

VALUE EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVE OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract

Values, as defined by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, are the 'beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life.' Values are the most important things that every parent, teacher, or elders wants to inculcate in their wards. The inculcation of values starts right from the birth of a child, or better to say even before the birth, as seen commonly in India and Indian mythologies like the Mahabharata where it is believed that a child starts learning in the womb. Why are values so important for a child to learn? One of the simple answers is that it gives meaning to one's life by way of making them learn the socially accepted codes of behavior useful culturally, psychologically, and morally. The present article is an attempt to bring out the importance of values in higher education and the importance of language teaching to inculcate the best possible values in the learners.

Key words: Values, Higher Education, Language

'Spare the rod and spoil the child' was a concept associated with education system, particularly with the school level of teaching which has now changed or allow us to say, has taken a 'U' turn. Nowadays, teachers, at the primary level of teaching, are advised not to use any sort of physical punishment and to make the learner learn by way of 'play-way'. And, if by any chance, a teacher uses any sort of physical punishment on the learner, of course, depending on the intolerable behavior of the learner, the guardians make a hue and cry over the matter, making the authority take action against the faculty, which makes the learner comprehend that he has nothing to be afraid of the teacher, which with the stretch of time might make the learner bring in the notion to, sometimes, disobey/disrespect the teacher. This reminds us of a saying in Hindi *bin*

bhaya hot na prit ('no fear, no love') which connotes that fear gives birth to love and love to respect. But intellectuals and psychologists later on researched that corporal punishment might result in creating lasting negative impressions about the whole 'teaching-learning' system and might make the learner a depressed personality. They advocated that the use of corporal punishment should be stopped. The emphasis is, now, shifted to the education of the learner, text book or examination based education, which enables the learner to score more marks or better grades in relation to his/her academic field.

With the shift in focus of the teaching-learning system their came degradation to the development of a 'good' and moral character of the learner. The concentration of the teacher on the academic issues leads to diminish the inculcation of ethical and moral values in the learner which are the basic needs to develop a 'man of character'. In Indian societies, a person possessing moral and ethical values is termed as a man of 'good' character. One can quote Shakespeare, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so", but one cannot agree to such a philosophy where the norms of standard are set by the whole society and the society strictly adheres to such norms in judging the character of any individual.

Education is the all round development of the learner. To inculcate in the learner, the cultural, social, moral and ethical values, schools, particularly private schools, include into their curriculum the subject / paper called –value education, alternatively called moral science. They, in such a class, teach the learner the importance of a good moral character and help and guide them in making one. The need of ethical values and morality is developed among the learners right from the very beginning of their schooling. But, that, too, does not guarantee that the learner would grow adopting those values. They take it as just a subject/paper like any other paper and consider it purely from the examination point of view. They, then, pass on to the higher education. The Higher education system in India, basically, focuses on the 'academic' development of the individual; no where do we find value-education as a subject or paper at university level of teaching.

The question may arise—why values are important to be taught? The schools and other educational institutions could do better, for an improved mark sheet / grade sheet, without giving any thought to the teaching of values. The most probable answer would be that values play a vital role in shaping the character of an individual, and if not considered to be developed in an early stage of life, including the under graduate (UG) level of teaching, there is every possibility that it cannot be developed at all. Values are important because they guide our path of life; they mould our character by influencing our thoughts, guiding our feelings and directing our actions. They help us to make judgments, decisions and choices. They shape our attitude. Values are those important part of any education system in which people talk of the 'all round development' of an individual.

In the past, the world was not a technical world, not an IT world, neither the word 'practical' was so common. The past was a world where teachers were to focus more on moral values, to impart the knowledge of honesty and truth, to make the learners believe in friendship, and to understand the value of relationship. But, in the modern world, the attitude has changed, people have become more and more practical, educational institutions are interested more in vocational courses and other professional courses which give better placements, even they consider much the monetary benefit, and made the whole system of education a business entity. In a rapidly growing world of science and technology, where privatization and globalization are echoed everywhere, the need of value based education is of much importance.

Values seem to be of utmost importance for a learner. An individual can achieve good grades, but if he does not accord to values, he can easily be accessible by the prevailing trends of being immoral and uncivilized; there, then, arises a question on his/her education pointing strictly to the institution and the faculty that provided him with knowledge, either directly or indirectly, to think only in terms of grades.

It is hard to believe that values are not considered or are not given any thought while preparing the syllabi of any course in the higher education scenario neither does the UGC talks about value education or its place in higher education. The lack of value education in the syllabi of higher education has brought in ‘dire’ consequences to the whole of the teaching-learning process. Very often we come to know, or if unfortunate, witness, that some or the other student or a group of students has challenged the ‘social positive face’ of the teacher. These learners not only are mischievous but also go to an extent of being violent, literal denotation. Some students consider themselves even rightful in ‘hijacking’ the faculties, including the administrative authorities, to get their demands fulfilled. I¹, on two different unfortunate situations, witnessed the lack of values among the students, along with other faculties, was made to stay in the institution till late evening until the college administration surrendered to the demands of some of the students seeking admission into the college, on being rejected on the grounds of seat limit and lower grades. One of the faculties was on the verge of getting physically assaulted, if not intervened by other teaching and non-teaching staff. There are more incidents, which I think, most of the teachers working in the higher education system witness, either in the classroom or in any other scene, the degrees may vary, but is sufficient enough for the teacher to give a thought to the issue. Such incidents show that the learners are riding on a wrong path by only hankering after the grades and not being made to, even, think of values. There is no denying the fact that most of the learners put a far better show than the one mentioned above, but for such learners it is to be said that they might have a ‘stricter’ guardian. We do not intend to say that learners are not to put demands in front of the authority, but they should be able to decide about their demands as ‘right/wrong’, and should also be taught to place it in the proper way without being there any need to use abusive language against faculties or hurting him/her physically or emotionally (stated from personal experience). We do not find any wrong decision on the part of the authority of the institution where the above incident(s) occur as the seats in the institutions were limited and were filled mostly with students scoring between 60-90 percentage; where students scoring less than 40% were demanding admission and to worsen the situation their demand raised to the point to include each and every applicant, with no heed paid to grades, percentage, reservation policies, or any other criteria.

There is no denying the fact that there are degradations in the values of the youth of today, to a certain degree, and it is a joint responsibility of the parents and the teachers to work together on it. Teachers spend more time with the learners than their parents. It is a very obvious understanding that if a teacher talks in the class the students, sometimes even more than two hundred, listens. And if out of those students even one gets the thing what the teacher is trying to inculcate into him/her, then it could be said that the efforts of the teacher has gained him a lot.

In a language classroom, the teacher is equipped with the best possible tool to inculcate values in the learner. His tool is—language. Language has got the power to influence the brain of any individual. Any sort of sound created with the help of language is surely to send a response to the brain, just like the waves in still water, if it is disturbed. A language teacher can use his

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tool, even if the student is sometimes inattentive, by organising sounds in a way which best suits his purpose, to let language, create a change in the behavior of the learners.

The best technique to use language is to use it in the linguistic pragmatic way. The teacher would at the initial stage make the learner understand the concept of face--the social face which has both the negative and the positive aspect of it. According to Goffman (1967: 5), Face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” Again, According to Verschueren (1999: 45), “positive face, a person’s need to be treated as an equal or insider.”

The knowledge of the concept of face would bring in the learner the sense of being polite to others, by way of their attempt not to threaten the positive face of the listener. Later on, the teacher should make the learner understand that ethical and moral values are of much importance if he/she wishes to create a better society to live in—a sophisticated society, for which they need to get a good job or at least a handsome amount of income, and all these are not possible if he has no sense of politeness and, also, if he has no qualities of a ‘civilized’ human being. The language teacher, or any other teacher who is an expert in handling language, should attempt on brainwashing the students. He must very often keep saying things related to values of life, values that might help him to lead a peaceful and successful life, by way of examples and anecdotes that would be related to the topic being taught, else the students might not show interest and would signal boredom; which are sure to create an impression on the brain of the learner and would make him adopt certain values.

A teacher has to shoulder the responsibility of shaping the character and career of his learners. To shape the career he could help and guide them in the academic matters, but he cannot deny the fact that he has, as part of his duty and responsibility to society, to produce ‘valued’ citizens. He should also focus on, along with his regular duties of engaging classes and providing expert suggestion(s) to the students in relation to his subject and the need of students, counseling and brainwashing, that is surely not to be done without having expertise in language. We would agree that values play a vital role not only in shaping the character of an individual but also in the development of a society which eventually leads to the development of the nation.

References

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