

Values and Values Education

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What is values education?

Shaping individuals who are guided by strong and meaningful values has always been a central purpose of education. In today's world, however, marked by globalization and the rapid development of artificial intelligence, values education has gained even greater importance. There is an increasing need for learning processes that go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and support the learner's holistic and personal development. Value-based education plays a vital role in fostering young people's ethical awareness, social responsibility, and critical thinking (UNESCO, 2015).

The term *values education* already suggests its basic meaning. Nevertheless, it raises several important questions: What is a value? And what do we mean by "right" values?

Values education refers to the transmission of values that have universal human significance, remain meaningful across time, and relate both to the individual and to the society in which that individual lives. It is one of the fundamental and strategic directions of education, aimed not only at imparting academic knowledge, but also at supporting the personal and civic formation of the learner. Values education is based on the idea that schools - and educational environments more broadly- should help learners identify values, understand them deeply, and translate them into behavior by applying them in real-life situations.

At the same time, values education may be understood as a pedagogical approach that helps learners engage with specific values through subject content and recognize their relevance in real contexts, including in their own lives. It can be implemented across all subjects by teachers who understand the importance of values education and are able to apply appropriate pedagogical methods and tools.

Whatever definition we adopt, values education ultimately refers to a learning process with a dual purpose: to help learners acquire subject-specific knowledge while also encouraging them to reflect on universal and personal values such as justice, respect, responsibility, care for others and the environment,

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diligence, and similar principles. Within this process, it would be misleading to view knowledge and values as competing priorities. Values education gives equal weight to both, recognizing that each is essential to shaping a person not only as a knowledgeable individual, but also as an active, empathetic, and responsible citizen. As the well-known saying suggests, ““Values without knowledge are blind, knowledge without values is irresponsible.” (Patry & Weyringer, 2002).

It is also important to note that the values learners develop are essential not only for their successful integration into society, but also for their academic achievement, holistic growth, and, ultimately, a meaningful social life.

What Do We Mean by “Values”?

Values are the principles and ideals upheld by a society or an individual that shape how people live, think, decide, and act. They serve as an inner compass, helping us recognize, distinguish, and judge what is good or bad, right or wrong, important or unimportant.

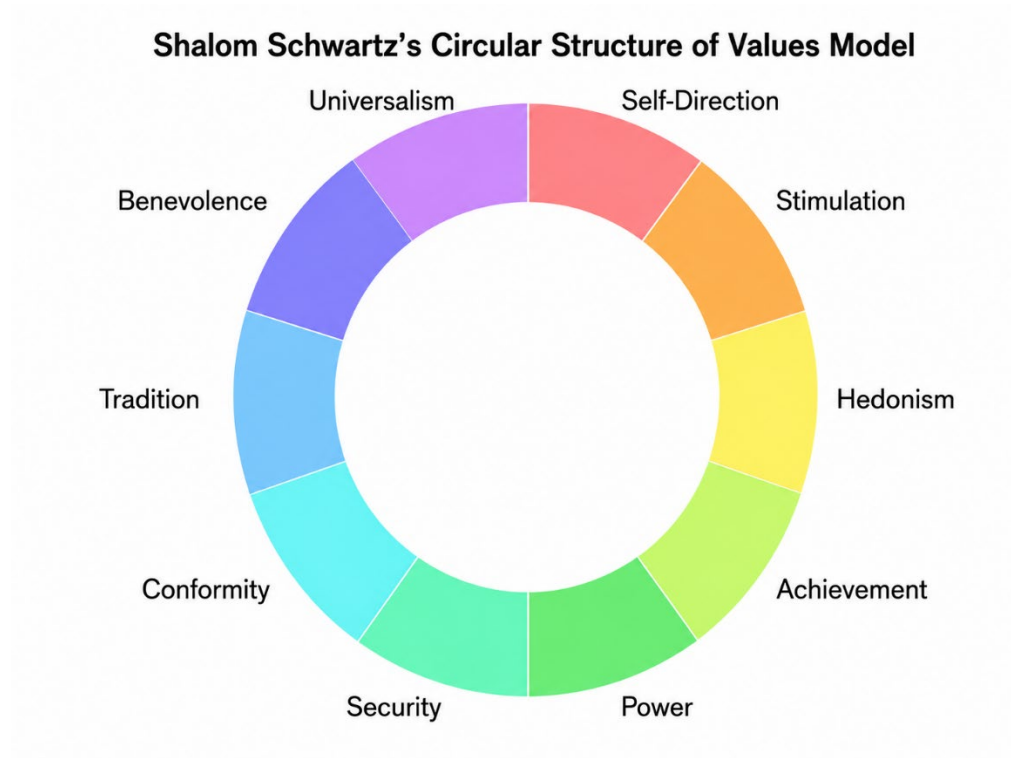
There are several scholarly classifications of values. One of the most widely known is Schwartz’s theory of basic human values, developed in the late twentieth century. According to this theory, there are ten basic values that are universal and can be found, in one form or another, across virtually all cultures (Schwartz, 1992).

1. **Benevolence / Care** — concern for others, a willingness to help, and compassion.
2. **Universalism** — a commitment to equality, tolerance, and respect for both people and nature.
3. **Tradition** — respect for cultural and religious heritage.
4. **Self-direction** — a sense of freedom and independence, appreciation of personal choice, and the desire for self-discovery and self-respect.
5. **Security** — the desire to create a safe environment and the pursuit of order and stability.
6. **Conformity** — the willingness to observe social norms and maintain order.
7. **Achievement** — the drive for success, self-realization, and social recognition.
8. **Power** — the pursuit of status, influence, and control.
9. **Stimulation** — the search for novelty, adventure, and challenge.
10. **Hedonism** — the desire to enjoy life and experience pleasure.

Schwartz’s model is typically presented as a circle to illustrate the relationships among different values. Values positioned close to one another tend to be compatible, while those placed opposite each other

may come into tension or conflict. For example, the neighboring values of self-direction and stimulation both emphasize independence and openness to novelty. By contrast, self-direction is opposed to conformity and tradition, which appear on the opposite side of the circle. Similarly, achievement and power may conflict with universalism and benevolence, both of which are associated with concern for others. The model was later revised and expanded by Schwartz and his colleagues (Schwartz et al., 2012).

Shalom Schwartz's Circular Structure of Values Model:



Categories of Values

Values can also be explored across several dimensions, particularly in relation to communication, personal development, and education. Early discussions of the practical and moral dimensions of values can be traced to Jürgen Habermas (Habermas, 1993). In this view, individuals develop knowledge and values through lived experience. More specifically, as they progress through different stages of consciousness, they begin to form:

- **Pragmatic values**, which are important for personal comfort and effectiveness;
- **Instrumental values**, which help individuals achieve social or career-related benefits;
- **Moral values**, which are guided by universal ethics in all situations.

Pragmatic values are values shaped by personal comfort and practical needs. They are often connected to achieving a narrow, specific outcome or solving an immediate problem. They stem from the individual's personal interests and, as such, may not always be deeply reflected upon or ethically grounded. For example:

- I will study this subject because, if I pass the exam successfully, I will be rewarded. (*personal benefit*)
- I will take care of the textbook because I need it. (*personal need*)
- I will help keep the schoolyard clean because I study here myself, although I might be less concerned about cleanliness elsewhere. (*personal comfort*)

According to Weinberger, this is an initial level, grounded in egocentric reasoning.

Instrumental values are aimed at achieving strategic benefits, such as gaining social status, advancing one's career, or contributing to shared group goals. For example:

- I will study this subject because, if I pass the exam successfully, I will be able to get a better job. (*career advancement*)
- I should not be late, because punctuality will help me earn the respect of my partners, which will support the development of our shared work. (*business development*)
- Learning a foreign language gives me the opportunity to continue my studies at a university abroad. (*social mobility*)

Moral values represent the highest level of values. A person guided by moral values has internalized universal ethical principles. For such a person, justice, dignity, respect, equality, and empathy become central, and they uphold these principles in all life situations, including those that may be personally inconvenient or disadvantageous, regardless of the outcome. In other words, moral values are not driven by personal gain, but by universal moral principles and by an awareness of one's own responsibility. These values are a matter of free personal choice rather than a means of achieving a goal. For example:

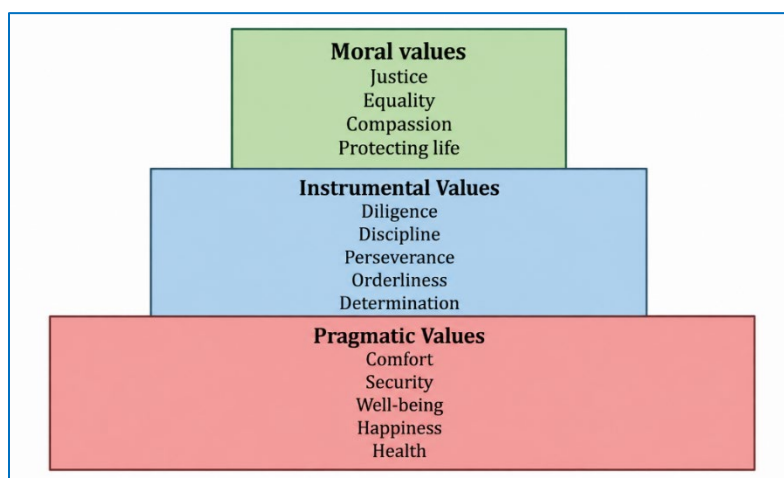
- We must care for nature because it is the source of life for all living beings, including human beings.
- We must respect one another regardless of background or personal characteristics, because all people have equal rights and inherent dignity.

Thus, pragmatic values are oriented toward personal benefit, instrumental values are shaped by social context, and moral values are those that a person embraces internally, independently of external

influence. Pragmatic and instrumental values are most often confused with one another, although they differ significantly in terms of time frame and scope. The former is oriented toward short-term personal comfort, while the latter are directed toward long-term strategic benefits, often linked to a broader social context.

The classification of pragmatic, instrumental, and moral values can also be applied to the educational context (Weinberger et al., 2008):

- **Pragmatic values** define the learning goal set by the student or the teacher in the educational process;
- **Instrumental values** define the ways of achieving that learning goal, including methods, activities, resources, and other means;
- **Moral values** define the invisible boundaries connected to individual and social values within which the learning process takes place.



(Weinberger et. Al., 2008)

This hierarchy shows that values are interconnected: pragmatic values create the foundation for development, instrumental values support the process of development, and moral values provide the framework within which individuals act.

This perspective is especially relevant for education specialists, as it makes it possible to plan values education more deliberately. The model is useful for analyzing where a learner stands in terms of values development and how they can move to the next stage. Values education should help students move from pragmatic to instrumental values and, ultimately, toward a deeper understanding of moral values. The

path from value to morality requires developmental stages and practical experience - and it is the school that should provide students with opportunities to move through that process.

The model does not rule out the coexistence of all three types of values in an adult. On the contrary, in a mature person with a well-developed value system, these values often coexist simultaneously. The model describes an evolutionary trajectory - that is, the dynamics of value development - but this does not mean that earlier stages disappear once a person moves to a higher level. An individual may value pragmatic benefits, such as personal well-being; uphold instrumental values, such as social norms and shared responsibility; and, at the same time, be guided by moral values, such as justice, equality, and others. Thus, the sequence of stages should not be understood as mutually exclusive (Weinberger et al., 2008).

Moreover, in real life, the same value may be pragmatic, instrumental, or even moral in nature, depending on the context. Honesty, for example, is a moral value when understood as an ethical principle; at the same time, it may also function as an instrumental value when it serves as a means of building trust in a particular context. Similarly, justice may be regarded as one of the highest moral principles, yet in a specific situation it may also operate as a means of achieving a particular goal. Therefore, the illustration above, in which each value is assigned to a specific category, is necessarily simplified and too linear to fully capture the complexity of the value hierarchy.

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