reached to higher levels of education, negative tendencies are on the rise. We read reports of frequent cases of crime, corruption and violence. School children are resorting to violence and serious crimes even in highly educated countries. We know that schools are cradles of education. The future of any nation lies there. What is taught there is caught elsewhere.

If school children take to negative approaches to life one can imagine the menace that society will face. Therefore value-based education becomes a very important part of school education curriculum. The same applies to other institutions of learning like gurukuls, madrasas, *makatib* (plural of *maktab*, a system of primary education), pathshalas, shakhas, etc, because these are places where “social formation” of children takes place.

Defining value

So what constitutes value? The term has originated from a Latin word which means “worthwhile”. Thus what is valuable is worthy. It simply means that a value-based education is a worthwhile education. As we know that values can be both positive and negative and sometimes negative values are more powerful than positive ones and, they spread rapidly. It is therefore important that positive values are taught, appreciated and inculcated and negatives values discouraged and discarded. This must be done from early childhood i.e. from birth till six to seven years of age which, according to Siddiqi, Bhatia and Biswas, is “the crux of the total education system.”

Values are related to morals and ethics and thus they are abstract notions. Therefore finding what is meant by value is vital for understanding its significance and, subsequently, its application to the domain of education. According to Parmila Bakhati “Ethics are beliefs, ideas, and theories that facilitate the setting of standards. Morals relate more closely to behavior. Values constitute that which is accepted by the group, community or society”. From this definition, which is a Buddhist perspective, we can understand the significance of value for any group, community or society and its impact on the larger society. What is meant by community here can be classified on the basis of (i) religion; (ii) geographical region; (iii) occupation; and (iv) income group. Each of which then has many sub-categories as elaborated by Siddiqi *et al.*

Coming back to the discussion of value, Devraj & Agrawal say that values can be viewed in different ways. However, “There are three universal and eternal values: *Truth, Beauty and Goodness.*” According to Charles Henry value can be understood from two perspectives: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic value is central to ethics and is essential to judgements of morality. Henry says that extrinsic value is a derived value “good, not for its own sake, but for the sake of something else.” Henry’s division of value reminds me about the division of knowledge by some Muslim scholars as “wahbi” and “kasbi” which is that knowledge is of two kinds; one which is revealed and the other which is acquired. In other words, knowledge is both inherent and acquired. Here I find knowledge itself to be a value which can be used both for constructive and destructive ends. Also, knowledge and education from this viewpoint are overlapping concepts. However, what is important here is not acquisition of education or knowledge but how and where it is applied. Therefore knowledge *per se* whether of worldly affairs or Godly commands and elderly precepts can yield no good unless it is applied. So if it is applied for good, whether of self or of something else, it will be good, but if it is used for evil, it will be evil. One can discuss here the ends-and-means question but the scope of this paper does not allow me to bring that debate here.

Earlier we talked about the difference between knowledge, information and education. The first two are not the subject matter of primary concern here, the last one is. For educationist

Mohammad Ishaq “Education alone is the master-key which awakens the latent talents in an individual and builds up insight and understanding”.

According to the Qur’an, whose first verses explicitly talk about its significance, education is not a passive idea but an action-oriented process, because God demands to read and to read by using pen. (Chapter 96, Verses 1-4)

Education is a subset of a larger socio-cultural setting. It is not merely information or knowledge but a systematic process of teaching and learning which generates critical thinking, creates new ideas, stimulates intellectual curiosity, invites dialogue and discussion, encourages independence and creativity, promotes research and innovation, prepares the mind to face criticism to introspect, review and reform. Knowing bare facts is not called education. One can store a million facts in one’s mind but still remain uneducated. Dr S. Radhakrishnan said, “Education, to be complete, must be humane, it must include not only the training of the intellect but also the refinement of the heart and the discipline of the spirit.” Prophet Muhammad described the objective of his advent as “completion of the moralities”.

It cannot be disputed, as senior academician and historian Romila Thapar has pointed out that “education provides us with information on various subjects, it equips us to better understand the world we live in, and is necessary to many jobs.” But there is more to it than just getting grades, because “Critical inquiry is not acquired in passing. It has to be taught, inculcated and made relevant.”

Education is organized and purposeful. Whatever is taught has an effect on any culture and society. Therefore, making education culturally contextual keeping in mind the broad spectrum of society, its needs and sentiments is the need of the hour. Value-based education therefore must be a vital part of pedagogy.

Value transformation

In the transformation of the personality of any individual education plays a very significant role because it is through education that one's ideas are shaped and one's behavior changes, improves and matures. There are other things that also play their part in personality building and behavioral change though. It is also very important to note that not only just what is taught has an effect but also who teaches it and how it is taught also has its own impact, as Ravinder Rena says that as against prevailing notion of "better caught than taught" in some countries, values are both "taught and caught".

Having an idea of what is meant by value and why it is needed to have a system of value-based education, let us now look at some of the processes and means through which values can be taught and promoted for larger social benefits.

Family: Family is the basic unit of society. What is taught here lasts long. Thus the role of parents becomes very important. A mother's lap is the first institution from where a child learns life's lessons. A mother is also the first teacher of a child. So, whatever values a mother not just tells her child but also practices in her day-today life, becomes part of the child's life too. Besides parents, the role of other immediate family members is crucial in imparting values to children.

Peer group/s: As children grow they make groups and spend time with them. So, the kind of peer groups that children have, whether in family or school, has an impact on their overall development and habit formation. To ensure that children do not fall in wrong groups, the responsibility of parents especially of father and other senior members of the family grows many folds, because children learn things quickly and pick up both good and bad habits.

Education: Education is the most vital part of any child's emotional, mental, physical and psychological growth. Since the article discusses this in detail, it is left here.

Teacher/s: After parents, teachers and educators are the most important persons who play vital role in life and career of an individual. If one is born through one's parents, one is certainly shaped by the teachers. What is taught is important, but equally important is who teaches it and how. Students do not learn only through their course contents but also through the ideas, traits and practices of their teachers. Most students make some or the other teacher their ideal personality and follow them religiously. So the life of a teacher gets reflected in his/her persona and, as Malik Mohammad Musa writes, "Research reveals that teacher is an element in triggering revolution in children".

Curriculum: Apart from who teaches, what is taught is a significant part of value learning and moral cultivation. Therefore the design and content of the curriculum are important elements of education. Citing Section 2.1 of the National Curriculum Framework-2000 Devraj & Agarwal inform that "Since India is the most ennobling experiment in spiritual co-existence, education about social, moral and spiritual values and religions cannot be left entirely to home and the community." There are different curriculums like Recommended Curriculum, Entitlement Curriculum, Intended Written Curriculum, Supported Curriculum, Implemented Curriculum, Achieved Curriculum, Attend Curriculum, etc because what we call syllabus is not the name of few books. It is a combination of planning and administration in which changes are made as and according to needs and situations. Inclusion of value education in the curricula can make a huge difference.

Leaders: People who lead and inspire in different fields capture people's attention. Be it in academics, business, politics, religious affairs, sports, those who outshine become ideal for many. Their every movement is watched and followed. So the values and philosophies these leaders follow are adopted by thousands.

Religion: Religion is a binding force. It inspires millions across the world. What comes as part of religion becomes significant for its followers. We know that all religions teach certain values, some of which are common. Some scholars like W.H. Bequist have found in their studies that

religion is a great motivating force and intimately bound up with the formation of character and the inculcation of ethical values. Therefore inclusion of morally inspiring religious stories and lessons should be made part of the curriculum for value awareness and value acquisition.

Spiritual training: With rise in violence and extremism, need for spiritual guidance and training has assumed a new significance. Yojana Patil writes that “Value based education cannot be taught without spiritual Knowledge or Spiritual Consciousness”. For Patil “Values have social, psychological, economic, spiritual and philosophical aspects” and they have a wide impact.

Many educationists and experts agree that the 21st century school curriculum does not support teaching of values. There is a race for marks and, achievements are measured by examination scores. This is something creating serious psychological problems. A number of cases of suicides have been reported by students who scored well but still ended up with their precious lives because of the high expectations from their parents and wards.

Conclusion

Making children good human beings and law-abiding, peace-loving citizens is a chief objective of education and, what can help achieve that goal can be learnt from a number of sources from parents to peer groups, to teachers and leaders. In this process, disagreement without negation and creating space for accommodating dissent and diversity should be encouraged, as Ravi Kumar of Jamia Millia Islamia writes, “education system has to be receptive to the students coming from diverse social formations”. So be it the syllabi, the teachers or the institutions, diversity must be accommodated and differences acknowledged, something which can be termed as *educational ethics*, an idea which can promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Finally, a value-based school curriculum containing lessons on morality can help what Neil Hawkes describes as a “shared vocabulary” which appears to be missing from many schools and society. If that mark is achieved that will be a hallmark.

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Bio

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