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PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

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Psycho-social Values and Education

Introduction

In this chapter, the meaning of value is examined, the relationship between values, norms and mores are discussed. Different values that may exist in an individual are identified with emphasis on psycho-social values. The implication for education of psychological values an individual possesses and the social values within the society are discussed.

Values

Values are beliefs about what is desirable for the individual or in the society. Values constitute a major dimension of philosophy called axiology. Value can be used as a word to indicate worth. For instance, we can ask the question about what value an individual places on something in terms of worth in naira and kobo. Sometimes, it can indicate respect. You may value an individual highly. It can refer to a life-style, a way of living. We can say that the sense of value of an individual is very high. Value may mean what one desires or what we should desire. Values are human preferences, they are descriptive and normative. These values change with social conditions. Values are goals, standards, what people ought to be. The later conceptions of values will be our focus in this chapter.

While some people feel that value changes depending on the prevailing situation, others argue that some values are resistant to change.

Types of values

There is the notion that people can be classified into discrete value types. The conception is that every individual has some sort of unifying philosophy of life, a dominant value that shapes and structures his entire personality: People can be classified into the following "ideal" value types.

- (a) *The theoretical:* These people show dominant interest in the discovery of truth. They observe and reason. Their chief aim in life is to order and systematize knowledge. For example, those who take

interest in inventions and research may fall in this category.

- (b) *The economic:* People concerned with the production of wealth. Their dominant interest is in what is useful, they are more practical than theoretical. Examples are people who are business conscious and oriented.
- (c) *The aesthetic:* People who believe that beauty is the greatest truth and they judge each experience on its aesthetic merits. Their dominant interest is in form and harmony. Examples are artists and sculptors.
- (d) *The political:* People with dominant interest in power whether in politics or in other activities. Their goal is to gain influence and control over people and events. Examples are people who seek political offices where they can be in control of things.
- (e) *The religious:* People more concerned with mystical experiences and with what is divine in every phenomenon. They show interest in understanding the unity of the universe. Examples are people in various religious sects in the country.
- (f) *The social:* People with dominant interest in love of people, they are concerned with other people's affairs and with their welfare, they possess a warm and humane outlook. Examples may be people who prefer to render services in areas, settings or environments poorer than their own with the ultimate goal of promoting the welfare of the people being helped. These six "ideal" value types were suggested by Spranger (1928). Most people however have a mixture of these values.

Psycho-social values

Psycho-social values can be conceived from psychological and social principles, the ideals of the individual, that affects the behaviour of the individual in the society. It may also be conceived as the psychological values of the individual that are in harmony or in conflict with the social values of the society. The degree of harmony or disharmony may determine the adjustment or mal-adjustment of the individual in the society. Adequate psychological and social values must be transmitted to ensure the survival of the individual and the survival of the society. Psychological values are personal to the individual and may vary from one person to another. It is possible for one individual to value hard work or good reputation while another values prestige. Some people, socially, may value the wise use of time while others may value having fun, having dates, buying clothes or going to parties. Our values seem to determine first, in what areas our aspirations will be developed and the direction they would take. An individual who has a high prestige

value for sports will aspire to succeed in athletics rather than in another area, for example scholarship where his prestige is lower.

Other psycho-social values may include values we place on experience, age, adulthood, respect for age or authority, mode of behaviour and so on. Are these values changing or have they been challenged by the individual in the society? Problems are likely to arise if the individual is in conflict over any of these issues. Sometimes, we do experience conflict of values between the individual and the society, between cultures and between sub-cultures in a given society. The values of the poor may be in conflict with those who are rich. A community may find it necessary to encourage certain values. Nigeria is promoting certain national values. There is the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption and the positive realization of lofty ideals. People are to value discipline, orderliness, positive attitude to work, patriotism, nationalism and fairness to others.

Values, norms, mores and folkways

Values express the most general statement of what is desirable in the society. Norms on the other hand are more specific than general values, for they provide rules of behaviour or guidelines for the realization of values. If the value of democracy is to operate, rules must be formulated that will spell-out the principles of elections. One needs to specify agents that will take charge of achieving the identified value, and the roles of the agents will need to be identified, towards the realization of the value. One also needs to evaluate the facilities for the realization of values.

Norms are divided into folkways and mores. Norms are termed folkways when conformity to them is not considered vital to the welfare of the group and when the means of forcing conformity is not defined. Wearing a complete national dress or suit to a formal occasion may be considered a folkway. Mores are norms which specify behaviour of vital importance to the society and which embody its basic moral values. It is expected that a man should provide for his wife and children.

Dynamic and Absolute Values

There is the assumption by some scholars that values change. This is to say that the presumed worth of any concept or experience is subject to change, particularly in its position in a person's hierarchy of values. Changes in social conditions, technological developments, environmental conditions, some argue, affect the value of worth of any concept or experience. Other scholars hold a contrary view, all values, according to them are completely independent of any opinion. If an individual

desires something, desiring it is a fact, which they argue, cannot be changed by any amount of opinion about the matter. In that sense, it is objective and absolute. Any realistic approach to value, in their view must incorporate the following principles:

- (i) the existence of a world independent of any consciousness. This is the principle of independence;
- (ii) that the world can be known in its essential nature.

The acceptance of these two principles supports the realistic view (Scientific Realism) that there is some objective reference for value norms and that values are not subjective and purely relative. Under this view, ethics which is the philosophy of value applied to conduct is built on objective foundations. What is right for man and what man needs in order to realize his nature is not a matter of vague speculation or opinion. Values to some are immutable and unchanging.

Psycho-social values and education

There is the assumption that education is intimately involved in the value enterprise. The teacher is a moral agent and a transmitter of truth, which has a moral dimension. The role of the school is to assist in the apprehension and incorporation of value in his life.

The individual value system can affect how the individual will benefit from education in general. One's value can affect the whole process of education. Each of us has a hierarchy of values, an ordering from high to low of what we believe to be important in life and more importantly in our life. This hierarchy orders our behaviour. If 'being honest' is higher in our hierarchy than 'having money', then we will not act dishonestly to obtain money. Some value may shift in terms of changing personal and changing situations.

Therefore, the psycho-social value of an individual or any other value can influence what the individual value in education. The individual psychological value can affect the perception and importance attached to education itself. Education can also assist in fostering the individual's psychological values. Through education, appropriate social involves can be encouraged while inappropriate ones are discouraged in the society. Rules of behaviour may be formulated and guidelines for achieving them could be outlined. The individual, in the process of education could develop a better self-understanding through value clarification. Knowledge of value clarification can make an individual identify what he really wants and cares about and this affects every decision that is made by the individual. The process of value clarification can become an integral part of the student's educational development.

Summary

Values can be used to indicate worth, it may be used to indicate the lifestyle of an individual and it may mean what an individual desires, what he cares for and what he likes. Values can be categorized into ideal value types which are the theoretical, the economic, the aesthetic, the political, the religious and the social.

Some values exist within the individual and may be termed psychological, some are dictated by the society such as social values. Values are general statements of what is desirable while norms provide rules of behaviour. Norms are divided into folkways and mores. What an individual values vary from one person to another and values affect every decision that we make.

Follow-up activities

1. What is social behaviour?
2. What are psycho-social values?
3. Discuss the implications of psycho-social values for education.

Out-of-class activity

Make a list of about five social values in your community.

References for further reading

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