

Values: What Impact on Educating for Judgment Making

James K. Uphoff

"The goal of scientific problem solving is not valued as highly as we may have thought it to be." We need to make much progress in achieving a better relationship "between our actual behavior and our professed goals."

Do the terms "critical thinking, inquiry method, problem solving, scientific method, and reflective thinking," ring a familiar bell? If not, the reader must have been totally isolated from educational study, reading, and practice for many decades.

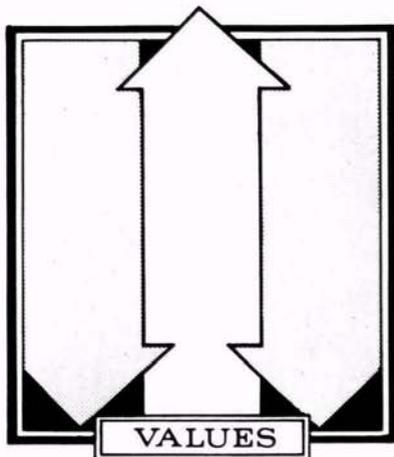
The professional pedagogical community has for generations utilized such phrases to describe a major public goal of education—preparing future citizens who will approach an issue with an open mind, and who will arrive at a position based upon use of logic, reasoning, facts, and careful analysis of all points of view.

One need only refer to such well-known sets of goal statements as the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education in order to document this point. But recent public events quickly raise serious questions regarding the effectiveness of the actions taken to implement such a goal.

The rash of book-burning incidents in all parts of our nation in the past several years has thrust into view vivid examples of the failure of our educational system to develop logical behavior. Unfortunately, our failures nearly always attract more attention than do our successes.

All of us must ask why such a lack of success exists when for seven decades we have expressed a desire for and worked toward rational judgment making. The prime question is, "Do we really believe in the goal we have adopted?"

In order to answer such a serious and obvi-



ous question, we must first examine the impact of values—both individual and group—on the question. For the purposes of this discussion, values will be defined as beliefs, feelings, and desires held by individuals and groups in varying degrees of intensity depending on time, context, and a variety of factors.

Values are developed by each of us as we draw upon our total life experience—religion, socioeconomic status, occupation, age, culture, heritage, and so on. Rokeach contends that they serve either as "a desired end state of human existence (terminal values) or a desired mode of behavior (instrumental values). The second group are instrumental to the attainment of the first."¹

There are those who see a clear distinction between "Religious Values (RV) and "Non-Religious Values" (NRV). Too often this perceived distinction leads to a Bad RV vs. Good NRV judgment on them by members of the education profession, since the RV are seen as stressing faith over logic. Thus, it is crucial that this definitional problem be clarified.

The term "religion" has, itself, two very important elements. Leaders of the Public Education

¹ Milton Rokeach. "Conceptualizing the Role of Values in Education." In: James A. Phillips, Jr., editor. *Developing Value Constructs in Schooling: Inquiry into Process and Product*. West Chester, Ohio: Ohio Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1972. p. 7.

Religion Studies Center have identified a narrow and a broad definition, both of which must be used.

The narrow definition comes to mind immediately when the word "religion" is used: an institutionalized set of beliefs, dogmas, ethical prescriptions, and cultic practices which center around devotion to and service of a particular deity or set of deities. Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Bha'i, for example, are religions of this type.

The broad definition envisions religion as any faith or set of values to which an individual or group gives ultimate loyalty. Theravada Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, secularism, humanism, scientism, nationalism, money, and power illustrate this concept of religion.²

The broad definition, which applies to all of us, must be used in this analysis. To the extent that we educators have placed our *faith* in the critical thinking process as a means of improving our world, we may have adopted it as a religious value based on faith just as much as a creationist believes in the six-day account of creation on faith.

The distinction between RV and NRV, thus, is *not* real in many instances and only serves to distract us. Let us return our attention, instead, to the more fundamental issue raised above. Why our lack of success?

The Goal Expounded Is Not Really Desired

From data collected and reported by Rokeach, we could draw a simple conclusion. The goal so widely and publicly expounded is not really desired by most people. It is an RV for only a small group in our society.

Rokeach developed two lists of 18 values, one list terminal and the other instrumental. He and his associates asked many thousands of Americans of all ages, locations, and groups to rank order each set from most important (1) to least important (18).

Among his list of 18 instrumental values are the following related to this topic: Intellectual, Logical, Capable, Imaginative, Courageous (standing up for your beliefs), and Ambitious. Several of these call for a more detailed look.

"*Intellectual*" would be an important behavior to be exhibited and valued by anyone advocating and/or developing the scientific method of prob-

lem solving. College professors ranked it *second* in importance; the American people ranked it *fifteenth*; and school superintendents placed it only *twelfth* out of 18.

"*Logical*" would be a crucial behavior to exhibit and value if rational thinking is as important as we have said it is. The rankings for college professors, American people, and superintendents were *seventh*, *seventeenth*, and *tenth* respectively.

Being "*imaginative*" in seeking judgments and new solutions fits well within our goal. Our three groups placed it *sixth*, *eighteenth*, and *fourteenth*. A disturbing picture begins to emerge. Three of the most crucial instrumental values needed for a person to operate in a reasoned manner when making decisions are ranked in the bottom four by our American people. Just as disturbing is this summary by Rokeach:

Picture a person who is highly self-controlled, reasonably low on Courageous, low on Intellectual and Logical; then when we hear that I have been describing the values of school superintendents and principals, it is appropriate to wonder whether educational values can really be taught in a context in which the gatekeepers of the educational institutions have such values.³

Perhaps it is no wonder that we have had difficulty in achieving our goal. We may genuinely question whether or not it really exists as a common goal of the American people and school leaders. One key factor is the problem of agreement in the abstract becoming disagreement on concrete specifics.

When the Abstract Becomes Concrete

The value placed by Americans on human dignity and life is most significant. Both are included in a very high position on almost every compiled and reported list of such values. In the abstract, many values are given strong support by individuals from widely different political, religious, and economic backgrounds.

But let the abstractness of the value be replaced by the concreteness of a specific debate

² Bracher, Panoch, Piediscalzi, and Uphoff. *Public Education Religion Studies: Questions and Answers*. Dayton, Ohio: PERSC, Wright State University, 1974. p. 5.

³ Rokeach, *ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

such as that concerning abortions (For whom? Under what circumstances? Using whose dollars? Within what time constraints?), and the general agreement becomes emotion-laden with divisiveness.

Groups such as Catholics and fundamental Protestants, who on Monday may be testifying against each other on church/state issues, will be found marching shoulder to shoulder in an anti-abortion demonstration on Tuesday. It's hard to tell the players without an issue-by-issue program.

The making of judgments by utilizing the scientific process of problem solving is difficult to find within such debates. The abortion stalemate between the two houses of the U.S. Congress in Fall, 1977 serves to illustrate the point.

Does this mean that we should forget the entire project and resign ourselves (consign our nation) to unthinking, unquestioning, and emotional judgment making? My own *faith* in the value of and need for rationality makes me become a *missionary* and undertake the task with great zeal.

The Small Steps to Success

What suggestions does this zealot have for achieving success? First, we must recognize that success may come in small steps taken over a long period of time. Having thus established reasonable standards by which we can evaluate our efforts and retain a small degree of professional self-confidence, we can move into action.

1. I strongly advocate that every school district develop, adopt, and implement a definitive guide on academic freedom and teaching controversial issues. The April 1975 Academic Freedom issue of *Social Education* provides useful help with some specific questions that should be examined.⁴

Such a guide will give administrative and board support for the professional staff and help defuse some of the emotion that could otherwise limit the free and rational exploration of issues and ideas. It would provide for an *orderly* means by which the public could express concern/disagreement.

2. Every teacher should be helped to assess his/her own teaching behaviors and skills in order to identify those that inhibit effective decision

Leaders in
reducing test bias:



CTB, McGraw-Hill
Del Monte Research Park
Monterey, CA 93940

making. Following this identification, the teacher must be provided the help needed to change, to improve, and/or to acquire and adopt more appropriate teaching behaviors. What are some of these behaviors?

a. *Questioning Skills*: What types of questions are asked? To which students? Are only "wrong" answers challenged by probing questions? How much time is spent seeking specific answers? Seeking reasons? Seeking relationships? Seeking a variety of views?

b. *Reinforcement / Encouragement*: Which student answers/responses receive verbal and/or nonverbal encouragement? Do students with "incorrect" responses receive the same, more, or less encouragement to test out their answers/ideas via clarification as do those with "accurate" responses? What is the amount and type of eye contact between teacher and students, and does it

⁴Uphoff and Helms. "A Classroom Teacher's Guide to Academic Freedom." *Social Education*, April 1975. pp. 222-25.



ASCD 1977 Yearbook

Feeling, Valuing, and the Art of Growing: Insights into the Affective

This book provides some insights into the affective (the feeling and valuing) dimensions of education. The need for such an exploration, as interpreted by the writers, grows out of several alarming recent trends, such as: undue censorship of educational materials; reluctance of educators to examine any area that might be controversial; and emphasis upon narrowly defined programs that develop a limited range of skills. Such developments tend toward a "safe but bland" curriculum that fails to capture the imagination and feeling of children and young people and does not enlist the allegiance and enthusiasm of teachers and others responsible for instruction.

"Safeness" and "blandness" are the antithesis of the intentions of the writers of this volume. They turn to the affective domain as a strong ally in freeing and extending the curriculum in order to strengthen education.

Writers who contributed to the volume are: Louise M. Berman and Jessie A. Roderick, co-chairpersons and co-editors; Kaoru Yamamoto, Rodman B. Webb, Philip H. Phenix, Madeleine L'Engle, Kenneth R. Beittel, Charles M. Fair, Cecil H. Patterson, Elizabeth Léonie Simpson, William D. Hedges, Marian L. Martinello, and Cathy Pope Smith.

Order from:
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
1701 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

Orders totaling \$10.00 or less must be prepaid by cash, check, or money order. Postage and handling extra on all billed orders. Orders from institutions and businesses must be on official purchase order form. *Discounts on orders of the same title to a single address: 10-49 copies, 10%; 50 or more copies, 15%.*

Stock number: 610-77104

Price: \$9.75

312 pages

change or differ when student ideas differ from those held by the teacher?

c. *Acceptance of Feelings:* When a student shows emotion, is it recognized by the teacher? If so, is it acknowledged? encouraged? reprimanded? accepted? analyzed? *Feelings do exist*, but too often they are denied. The teacher's soft words are "shouted down" by the body language that says, "That's not nice!"

3. The schools must constantly seek to relate the everyday kinds of actions, assignments, and activities to the larger goals of the district. Too often, neither the classroom practitioner nor the educational leader is aware of these relationships. Thus, it is impossible for either to communicate to the students, to fellow professionals, to the board, or to the community how and why the open classroom discussion of a significant local issue is related to the broad goals of the school.

While such steps as the three mentioned earlier are vital, they are only examples of the types of actions that must be taken. The goal, according to my values, remains both valid and necessary even though there are data that suggest that the goal of scientific problem solving is not valued as highly as we may have thought it to be. Thus, the task ahead seems to be one of achieving a better understanding of ourselves, of the possible steps available to us, and of the relationship between our actual behavior and our professed goals.

The implemented goal of judgment making might result in classroom-centered *student analysis/solution* of the hallway behavior problem rather than the more typical unilateral-administrative action. All things are possible! [E]



*James K. Uphoff is
Dean of Branch Cam-
puses for Wright State
University, Dayton,
Ohio.*

Copyright © 1978 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.