

A Strategy for Developing Values

THIS paper deals with a strategy for helping children to develop their own values. Recognition of the importance of children's values has been with us for years. "A great and continuing purpose of education has been the development of moral and spiritual values" (5). With this pronouncement, the Educational Policies Commission opened its 1957 report. As important as developing values seems to be to the DAR and the VFW; to the FBI and the HUAC, the area is even more important to us as educators, it seems to me, because of its implications for the learning process. Let me briefly spell out some of these implications.

First, Kubie (12) suggests that learning is swift, spontaneous and automatic. At times, learning is blocked—many times by what Kubie calls preconscious motives and drives. He recommends that teachers concern themselves with developing self-knowledge on their students' part to remove blocks to learning—to free children so that they may learn in

a spontaneous fashion. Second, Ginsburg (7) suggests that good mental health, assumed to be a necessary condition for learning, is merely a process of living up to a set of values. Finally, several researchers, following the ideas of Louis Rath, have identified pupil behaviors associated with a lack of values (9; 11; 13; 14). These classroom behaviors, including over-conforming, indifference, flightiness and several others, it is argued, interfere with concentration, involvement, and openness in the learning process. Therefore, value development, it seems, should be one of the many central concerns of teachers.

While the area of value development has been a major concern of educators for many years, the public and many professional people, too, have had a feeling that our efforts in this area have not been too effective. The studies summarized by Jacob in his *Changing Values in College* tend to support this hunch (8). Teachers have been unable, it seems, to translate their genuine concerns about the value problem into effective patterns of action in their classrooms.

Essentially, there are four basic approaches to the development of values current in our schools. These methods in-

James Rath is Associate Professor, College of Education, and is also Assistant Director, Bureau of Educational Research and Field Services, University of Maryland, College Park.

clude the teaching of values by the lecture method, by the use of peer-group pressure, by finding or setting examples for children to respect and emulate, and by a reward and punishment rationale. These methods are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive of all the approaches we use in schools, but they seem to me to be among the most prevalent in our classrooms.

Methods in Use

Perhaps the most common approach is the use of lecture methods. Teachers seem ever ready to tell students what they should believe or how they ought to act. It is easy to burlesque this method in harsh tones. Actually, it may be employed by the kindest, most sincere teachers as well as by the overly self-righteous, would-be reformers found on some school faculties. While it is possible to cite cases in which a lecture or even a "bawling out" did bring about changes in students' values, basically this method is not too successful. Attesting to this is the common cry of many teachers—"You can't tell those kids anything." In general, this remark has been found to be accurate.

Teachers' judgments and convictions seem, from a student's point of view, to be out of the framework of things. (Analogously, it may be akin to the feelings teachers in the field have of the "should's and should not's" of professors from schools and colleges of education.) Jones (10) has suggested a basis for explaining the ineffectiveness of the lecture method. He states that a teacher must be emotionally accepted by his students before he can contribute much to their development of self. By their moralizing and preaching, teachers may set themselves apart emotionally from their students. To the extent that teachers are not

accepted by their students, it can be presumed that they will have little effect upon students' values. Students may leave the lecture all full of enthusiasm about what the teacher said, but they may not internalize what they admire and all too often they do not.

A second approach to the value development problem has been in the main popularized by exponents of the core curriculum. During a special period of the school day, students address themselves to self-evaluations and group evaluations. They are encouraged to speak freely, frankly and openly to the entire class judging their own behavior, criticizing group performances and perhaps pledging themselves to future improvements. In general, such statements are accepted by the teacher with little or no comment while other pupils are free to make suggestions, recommendations and comments.

The pressure of group approval or disapproval is a powerful force in bringing about changes in values. This method seems successful in some cases but it has some disturbing by-products. The most distressing of these is the tacit approval of the teacher of the notion that group consensus is correct or at least worthy of very serious consideration. This method, in effect, helps develop "other-directed" persons. Another disadvantage inherent in this group technique is the passive role of the teacher. In a sense, the insight, experience and skills of the teacher are muted. In their place, naive students play the dominant role in value development, and they do it quite unconsciously.

A third approach for developing students' values is one of acquainting students with examples of exemplary behavior. Instances of model behavior may be drawn from history, literature, and

legend or, more directly, from examples set by teachers.

Literature for all levels of schooling has been selected for the past several hundred years on the basis of the ethical and moral lessons with which it dealt. As in other methods discussed previously, some students are truly inspired by these vicarious experiences but we have little evidence that attributes found in a student's reading are readily transferred to daily life.

Teaching values by a living example is a related tactic. Here it is assumed that "values are caught, not taught." It is argued that as teachers demonstrate values, students will learn to prize these values. Surely people have been inspired by the goodness of a teacher with whom they have had the good fortune to be associated. However, teachers, especially in secondary schools, have little opportunity to demonstrate many key values. Problems that represent the real issues of life rarely present themselves in a 50-minute subject-matter period in such a way that students can observe their teacher's handling of them. It would truly be unfortunate if we had to rely on this approach as the only positive way teachers can help youngsters develop a set of values.

A fourth method deals with indoctrination and habit formation. Here it is assumed that when students are required to follow rules and regulations, when they are punished for infractions and praised for obedience, they will take on the values associated with the requirements. We are all familiar, however, with what students do when they are free *not* to obey the rules.

It is my contention that these four methods are rather ineffective. Perhaps their relative ineffectiveness arises partially because they are based on the as-

sumption that the knowledge of ethical and moral choices necessarily leads to ethical and moral conduct. As pointed out many years ago by John Dewey(4), this assumption has little basis in fact.

Yet more important, these methods seem intent on utilizing external factors, such as lectures or peer-group pressures, to develop values. Friedenberg(6) analyzes the current problems in developing values as follows:

... it is the inner discipline that is lacking; the school fails to provide a basis for it. The undisciplined behavior which sometimes results is often a sign of the anguish which results from having no core of *one's own*. [Emphasis added.]

The most promising approach would seem to be one that attempts to help each student build his own value system. This idea is supported by Allport(2) who asserts that no teaching is more important than that which contributes to a student's self. Clearly, this statement echoes the ideas of Kubie mentioned in the opening paragraphs. Are teachers able to help children in this way? B. O. Smith has said that teachers use little psychological knowledge beyond that found in common sense. What knowledge can we, as teachers, use in this area? Louis Rath's has developed a teaching method designed to provide some direction for teachers who are interested in helping students develop their own value systems (15; 16; 17).

Use of Clarification Procedures

The teacher's role in this method is neither that of preacher nor that of passive listener. Instead the teacher strives to (a) establish a climate of psychological safety, (b) apply a clarification procedure. An elaboration of these procedures follows.

Establishment of Psychological Safety

Nonjudgmental attitudes. It has been said that teachers have difficulty responding to an idea without saying, "That's good," "That's bad," or "What good is it?" To provide an atmosphere in which children will feel free to express themselves without threat of ridicule and derision, teachers must refrain from making harsh unnecessary judgments. Of course at times some judgments become necessary in situations in which the health and/or safety of students are threatened in any real sense.

Manifestations of concern. While the teacher may be nonjudgmental, it is important for him to be concerned with the ideas expressed by his students. If the concern is apparently lacking, then often the number of student ideas shared with a teacher tends to diminish. Perhaps students are reluctant to share their ideas with someone who is not interested in them. One of the most effective ways to show concern for a student's ideas is to *listen* to them. Busy teachers sometimes overlook this basic and effective technique for communicating interest to their students. Another method for a teacher's communicating his concern for a student's ideas is to *remember* them. As a teacher is able to cite a student's idea in a later conversation, the student cannot help but feel genuinely flattered and impressed.

Opportunities for the sharing of ideas. Teachers must organize their courses in such way that children have the opportunity to express their opinions, purposes, feelings, beliefs, hunches, goals and interests, about moral issues. These attitudinal-type statements may then be examined by the child who expressed them with the teacher acting somewhat as a catalytic agent in the process. Some

methods used by teachers in various researches by classroom teachers include: (a) question-answer discussion periods involving moot questions for the class to consider; (b) special written assignments; (c) role-playing techniques; (d) behavior manifestations of individuals or groups that may indicate attitudes, e.g., cheating or being tardy.

The task of finding issues that children may react to is no small problem. While our lives are filled with many, many moral and ethical questions to consider, even within our formal disciplines, it is difficult to find these issues in our textbooks, or *Weekly Readers*. Alexander(1), a textbook consultant for the New York City schools, has found that "few or no serious problems" are present in our current textbooks.

Clarifying Strategies

Asking questions. The teacher may attempt to clarify the ideas elicited from his students by asking probing questions. The key criterion for selecting these questions is that they must be questions for which only the student knows the answer. Of course, to be effective they must be asked in a nonjudgmental manner. If a student seems seriously challenged by one of the questions, the teacher should make efforts to "save face" by accepting his bewilderment. For example, the teacher may pass on by saying, "That's a hard question for any² one to answer, isn't it?" "Let's think about it for a while and maybe an answer will come to us later." A list of questions that a teacher may ask is included below. Of course, this list is not exhaustive, and teachers may add to it as they become more fluent in the use of this procedure.

1. Reflect back what the student has said and add, "Is that what you mean?"

2. Reflect back what the student has said with distortions and add, "Is that what you mean?"

3. "How long have you felt (acted) that way?"

4. "Are you glad you think (act) that way?"

5. "In what way is that a good idea?"

6. "What is the source of your idea?"

7. "Should everyone believe that?"

8. "Have you thought of some alternatives?"

9. "What are some things you have done that reflect this idea of yours?"

10. "Why do you think so?"

11. "Is this what you really think?"

12. "Did you do this on purpose?"

13. Ask for definitions of key words.

14. Ask for examples.

15. Ask if this position is consistent with a previous one he has taken.

It is important that teachers ask these questions of students who express ideas with which they agree as well as with those students who express ideas with which they disagree.

Coding written work. Researchers have found the coding of written work very effective in value clarifying. Whenever students seem to express an attitude, belief, goal, purpose, interest, or aspiration, teachers may mark a V+ or V- in the margin to reflect this idea back to the student. This code works much like other more familiar codes we already use in our schools, e.g., WW for wrong word, or SP for misspelled word. There is one crucial difference. When a teacher marks WW in the margin, there usually is a wrong word. When a teacher marks V+ in the margin, it is understood that she is really asking, "Do you believe this?" or "Do you want to change it?"

Acceptance without judgment. It has been found that teachers feel awkward trying to draw the clarification exchange to a close. The verbal interaction between

teacher and student is not to win an argument or to gain a debating point. The purpose of the exchange is to clarify students' ideas. It is important that teachers find a way to accept the students' ideas without communicating agreement or praise of them. In a sense, the exchange does not have an ending. Neither the teacher nor the student arrives at a conclusion. Neither is there a need for summarizing. Questions left unanswered are thought about and dwelt on by the student (and perhaps the teacher) at night before going to sleep, or during moments of quiet during the day. Some ways that have been found successful in closing an exchange are as follows:

1. Silence with a nod.

2. "Uh-huh."

3. "I see."

4. "I understand you better now."

5. "I can see how you would feel that way."

6. "I understand."

7. "I can see that it was difficult for you to decide that way."

In summary, the clarification procedure developed by Louis Rath's attempts to elicit from students statements of an attitudinal nature and to clarify these statements for the student. By developing an emotional acceptance of himself on the part of his students, and by asking students questions which will serve to clarify their own purposes, goals, attitudes, beliefs, etc., teachers can play an effective role in developing values in their classrooms.

This procedure can be time consuming or it may also take just a few seconds. For example, consider the following hypothetical exchange:

Student: I hate math.

Teacher: You have never liked math?

Student: Well, I did like it at one time.

Teacher: What changed your mind?

Student: I don't know.

Teacher: Oh.

Without trying to lecture the student about what he "ought" to like, without preaching about the dangers inherent in not liking math, the teacher is attempting to help the student understand his own preferences and values.

In passing, it may be appropriate to add that several researches (9; 11; 13; 14) have successfully attempted to test these ideas in classrooms in New York State and Wisconsin. Other studies are needed, of course, to test further the efficacy of this procedure. The experiences of a number of researches in this field suggest also that learning to use the process of clarifying is not easy. It is clearly a difficult matter to enter into a significant interaction with a student. The problem is much less that of identifying with a student, but one of identifying with the student's concerns, of listening, and of taking seriously what he has said and reacting thoughtfully to it.

It must be clear that teachers who apply the clarification procedure must have a tremendous respect for their students. As teachers agree or disagree with students' expressed ideas they must be able to consider them as tenable ones to hold. If teachers believe it is their role to "convert" students to a "right way" of thinking, then it seems they must basically disrespect the views their students hold now. The distinction I am trying to make is one between accepting and respecting. It would seem possible for me to respect the views of a colleague, let us say, without accepting those views. This is the spirit that I believe must dominate a teacher's conversations with his students. Of course, this statement must be modified to the extent that a student's views may threaten the health or safety of him-

self or society. It is my contention that such cases are rare in our classrooms. Yet there is still plenty of room for many safe differences of opinion and behavior between students and teachers.

Most of us have become accustomed to the association of teaching with changes in student behavior. Too frequently, quite without being aware of it, we look for "instant" changes. We hope for miracles on the "values front." We do not pay enough attention to the fact that it took many years for our students to learn their present almost valueless behavior, and that it may take a long sustained effort to help students to develop serious purposes and aspirations through the clarifying processes. For a free society, opportunities to clarify and to choose must be created again and again.

Norman Cousins (3) has written about his concern for the predatory quality of life in human form. He suggests that what makes our society so much like a jungle is the misfits who exert power over honest men.

There are those . . . who insist on projecting their warped ideas to the people around them. They are the agents of chaos. . . . Maybe this is what makes a jungle a jungle.

Cousins continues to say that the way out of the jungle is not just emptying it of these misfits. "There must be some notion about what is to take the place of the jungle. That is why ideals and goals are the most practical things in the world. They conquer the jungle, make men mobile, and convert humans from fawning and frightened animals into thinkers and builders." As teachers learn to develop the ideals, goals and values of students by applying the clarification proce-

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of the culture with all the people and so long as there is effort to develop the rich potentials in all the people, there is hope. This is the basic assumption of democratic society. This is why the schools are the most important institutions in a democratic society. It is their task to bring forth and refine the ore which is the most precious raw material, the children. They are the power plants in which is generated the moral power of the people.

A Strategy—Raths

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dures outlined in this paper, they may perhaps become truly "influential Americans."

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Destiny—Wiles

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cerns of the entire earth—health, education and nuclear warfare, to mention a few. The question, if the world continues, is not whether we will have world government. This is a certainty. The question is whether it will be a totalitarian one or a government in which people have opportunity to participate through their representatives. We need to put a primary emphasis on participation and constantly seek a form of international government in which participation in making decisions that will affect them is a right of all individuals. To hope to achieve a world government that will incorporate this value means that we must demonstrate that it works by being sure that it functions in our schools and in every town, county, state and national government operation.

An open future: It is impossible to hold onto the past. The explosion of knowledge has been unbelievable. From 1900 to 1950 we doubled the knowledge that

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