

More About Value Education

The text below is based on a paper by Prof. Rajeev Sangal, Director, IIIT Hyderabad, Prof. R R Gaur, Ex Professor, IIT Delhi and Prof. Ganesh Bagaria, Faculty, HBTI, Kanpur, who have been deeply involved with value education and value-based living.

1. What is Value-Education?

1.1 What is the purpose of value-education?

1.2 Can values be taught?

1.3 How is a course in value-education conducted?

1.4 What value-education IS and what it is NOT

1.1 What is the purpose of value-education?

Education system today concentrates on providing to its students the skills to do things. In other words, it concentrates on providing “How to do” rather than “What to do” or “Why to do?” The present education system does not prepare students well for dealing with life. Primarily, it prepares them for profession or jobs.

A result of this is that the students are neither aware of their surroundings nor of their own self, and face life with difficulty. They have to learn by themselves to deal with life, which includes examining ones goals, identifying and sorting out conflicts, dealing with relationships in family and friends, understanding society, and leading a mutually enriching relationship with nature. This requires ability to think critically about everyday matters of life. Present education does not address these issues.

Value-education tries to achieve two goals. First to develop a critical ability to distinguish between essence and form or between what is of value and what is superficial, in life. Second, to develop commitment and courage to act on one’s beliefs in real life situations.

What makes it difficult is the fact that the ability is to be developed not for a narrow area or field of study, but for everyday situations in life. It covers the widest possible canvas.

1.2 Can values be taught?

Frequently people assume that a course in value-education teaches values. This is not correct. The course does not teach values but encourages students to discover what is valuable for them. Accordingly, they should be able to discriminate between valuable and the superficial in real situations in their life.

One of the foci is on observations which are mainly on the self, the other humans and relationships. Such observations and their analysis are shared and discussed. Teacher’s role is in pointing to essential elements to help in sorting them out from the surface elements (in pointing to the basic principles under which incidents take place, so that different incidents can be understood and explained). Hopefully, this leads to development of “commitment” for behaving and working based on one’s values.

1.3 How is a course in value-education conducted?

A course or classes in value-education are conducted by pretty much the normal method of lectures, explanations, discussions, home assignment and practical exercises. The course does not preach, and does not talk about do’s and don’ts.

One tries to connect the students to their self during lectures and discussions, and cause them to think on one’s goals, relationships, and living in family, society and nature.

Home assignments ask them to reflect on concepts and their applications. Laboratory is important in learning. Here, the difference is that the laboratory is everyday life, and practicals are how one behaves and works in it.

The group discussions would also provide support to a student in performing actions commensurate to his / her preferences born out of his/ her understanding.

1.4 What value-education IS and what it is NOT

- It is not a course in moral science. It does not tell you DOs and DONTs. It does not tell you what you should become, or what you should do
- It does not talk about rewards and punishments in an afterworld. The goal is happiness here and now. It puts forward the proposition that the basic human values are inherent and intact in all of us, what is needed is to be aware of them
- It does not say physical facilities are unimportant. It rather talks of prosperity in every family. It says that there is place for facilities in life and encourages people to fix their place in their own life

- It is not an organization or society. It does not insist on any specific faith or any specific belief

It only proposes and asks its listeners to investigate and explore into their own inner self and connect to what is innate and intact in all of them as something which is universal, natural and all-fulfilling for them as well as others. One can do this irrespective of his/her own religion or faith or beliefs

2. What are the results of Value-Education?

2.1 What changes are visible in students and teachers?

2.2 What changes are visible in the atmosphere of institution?

2.3 How does it relate to world problems (Its potential for the world)?

2.1 What changes are visible in students and teachers?

Changes are visible among students and teachers soon after the implementation of value-education. However, for this to happen, the implementation has to be right. It should not be through do's and don'ts but taking students through a process of sensitivity development and self-reflection.

2.2 What changes are visible in the atmosphere of institution?

The atmosphere of the institution becomes more harmonious and many of the small conflicts dissolve away. It takes time for any big conflicts to be resolved, but usually their intensity gets reduced relatively soon.

There is also a discernible change for the better in the environment of sincerity and studiousness.

2.3 How does it relate to world problems (Its potential for the world)?

Value-education has the potential to bring about world wide changes, if it is implemented in education system throughout the world. There is greater strife today in the family and society, and the world is full of violent conflicts locally and globally. At the level of the individual even though there is greater wealth, there is also a lack of fulfillment. Climate change has come as a specter in a world gone terribly wrong, where the greatest achievements of science and industry have become the biggest threats to the very human existence.

Value-education begins a process in the human being. This process though inside the human being, helps in engaging him or her with family, society and nature. It does not encourage withdrawal or renunciation from the world.

Once practiced in the world, over a period of time, it would bring about a change to a more equitable world with less conflict, and promote living with harmony in nature.

3. What is required in implementing Value-Education?

3.1 What are the elements in implementation of value-education?

3.2 What special care is required in implementation and in scaling up?

3.1 What are the elements in implementation of value-education?

Having worked out the purpose and the approach of value-education, its implementation has several elements. First, one has to determine in which classes it should be implemented with how much time. Second, it requires development of books and other learning materials such as teacher's manual, video lectures, home assignments, practical exercises, a course web-site, etc. Third, there needs to be a well-defined and clear program for teacher training.

3.2 What special care is required in implementation and in scaling up?

Special care is required in implementing the value-education program in the school system. There are two main reasons why it differs from other programs. First value-education directly addresses larger questions of life and relates to day to day living. As a result, the teacher has to be much better prepared to initiate a discussion in the class and to deal with question of the student. Second, the program aims at developing sensitivity in the student. Therefore, it requires a heightened sense in the teacher, the school, the school board, and so on.

This also indicates that this program requires a greater degree of understanding and sensitivity on the part of leadership implementing the program. Besides monitoring the progress towards physical targets, the sensitivity part has to be carefully nurtured and ensured.

4. What support is available from society and government for Value-Education?

4.1 What support is available from political, social and other societal groups?

4.2 What is the support from parents, teachers and government Department of Education?

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Value-education program usually receives support from all the sections of society – whether political, social, industrial religious or other. The reason for this support is that it appeals at the basic human level. Who would not want trust and respect in relationships? Who would not want prosperity for all citizens – even though it might seem infeasible? Who would want to destroy nature – even when current lifestyle seems the opposite?

Value-education makes an impact on all people irrespective of their race, religion, caste, gender or profession.

4.2 What is the support from parents, teachers and government Department of Education?

Once the people associated with education gain an understanding of value-education, they give it an enthusiastic support. It includes teachers, principals, government officials, parents and ultimately the students.

After value-education training, which usually brings about a major attitude change, teachers see a holistic role for themselves in education. Their role is not limited to teaching of a subject for the sake of wages, but a life mission. Teachers, government officials and principals realize the importance of relating education to the inner self which can provide a practical guide to living.

The approach is holistic, covering a large canvas. It has been explored with people from different walks of life. Some experiences are given below. Although, the concerns of each of the groups are different, what they realize at the end is that there is a need for human values and relationships that is founded on knowledge in the self.

Young students in engineering

The workshop has been included as a compulsory part of the academic curriculum. It has led to a major rethinking among the students. They have been reflecting on what their goals are, the place of money in life, the joy one derives in relationship, and in seeking knowledge and not merely on jobs and the money they get out of it. They have become relaxed in their self, and become more sensitive to relationships with their friends and family, and regarding society and nature.

People from different walks of urban life

People from different walks of life are affected by the workshop. Many realize the lack of time they give to their family in their relentless pursuit of wealth, and even more importantly, the way they behave with their children, spouse or old parents. Many such people are affected profoundly and come back to further workshops with their family members, again and again.

Criminals in jail

The workshop touches criminals in jail most directly. Those who are seething with revenge, slowly start realizing that in fact their "enemies" are not bad. They are to be pitied and not hated. In turn, they themselves get depressurized and relaxed. This eventually gets reflected in their day to day behaviour with other jail inmates and with jail authorities. Bilaspur jail experience shows that some of the most violent criminals with also the worst behaviour inside the jail got totally transformed.

Social workers from NGOs

People working for uplift of downtrodden in rural and urban areas are greatly affected by the workshop. It dawns on them that along with work on employment generation, agriculture, irrigation, health, sanitation, scientific temper, it is also important to work on "understanding" of the self and on relationship, without which their work and successes are short lived.

Farmers and rural folk

Rural folk today are in a state of demoralization. They are being told that they are backward, and need to be developed; that they are ignorant and do not know what is good for them; that they

need to study English and IT without which there is no future. The present political structure and political parties has led to a breakdown of the community decision making. High powered marketing along with TV has led to a loss of community life and led them to yearn for Pepsi and the "luxury of city life". They do not realize what they possess - clean air, clean water, and a stronger possibility of a wholesome life with fulfilling relationship in family and community. Experience of rural people who attend the workshop has been that they feel a sense of empowerment regarding themselves and what they can do at their own place. Rather than treating farming as an unworthy activity, they see value in what they are doing. The importance and necessity of physical labour for all, comes out as a corollary. Established business men who have done the workshop have taken up sustainable or "zero-input" farming where all the required resources for farming is generated from farm land itself. Several experiments in renewable energy are also in full swing. They are deriving happiness out of farming and physical labor.

People with spiritual background

People with spiritual background usually take time to come to terms that one can talk about "human values" without bringing in elements from mystery or unknown. Many are elated at this discovery. People from different faiths - Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity - have started getting deep into a process of self-exploration after doing the workshop, and are able to see that the human values can be derived through this process of self exploration by each one of us and are the same as professed by their respective faiths.

What this content is NOT

The content is not a course in moral science. It does not tell you DOs and DONTs. It does not tell you what you should become, or what you should do. (It only seeks to connect you with your Self and encourages you to seek answers within self).

It does not talk about rewards and punishments in an after world. (The goal is happiness here and now. It puts forward the proposition that the basic human values are inherent and intact in all of us, what is needed is to be aware of them. When we follow what is innate in us, we derive joy and happiness. The listener is free to do self investigation and self exploration and come to his own conclusions).

It does not say physical facilities are unimportant and must be shunned. It rather talks of prosperity in every family. (It says that there is place for facilities in life and encourages people to fix their place in their own life. This also requires separating needs from desires generated by TV and consumerist culture, where the irony is that accumulation of wealth is accompanied not by a sense of fulfilment but by a sense of deprivation, the workshop presents this aspect forcefully).

It is not the representation of an organization or society. It does not insist on any specific faith or any specific belief. (It only proposes and asks its listeners to investigate and explore into their own inner self and connect to what is innate and intact in all of them as something which is universal, natural and all-fulfilling for them as well as others. They can do this irrespective of their own religion or faith or beliefs).

From all these experiences, we can see the possibility that **Universal Human Values Are Teachable**, that they can be communicated precisely and effectively. Through the many examples, we can see indications and evidence of the positive change in attitude, academic excellence and

social concern among the teachers & students who have been consistently attending this course/workshop and are active in self-exploring. They develop a holistic vision towards life and profession; and have enhanced self-confidence. Such individuals become assets to themselves, to their family as well as to the society at large. Students perform well academically, do well at their workplaces and at the same time participate for order in society.

The key success factors are:

1. **Commitment of Key Decision-Makers** (Discussion with educators making effort in this direction, visits to their educational institutions and short interactions, like the 3-day workshop are helpful)
2. **Preparation of Teachers** (The 8-day Teachers' Orientation Program (TOP) is effective in preparing teachers - to understand, to live and to share the values)
3. **Communication with Students** (Frequent, open & transparent discussion with students and orientation programs are effective)
4. **Conducive Environment** (Orientation of the teachers and staff goes a long way)

Step-by-Step Implementation at a Natural Pace (A strong process and a committed, competent & empowered Value Education Cell is required)