

Value Education: what can be done

By [Jyoti Kumta](#) | Oct 3, 2012

In India, most value education programmes have been initiated by religious organizations. However, they are generally secular in nature and universal values like honesty, trust, responsibility, compassion etc., are given prime importance. Sathya Sai Organization, Ramakrishna Mission, Ananda Sangha, Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris, The Chinmayananda Mission and many others are actively involved in promoting value education in their schools or in the form of informal or formal classes. Gandhiji said that 'formation of character should have priority over the alphabet' and Swami Vivekananda said that teaching of religion must be part and parcel of education which, according to him was essential to teach values. Over the years, however, value education has taken the back seat.

In recent times, the CBSE and NCERT have been making efforts to re-introduce Value Education (VE) into the curriculum. NCERT had set up a National Resource Centre for Value Education(NRCVE) in 2000. In 2002, it launched a "National Programme for Strengthening Value Education." The focus was on generating awareness, material development, teachers' training, promotion of research and innovations in the education of human values. Guidelines for value education in the school system were to be developed. The CBSE had introduced Life Skills in classes VI and VII in 2003 and by 2005 had extended it up to class X. Now, they not only have a set of lesson plans for teachers of the subject but have also introduced the concept of Value Based Integrated Learning (VBIL) wherein all lessons are linked to some "value". However, 12 years since the NRCVE had been set up and 7 years since the CBSE sent out its directive, that schools should devote at least 2 periods a week to Life Skills, the situation on the ground is very different.

Some schools call it "Value Education", others call it "Life Skills" and some even call it "Personality Development". Some schools have prescribed books for the subject, but unlike subjects like Music, Dance, or Physical Education there are no specially trained teachers for the subject. No school, that I have come across, schedules more than one class a week for VE. All classes are taken by teachers who have not been trained to teach the subject and often, seem to have no interest in it. Most are unaware of the efforts made by CBSE to help them with teaching this subject. Many teachers use the period allotted for the subject to teach other subjects. How then can we expect "Value Education" class to make a difference?

In an attempt to ease assessment of Life Skills and Attitudes and Values, CBSE has laid down guidelines for the same in their Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation. The flip side however is that it has created resentment amongst some teachers and parents and created a lot of friction in schools. The class teachers, who are often subject teachers, do not have time to observe children's reactions, behaviour, responses etc, since their focus tends to be on the "academics". Hence, filling up the elaborate assessment sheet becomes a huge task. Parents seem to question the teachers' judgment and the basis of their subjective statements regarding this subject in students' reports. If we were to have specially trained teachers for Value Education/Life Skills (VE/LS), and they were to observe the child in a structured environment, their comments would carry far more credibility. When we can have trained teachers for all other subjects, then why not for this?

Shouldn't we actually be doing what great leaders and philosophers have advised for centuries? Shouldn't we give priority to character building over academics? It might take decades for such a paradigm shift but in the meantime, teacher training in Value Education will go a long way in filling the present gap.

Through discussions with over 400 teachers from various schools that include army and private schools, it was possible to draw up a table that highlighted the significance (or rather the lack of it) that is accorded to VE/LS in most schools.

	MUSIC/PT	ENGLISH	VALUE EDUCATION/ LIFE SKILLS
No of classes per week	1-2	6+	Max 1
Standardized syllabus	No	Yes	No
Teacher training	Yes	Yes	No
Specially selected teacher	Yes	Yes	No
Teacher's interest in subject	Yes	Yes	No
Permeates through the school	No	Yes	No

Though the NCERT and CBSE have been trying to do their bit in this area there is much that needs to be done. The first step can be to select teachers who have the aptitude and skills and train them to teach VE/LS.

Can values be taught?

Given the state of public life in our country today – where corruption, violence and intolerance are increasingly evident in day to day interactions – isn't it high time that educationists made a concerted effort to teach values? The very first objection from many is that values cannot be taught, they need to be imbibed. My contention is that while it is mostly imbibed, it **must** also be taught. Ideally, values must be taught by people who are willing to lead by example. Fortunately for us, Indian culture has ensured that good role models can still be found amongst our midst. We only need to zero in on them.

Let me try to explain my point of view on how values can be taught from three different perspectives – the logical, the philosophical and the cognitive.

The logical perspective – If teaching is the giving of instruction or is intended to impart knowledge or skill and if it is done through discussions, experimenting, lectures, demonstration/modeling, role playing etc., why isn't it possible to use the same methods for VE/LS? The knowledge content would relate to universal concepts like honesty, respect, compassion etc., and the methods used would be the same as is used for other subjects.

Take a look at the table below. Can the lecture method be used to teach each and every subject including Values? Can discussions be used to teach all the subjects? It is possible to use all methods to teach all subjects including Values. Only the proportion would vary. While teaching Dance or Music, more time is spent on demonstration and less on discussion when compared to Social studies. Just as an English teacher would need to be articulate to be effective, to teach values, the teacher would need to 'walk the talk' and be a good role model. This, in other words, is 'demonstration'.

Experimentation and practice are a must if we want to learn something new. Values too cannot be inculcated unless the laws of life are experimented with and put into practice. So though all methods are used, demonstration, discussion and practice would be the more important when it comes to teaching values.

	English	Math	Social Studies	PE	Music/Dance	Values
Lectures	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demonstration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Discussion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Games/activities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Practice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The philosophical perspective – Let us now take a look at what great scientists and philosophers have to say about teaching.

Sri Aurobindo had said "The first principle of teaching is that nothing can be taught."

Swami Vivekananda had said "No one was ever really taught by another. Each of us has to teach himself. The external teacher offers only the suggestion which rouses the internal teacher to work to understand things."

Socrates had said "I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think."

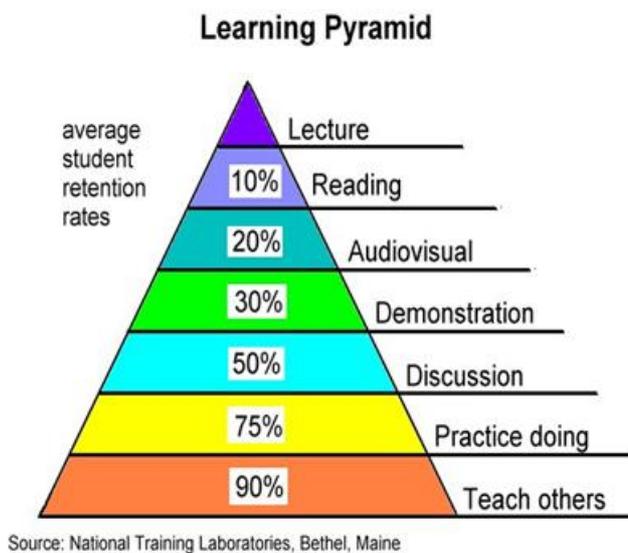
Galileo had said "You cannot teach people anything. You can only help them discover it within themselves."

Einstein had said "I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn".

So, according to all these luminaries, scientist or philosopher, Indian or Greek, nothing can be taught. It can only be learned, and we, as teachers, have to facilitate the process. Whether it is Math, Science, English, Music or Values, the methods would remain the same. The responsibility of the teacher increases manifold and the need for good role models becomes an absolute necessity.

The cognitive perspective – It has been said that nothing has been taught unless it is learned. So cognitive scientists focus on how learning takes place. The learning pyramid, below, shows very clearly that the traditional lecture method of teaching is practically ineffective and that it is demonstration, discussion and 'doing' that hold the key to effective learning.

In the case of teaching values I would consider demonstration (role models) to be more effective than discussion. However, the important point to note is that teaching others is considered the most effective way to learn. This would translate into the teachers of VE benefiting the most. So if values are taught in a structured manner by teachers who are specially selected for their interests and aptitudes, and then trained, it should have far reaching effects. Not only would students learn but teachers too would benefit and the results would have a domino effect.



The issue really should not be about whether values can be taught or not. The focus should be on finding good role models who will use modern teaching methods to teach values, and help children become capable of making better choices in life.

If we can at least agree that schools need to join hands with parents to counteract the negative influences of modern life and that children need a role model with whom they can discuss issues which confuse and confound them, on even a weekly basis, we would be making taking the first step. One period a week is already available in most schools. Why not use this time more effectively by selecting teachers with a specific set of skills, interests and aptitudes (from amongst existing staff) and training them to make best use of the resources available? Why don't we make VE classes something that both, teachers and students can look forward to?

Category: Teacher Development

Subject: Views and Reflections

Board: All boards

Grade/Standard: Early Childhood Education

Class 1-2

Class 3-5

Class 6-8

Class 9-10

Class 11-12

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