

Values Through Identification

A REWARDING area of educational investigation in recent years has been that of student values. What are the values of students? More particularly, can the school shape the values of its students in various fields of personal and social relevance?

Anthropologists tell us that values originate in many ways—from situations in which choices are made, from historical accidents, from cultural borrowing, or from the unique characteristics of community leaders. There is the suggestion that the school, as an agency for maintaining the culture, has a responsibility not only for transmitting values but also for their renewal in societies and men. The concern here is with this dual task of transmission and refinement in the context of the school's program of instruction.

Reports on studies with student populations suggest at least two major processes by which a student acquires his values. Many psychologists support a theory that the most important process for acquiring values is that of identification with a personality model who reflects given values. For a student this model may be a parent, a teacher, a

popular hero, a respected citizen in the community, or a member of his class. A second process is that of *value-ing*; that is, the student may acquire established values by making choices, through prizing one value over another, through rejecting one and adhering to another, and through clarifying issues related to values.

Both processes are probably operative in school situations, but the first is often unconscious on the part of the student who chooses his model and the teacher or other person who is chosen as the model. The second process should be the conscious focus of attention by both students and faculty. One definition of a classroom is: a place where instructors and students are engaged cooperatively in a common quest for values in the context of teaching and learning.

Psychological Identification

If central emphasis is given to the theory¹ that students acquire their values by identification, consideration may be made of the roles of the teacher and other school personalities in this

¹Jacob Getzels. "The Acquisition of Values in School and Society." *The High School in a New Era*. Francis S. Chase and Harold A. Anderson, editors. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 160-61.



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"We listen and observe carefully...."

process. Two concerns should be paramount in the minds of teachers in regard to transmitting values through appropriate personality models. First, we can ask, who ought to provide the models for identification; and second, what are optimum conditions for fostering appropriate identification?

The personal histories of many outstanding citizens attest to the singular influence of an admired teacher. However, it is also known from careful studies of youth that peer models are equally, if not greater, sources of adolescent values. It is not surprising in a society that has become increasingly "other directed" to find its youth looking to other adolescents for personality models rather than to the traditional authority figures of the school and community. One of the recent studies to give attention to this development was the survey made by James Coleman² of the teen-age social life in ten selected high schools in and adjacent to Chicago. Coleman reported that, among the values of adolescents, athletics and attraction of athletes were given top rating by boys and girls, respectively.

The impact of the school culture on the development of values was found to

² James S. Coleman. *The Adolescent Society*. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1961.

be equally disconcerting by Getzels and by Prince³ when they compared seniors with freshmen in selected high schools of the Chicago area. Summarizing one aspect of their study, Getzels writes:

Although we found a difference in the values of the industrial and the suburban schools, there were again only negligible differences between the freshmen and the seniors in either the industrial or the suburban schools. In short, on the average, whatever values a child brought with him when he entered a particular high school he also took away with him when he left the high school—nothing gained, nothing lost, nothing changed, at least for the types of values represented in the instrument used.⁴

The foregoing studies lead one to ask if the school currently is able to offer sufficiently viable models to serve in a countervailing sense for the transmission of values.

Apart from being concerned about the models students choose for identification, teachers might study the social context of the school to see whether sufficient conditions exist for effective identification with appropriate models whose

³ Richard Prince. "A Study of the Relationships Between Individual Values and Administrative Effectiveness in the School Situation." Unpublished Doctor's Dissertation, University of Chicago, December 1957.

⁴ Jacob Getzels, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

values are to be transmitted. The school, as an agency that engages children and young people for much of their time, often fails to bring students and teachers into a dynamic relationship in the study of personal and community values. Dependence on spectator sports and other superficial claims for personal loyalty, rather than vital involvement in the maintenance, government and welfare of the school, often deprive the young of valuable opportunities to discern the values of their teachers.

Sensing the sterility of many academic experiences in respect to current social issues, students often seek more direct participation and relevance in the welter of extracurricular activities. This so-called "second" curriculum, despite its recognized superficiality at points, offers the high school student in many cases the only available contacts with adult life in the community. One of the keys to the transmission of durable values might be found by fusing the academic program with those extra-class activities that bring teachers and students together in a more significant relationship.

A more conscious attempt to deal with values as a part of curriculum and instruction may be seen in the efforts of teachers to engage students directly in a consideration of their personal and social values. By confronting students with

the experience of identifying and clarifying their own preferred ways of behaving, the teacher becomes instrumental in a second approach to the transmission of values. In this approach attention is given to planning and organizing a curriculum which is conducive to a consideration of values and to fostering in the classroom instructional patterns which encourage the value-ing process.⁹

Helping Students Identify Values

If personal and social values are to be transmitted and refined through the process of value clarification, there devolves upon the teacher a responsibility for organizing and selecting learning experiences for pupils along lines provocative of such clarification. This means the teacher must be cognizant of the sources of values as well as of productive procedures for bringing them under scrutiny and examination. He must be able to see in the content of the curriculum its potential for providing value-laden experience and must know how to arrange the conditions for pupils to achieve their values through its reconstruction.

There seems to be little doubt that the comprehensive and primary source of values is human experience. Whether a pupil acquires values through psycho-

The school should help students achieve durable values through meaningful reflection on their experience.

COURTESY NEWS BUREAU, BALL STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE



logical identification with specific personality models or through the rational examination of attitudes and beliefs, he will do so in either case by interacting with his environment—people, events and conditions.

A likely starting point for teachers and curriculum specialists would be the overall curriculum structure around which learning experiences are organized. While taxonomy is not the immediate end of content organization, the structure agreed upon usually offers the central points for a classification of values and objectives. A school program which seeks to foster a serious and orderly study of values may need to reflect the categories proposed for the classification of values.

Within the wide spectrum of experience it has been common practice among investigators to consider traditional institutional relationships with family, school, church, job, and others as the most potent sources of values. Classification of values often follows these institutional categories as seen in the following taxonomy proposed by Dodd:⁵

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|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. domestic | 7. hygienic |
| 2. scholastic | 8. recreational |
| 3. economic | 9. artistic |
| 4. political | 10. scientific |
| 5. religious | 11. linguistic |
| 6. philanthropic | 12. military |

This classification is defended on the grounds that "societal institutions consist of the organized striving of most people for values of most kinds and amounts, which are most desired, at most times and places."⁶ This rationale for a particular classification suggests to the teacher the advantage of setting up meaningful

⁵ Stuart C. Dodd. "On Classification of Human Values: A Step in Predicting Human Valuing." *American Sociological Review* 16:647; 1951.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 646.

criteria for determining priorities for study. Dodd's studies have additional use at this point when he suggests that we ought to be concerned with the values which are most:

1. Permanent, or universal in *time* from cavemen to our posterity;
2. Ubiquitous, or universal in *space* from equator to poles;
3. Popular, or universal among *people* of every culture and class;
4. Inclusive, or universal to all parts of a culture or system of *values*;
5. Intense, or strongly *desired*.⁷

In addition to structuring a curriculum which invites direct consideration of values in clear-cut areas, the teacher needs to engage students in an instructional process which achieves the refinement and clarification described earlier. The merits and implications of such an approach have been described convincingly by Louis E. Rath, who sees the teacher's task largely as that of helping students to identify and clarify their values in the interaction of classroom experience.

In addressing himself to the question, "What do we mean by values?" Rath proposes five criteria for determining whether specific acts of behavior actually reflect a value held by a person:⁸

There must be pattern or repetition

There must be prizing

There must be consideration of alternatives

⁷ Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 645-46.

⁸ Adapted from "Let Us Keep Seeking to Clarify Values" by Louis Rath in *Introduction to College Life* by Norman Bell, Richard Burkhardt and Victor Lawhead. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962. p. 54-57.

There must be affirmation

There must be relationship to life activities.

Application of these criteria to specific expressions of attitude quickly differentiate loosely held attitudes from sound commitments to values. To discern a pattern of values one must have evidence of repeated expression of an attitude. Unless a person consciously cherishes an attitude as descriptive of his views and behavior, it is hardly fair to ascribe value status to this attitude no matter how often it is repeated. Hence, the need for applying the criterion of *preference*. Even then such an expression of behavior may be rather casual, routine and unexamined, hardly a *conception* of preferred behavior. Rath asks, "Can we say of a person that he holds something as a value if he has not reflected on it?"⁹ After having considered the consequence of an attitude, a person still must *accept* a formulation of the attitude as a concept for guiding behavior. Until he does, there seems to be no serious acceptance of a value implied. Finally, to ascribe full status of a value to the original attitude one must ask if it has penetrated or affected the behavior of its possessor. Without this integration with *behavior* the attitude remains at the level of verbalization and is relatively meaningless for educative purposes. This instrumental definition of values is supported by other investigators such as Kluckhohn, who refers to values as "stable ways of resolving ambivalence."¹⁰

Probably the most significant consequence of determining values along the lines suggested here is that situations

must be available wherein teachers are engaging pupils in the experiences of value clarification. Rath states:

It is this searching for values which is to be most highly prized. We listen and observe carefully for any evidence pointing toward a purpose, an attitude, an interest, a belief, a feeling, an aspiration, a thought, or an activity as we quite casually inquire into it. We use the five criteria as a basis. As we get answers to those five questions we are in a position to judge whether a value is being identified.¹¹

The literature of curriculum development and instructional procedures is replete with suggestions for working with learners in problem solving situations in which Rath's steps for identifying values could be tested readily. Resource guides such as *Helping Teenagers Explore Values*¹² offer excellent suggestions for teachers who want to engage students directly in an appraisal of their values. With younger students at the elementary level the resources listed in *Values: Resource Guide*¹³ by Mate G. Hunt provide the teacher with many avenues for a similar exploration.

Whether the approach to values emphasizes psychological identification with models or the examination of student attitudes, feelings and beliefs, the school in transmitting values must be concerned with the quality of experience it provides in the learning situation. Effective development of curriculum and instruction should place primary emphasis on the conditions which help students achieve durable values through meaningful reflection on their experience.

¹¹ Rath, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹² Harold Alberty *et al.* *Helping Teenagers Explore Values*. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, Department of Education, 1956. (Mimeographed.)

¹³ Mate G. Hunt, *Values: Resource Guide*. Oneonta, New York: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1958.

⁹ Rath, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁰ Clyde Kluckhohn *et al.* "Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action." *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils, editors. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951. p. 395.

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