

The Change of Educational Thought in the 21st Century: The Importance of Moral Education to College Students Facing the Society

Alphonso Landry

Gobi Arts & Science College, Gobichettipalayam, TamilNadu, India

1. Introduction

There has been growing concern over the erosion of values among youth and a need is felt for empowering them through education. Value education refers to those pedagogies that educators use to create enriching learning experiences for students and addresses issues related to character formation. Experts state that the school curriculum of the 21st century does not support the teaching of moral values. Many commentators neglect to recognize the impact of wider societal influences outside of school on children, however. These include changing family dynamics and the rapid changes introduced by technology, both positive and negative.

We now live in a globally connected world. We also now live in a material world that values material comforts, commercialization, and success, in education as well as other sectors. Hence, students' progress and success in school are frequently measured by their examination scores and 'wins' rather than demonstrations of moral ethics and values. Promoting and prioritizing competition and success on a daily basis can degrade the values, respect, and morals of individual students and, by extension, of wider society. The evident lack of human values, combined with the misuse of technology, can contribute to undermining the morals and values of society. Thus, abuse and disrespect, carelessness and self-interest become increasingly common phenomena.

Facing a worsening moral dilemma in today's complex world, everyone recognizes the need for educating youngsters about the importance of moral values. The decline in ethical standards, poor parenting, dishonesty by government and business leaders and violence have come to characterize the present day society all over the world. However, social changes and scientific progress during the past decade have been enormous. A new social media culture is silently taking over the world. Therefore, the current environment of political, social and religious decay has led to a renewed interest in teaching moral values to our children.

As we enter the 21st century, character and good moral values must become an important part of social life during the periods of childhood and youth if we want to see improved changes to our world. Greater importance should be given to develop clear guidance to teachers, parents and communities to raise children in a nurturing and unambiguous environment.

Role of Education

Education is only complete when it leads to all round development of the individual, which encompasses not only mental but also moral development. Moral education influences the social thinking of the individual and makes him/her distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. Moral education is a basic need for modern times where one is fast witnessing a degeneration of moral values. Moral education is important as it teaches diversity, tolerance, mutual respect and pluralistic values. The word moral comes from a Latin root (mos, moris) and means the code or customs of a people, the social glue that defines how individuals should live together. Moral values are values that express ideas about the good life. As such, concern for the moral virtues, such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others, is the domain of moral education.

Since young people readily and unconsciously assimilate all types of influences, good or bad, if they do not have proper guidance, it is important that society provides them with a type of education that will make them acquire sound religious and moral principles, and also develop appropriate attitudes and values that will help them to make good choices and decisions in their adulthood. Moral education, then, refers to helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of their communities. In this view, moral education should contribute not only to the students as individuals, but also to the social cohesion of a community. A moral education system must begin by defining the morals which are most important for not only the individual but for the society as a whole. The system must be designed as such that the individual at a formative stage should distinguish to differentiate between what is good and what is bad. Here practical learning should take precedence over bookish learning. The environment in which people live has always influenced patterns of behaviour, attitudes, actions, beliefs, values and ethics.

There is need for schools and college to encourage the youth to understand why people do one thing and not another. They should be able to make choices in order to become ethically mature adults. They should be assisted to learn how to take a position and consider facts relevant about a moral issue. The study of morality is vital because we live in a world of rapid change where there are various cultures coming into conflict, in which people are not guided by a single code of ethics but by many different values and rules. The differences are often not easily reconciled; and, in fact,

may be irreconcilable. It is important to understand the nature of these differences, as most discussions and debates about morals address them. The socio-cultural changes like transition from joint family to nuclear family system, excessive competition, parental expectations, commercialization of education, negative impact of media, misuse of information technology, globalization, consumerism etc. are putting immense pressure on children, families and schools leading to distortion of values. If effectively implemented, Moral Education will equip learners with tools of judgment in various situations leading to making responsible choices and decisions. Therefore, moral education should be an integral part of the school and college curriculum.

Gaps in the modern education

Experts argued, today's school education system is, somehow, following global trends and trying to cover the entire cross-cutting issues arose globally but the value based education is becoming forgotten. As Samten (2009) stated, modern education is not value-based; rather it works directly against human values. Although, nobody is explicitly taught to be selfish, greedy, arrogant, jealous, dominating and so forth; the overall content of the curriculum sends a message valorizing these characteristics (p. 2). It is observed in Nepalese context that the learning achievement and success are assessed on obtained high scores in examinations, through any means. In contrast, these students with the high score are also exhibiting poor moral characters. These circumstances indicate that the formal education is failing much to provide students with a holistic education.

Likewise, the formal education is running in a great confusion these days. Classroom instructions are becoming so reutilized that children often consider school as a place to exercise competition rather than cooperative learning. The students in our society are inclining towards violence, social evil and lack of respect towards the world. The enforcing reason is the aim of today's education which encourages only achieving a good mark in the examination to get a good job but loss of morality. These made the students look towards their rights but not duties.

Furthermore, today's world is operating on the basis of human's selfishness whether it is at the level of the individual, group, society or nation. Social norms and values are shifting as per the individual interests. Therefore, the self is increasingly being identified with selfishness.

A child of the twenty-first century showing unethical behavior and moral degradation seems everywhere; however, children are not to be blamed for this because there are several responsible reasons. One of the major factors is the parent. Incidences of broken homes with children distraught and deserted because the parent of twenty-first centuries is more involved with their worldly pleasures and social obligations rather than their responsibilities towards their children have become common. Similarly, another cause is a negative impact of information and technology. Children read and hear about growing influence of criminalization of politics and politicization of crime through the media every day. The impact of this constant flow of unhealthy information on their sensitive mind is easy

to imagine (Luther, 2001). This is happening due to the proliferation of vast amounts of information because of internet and media, and this may cause negative impacts, mainly in the more impressionable young minds, unless and until they have something robust to anchor upon (Singh, 2011, p.2). On the other hand, there is a strong chance of showing unethical behavior and unexpected activities by well-informed persons too. They may not be aware properly on human values, norms and ethics so they may break the code, rules and might fall on criminal actions.

Today, most of the crimes are committed by students coming out of schools and colleges as well. Their emphasis instead is on moneymaking and materialism instead of value or moral making. For these distressing conditions of human life and society, the new generation is drifting away from its history and culture while crime and violence have spread to all spheres of life. Doubtless, the scientific discoveries have given rise to genuine optimism materialistic accomplishments, but the problems of inequity, conflicts, poverty, apathy and anxiety are on the rise.

2. Conclusion

On the basis of above discussion, there is necessary of a balanced curriculum of values and other essential skills in today's education system. Therefore, the need of value education in today's context cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, education should aim at making human life better not only through economic upliftment of individual but also through social, moral and spiritual strengthening. This will not improve human life only but also realize the "higher truth". The study on value education as an initiative towards empowerment of youth is an attempt to understand the role of value education in making a positive difference in the personality of students and their present and future lives. The study has revealed that exposure gained by students through the value-education workshops have helped them to understand the value of discipline and moral uprightness. They have developed a greater team spirit, enhanced their levels of confidence, improved the power of concentration and built better interpersonal relationships. This has helped them develop into sensitive human beings and equipped them to effectively face the challenges of life. The students have gained enormously through these enriching experiences and are empowered to confront the uncertainties of the dynamic environment with clarity, courage and composure. A holistic approach to value education has ensured that there is the balanced development of all dimensions of students' personality. Spiritual and moral education are the powerful force that forges the strong and staunch individual.

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