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Role of Learning Environment and Curricular Programmes on Personal Values of Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to assess the personal values of the higher secondary students and to identify the importance of classroom learning environment and the different curricular programmes in this regard. The sample comprised of the class XII students of the West Bengal Board of Higher Secondary Education. Cluster sampling technique was used to select 12 schools and the size of sample was 763. An Information schedule was used to identify the curricular programmes carried out in schools, and standardized questionnaires were used to assess classroom learning environment and personal values. In this Correlational research, Descriptive Statistics, Correlation, Regression Analysis and One-way ANOVA were computed in SPSS - 17. The findings revealed that the majority of the students had high preference for Democratic, Economic, Hedonistic and Family prestige Values. The correlation and regression analysis indicated that significant correlation of learning environment exists only with two personal values - Knowledge and Hedonistic. The relative contribution of the learning environment in predicting these criterion variables is significant, though it is very low. ANOVA results suggest that the different curricular programmes for teaching personal values have significant impact only on religious and social values. So the study implies that more concerted efforts in conducting the curricular programmes for value education are necessary. For this purpose the steps suggested by Burrett and Rusnak (1993) [3] have been discussed.

Keywords: Personal Values, Learning environment, curricular programmes.

1. Introduction

Education is a process of human enlightenment and empowerment for achievement of a better and higher quality of life. Effective system of education results in the enlargement of learners' competencies and transformation of their interests, attitudes and values. In view of the gradual degeneration of personal values in our society, a question arises whether the present system of education is able to fulfill the goal of developing proper attitudes and values. In order to achieve the all-round development, schools should focus on value education. Also stated, "Education is not limited to imparting information or training skills. It has to give the educated a proper sense of values" (Velmurugan and Balakrishnan, 2014) [13].

Value education is what schools do to help the young become ethically mature adults, capable of moral thought and action. Value education is also known as moral education and the term character education is also preferred by some. Though there are subtle differences between these terms, the educational implication is more or less same. Value education is as old as education itself. In the earlier days value education was provided through discipline, the teacher's example and the daily school curriculum. The religious books were school's sourcebook for both moral and value instruction. But with the advancement of science in the latter half of the 19th and 20th century, the consensus supporting value education began to crumble down. The rapidly intensifying pluralism and the increasing secularization of the public arena have become important barriers in achieving the moral consensus indispensable for value education in the schools. But in the context of present society, the educators are realizing the importance of value education.

To introduce value education, it is necessary to understand the concept of value from psychological perspective. A value is a belief, a mission, or a philosophy that is meaningful. Whether we are consciously aware of them or not, every individual has a core set of personal

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values. Values can range from the common place, such as the belief in hard work and punctuality, to the more psychological, such as self - reliance, concern for others and harmony of purpose. Personal values are implicitly related to choice; they guide decisions by allowing for an individual's choices to be compared to each choice's associated values. Personal values developed early in life may be resistant to change. They may be derived from those of particular groups or systems, such as culture, religion, and political party. However, personal values are not universal; one's genes, family, nation and historical environment help determine one's personal values. This is not to say that the value concepts themselves are not universal, merely that each individual possess a unique conception of them i.e. a personal knowledge of the appropriate values for their own genes, feelings and experience. Personal values are the beliefs, values, and philosophies that we hold about life, its purpose, and our own purpose. As we grow up, we take on board the personal values of others around us until we reach the teen years and start to accept or reject such values as being a part of who we are, or not a part of our own selves. It is easy, however, to pass by the active recognition and sorting of personal values, and to just accept those values that were ingrained in us by parents, teachers, society, etc. We can do this because the fit is comfortable and easy. Knowing the personal values of growing students will help the schools in playing a pivotal role to provide adequate guidance so that proper values are inculcated by students.

A number of studies have investigated the personal values of school students and some variables associated with the values. Barrett (2010) ^[1] stated that values stand at the core of human decision-making. Tarabashkina *et al.* (2011) ^[12] studied the impact of values and learning approaches on student achievement. Results showed that specific combinations of values were related to each learning approach. Mhaske (2010) ^[7] investigated the Higher Secondary School Personal Value Pattern and found that value pattern of students changed due to gender and also value pattern of rural and urban students was significantly different. Velmurugan *et al.* (2014) ^[13] investigated the value preferences of the higher secondary students and reported that the students gave highest preference for political value and least for theoretical value. Bhutia (2013) ^[2] found that the secondary schools students had high religious, democratic, economic, power and family prestige value whereas the students have low social, knowledge, hedonistic and health value. The choices and personal values were implicitly affected by the culture, gender as well as locality. He further stated that by knowing their personal values, the adults and teachers can identify in which direction they are moving and the type of guidance required for them. Proper counselling may be provided when students do not carry proper values and help them to acquire such values which help them to adjust in schools, and prepare for future.

From the above studies it is evident that there is paucity of researches in examining value as an integral part of the school learning. Thus the present study attempted to examine the role of learning environment and curricular programmes carried out for moral learning on the different values of higher secondary students.

Objectives

- To find out whether curricular programmes necessary for learning the personal values are conducted for the higher secondary students in the schools under West Bengal Board.
- To determine the learning environment experienced by the students in the higher secondary classrooms.

- To assess the personal values of higher secondary students.
- To find out if there is any relationship between their learning environment and the personal values.
- To find out if there is any relationship between the curricular programmes and the personal values of the students.

2. Materials and Method

Hypothesis

¹H₀: There is no significant relationship between the learning environment and the personal values.

²H₀: There is no significant relationship between the curricular programmes and the personal values of the students.

Sample

The target population of this study was all the students who studied in the class XI and XII under the West Bengal Board of Higher Secondary Education. The sample was drawn randomly by cluster sampling technique. 11 schools (4 Boys, 5 Girls and 2 Co-Education) of three districts- Kolkata, North 24 Parganas and Hoogly were selected. The size of sample was 763, among them 370 were boys and 393 were girls.

Tools

The information regarding school was gathered from an Information Schedule developed by the investigator. This consisted of 35 statements with Yes-No responses designed to collect information about curricular programmes carried out in school for teaching different values. Learning Environment Scale developed by Thelma C. Rivera, Mildred F. Ganaden (2001) ^[4] was used to assess classroom experiences. The original scale consisted of 76 items (Reliability is 0.997). 30 items were selected and translated into Bengali and the reliability obtained from the pilot study was found to be .62. The personal values were assessed by Personal Value Questionnaire developed and validated by G.P Sherry *et al.* (1998) ^[10] which comprised of 40 items. All the items were translated into Bengali and checked by two experts.

Procedure

A preliminary study was conducted with 100 higher secondary students of two schools. Findings of the pilot study revealed that the students were able to respond to the questionnaires developed for the study. The reliabilities of the questionnaires were computed on this data. The final data were collected from the students of the selected schools with the permission of the authority concerned. All the questionnaires were administered in groups in the classrooms with proper instructions. The information about the curricular programmes were collected from the class teachers and head of the institutions. These responses were coded and the responses of the standardized tests were scored. The codes and scores were subjected to statistical analysis in SPSS - 17. In this correlational research study, Descriptive Statistics, One - Way ANOVA and Regression Analysis were computed.

3. Results and Discussion

Table I shows that among the different values the majority of the students have high preference for Democratic, Economic, Hedonistic and Family prestige values. They show average preference for Aesthetic, Knowledge and Social values. Majority shows low or very low preference for Religious and Health Value. These preferences are to some extent similar with the findings of Bhutia (2013) ^[2] but different from the study by Velmurugan (2014) ^[13]

Table I: Percentage distribution of the sample according to the different levels of personal values.

Values	Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
A. Religious	43.5	33.0	18.5	4.8	0.1
B. Social	12.1	38.0	28.3	19.3	1.7
C. Democratic	1.0	11.5	41.4	32.9	13.0
D. Aesthetic	4.7	23.7	37.4	26.9	7.3
E. Economic	0.4	8.5	29.8	32.1	28.8
F. Knowledge	6.7	20.1	40.8	26.6	5.9
G. Hedonistic	0.7	13.8	45.0	29.2	11.4
H. Power	1.2	18.3	38.7	29.5	12.3
I. F. Prestige	0.1	11.1	42.9	42.2	3.7
J. Health	19.7	47.7	30.5	2.1	-

Table 2: Results of Regression Analysis including learning environment as predictor and the different Personal Values as the dependent variables.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variables	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The Estimate	F	Sig.
Learning Environment	Religious	.032	.001	.000	3.803	.783	.377
	Social	.060	.004	.002	3.493	2.768	.097
	Democratic	.023	.001	.000	3.165	.388	.533
	Aesthetic	.033	.001	.000	3.131	.852	.356
	Economic	.009	.000	-.001	3.869	.068	.795
	Knowledge	.105*	.011	.010	3.477	8.564	.004
	Hedonistic	.155*	.024	.023	3.189	18.694	.000
	Power	.017	.000	-.001	3.148	.208	.648
	F. Prestige	.004	.000	-.001	3.107	.011	.916
Health	.008	.000	-.001	2.489	.045	.833	

* P < 0.01

Table 3: Co-efficient of Regression Analysis.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variables	Un-Standardized Co-efficient (s)		Standardized Co-efficient	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Learning Environment	Religious	-.009	.010	-.032	-.885	.377
	Social	.015	.009	.060	1.664	.097
	Democratic	.005	.008	.023	.623	.533
	Aesthetic	.008	.008	.033	.923	.356
	Economic	.003	.010	.009	.260	.795
	Knowledge	.026	.009	.105	2.926	.004*
	Hedonistic	-.036	.008	-.155	-4.324	.000*
	Power	.004	.008	.017	.457	.648
	F. Prestige	.001	.008	.004	.105	.916
Health	.001	.006	.008	.211	.833	

Table 4: Summarized results of ANOVA (F-ratio) - Effect of curricular programmes on personal values.

Values	Delivering Value Learning	Communication Skills	Negotiation Skills	Problem Solving Skills	Refusal Skills	Building Self Esteem	Practicing Skills
Religious	16.153*	.006	4.721	.526	12.986*	.006	16.153*
Social	44.239*	6.174	11.608*	7.999*	28.124*	6.174	44.239*
Democratic	3.291	.218	.390	.334	3.451	.218	3.291
Aesthetic	2.380	.000	1.694	2.453	1.931	.000	2.380
Economic	.012	.083	2.350	4.308	3.463	.083	.012
Knowledge	.728	1.373	.125	.024	.931	1.373	.728
Hedonistic	7.380*	2.091	.303	.237	1.490	2.091	7.380*
Power	.537	.806	.067	.309	.071	.806	.537
Family Prestige	6.021	.586	.629	3.609	.393	.586	6.021
Health	6.989*	2.379	.115	.375	.001	2.379	6.989*

*p < .01.

Table II shows that significant correlation of learning environment exists only with two personal values - Knowledge and Hedonistic. The contribution of this independent variable in causing variability of knowledge is 1.1 % and of hedonistic value is 2.4% only. The standardized beta weights in table III indicate that the relative contribution of the independent

variable in predicting these criterion variables is significant, though it is very low. Further the t is positive for knowledge value but negative for hedonistic value. This means that learning environment positively determines ones knowledge value, but positive learning experiences tend to lower the hedonistic value. The first hypothesis is accepted partially.

This finding is not fully consistent with previous researches. Burrett and Rusnak (1993) ^[3] believe that positive classroom environment supports character education. Moreover, the relationship between personal values and learning approaches has been confirmed by a number of studies (Grant & Dweck, 2001 ^[4]; Lietz & Matthews, 2010 ^[6]; Mathews *et al.*, 2007 ^[9]; Wilding & Andrews, 2006) ^[14].

When the different activities for value learning are carried out through curricular and co-curricular programmes, it has significant impact only on religious and social values. Hedonistic and health values are also influenced to some extent. Some important activities such as teaching communication skills seem to have no significant impact. The second hypothesis can be accepted partially. These results are inconsistent with previous findings of Gould (2001) ^[5] who suggested some of these strategies for building classroom communities, support affective learning (attitudes, values, predispositions). To some extent, this finding reflects the same observation as that of Tan, *et al.* (2013) ^[11] that learning experiences in most schools are still centered on preparing students for high stakes examinations only. Further, Viadero (2007) ^[16] has looked at 41 school programs and found that only nine of them have positive rating. The rest of the programs have been found to be either of “mixed” success or “no discernible effects”.

4. Conclusion

The overall results suggest that curricular programmes and learning environment are not quite effective in determining most of the personal values. So the school authorities should take initiatives with the help of school teachers and counselors in assisting students in increasing their self-esteem, improving responsibility, learning to solve problems effectively, developing relationship skills, learning healthy choices and learning to refuse undesirable behaviours. The findings of the study imply that more concerted efforts in conducting the curricular programmes for value education are necessary. For this purpose the following steps suggested by Burrett and Rusnak (1993) ^[3] can be practiced:

- Reviewing instructional materials for themes relating to personal development and referencing such materials to specific learning objectives.
- Reviewing national, state, and local documents for statements of goals relating to personal and social/cultural development.
- Constructing a chart of ideas or concepts in various subjects that are focused on character themes.
- Selecting methods and activities that involve students in the process of reflection about moral/ethical issues.
- Teaching lessons that integrate character education with the content being taught.
- Evaluating students learning for evidence of understanding of and personal growth in matters of character.

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