

Including Value Education in Tertiary Level: What Bangladesh Think

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Abstract

Bangladesh is a nation with a great diversity of cultures, economy, and religions. It is not easy to identify the common values to be taught in such a pluralist society. Therefore, the values of pupils must be established to show respect for the cultures of others and to foster mutual tolerance and understanding through Value Education (VE). The purpose of the research was to explore teachers' and students' opinion to include VE as a course in higher education level in Bangladesh. It was a qualitative study and data was collected from the university teachers and students via semi-structured interviews. Religion was found in this study to be a sensitive issue to be taught in the VE class that can cause conflict between teacher and student. Participants suggested that the content of VE should be practical rather than theoretical. One of the difficulties found ways to include VE is the impact of the labor market environment that would make students find the course to be a burden and not fit for future employment. One of the recommendations of this study was that teachers of VE should be open, liberal, and respectful of the beliefs of students.

Keywords: curriculum; social and religious values; tertiary education; value education

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INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh's society is pluralist, living among different cultures, religions and ethnic minorities. Not everyone in a pluralist society has the same beliefs and even the same definition of what values are (Halstead & Taylor, 2005). Therefore, educating people about common values and behavioral standards is necessary. In addition, it has been found that the world of today is experiencing the highest level of hatred, conflict, and intolerance between different groups, cultures, and religions. In this case, value education (VE) may promote community respect and tolerance and refuse violation (Halstead & Taylor, 2005).

One-third of Bangladesh population is youth. A significant number of these young people are involved in various socially and morally unacceptable issues such as eve teasing, alcohol and drug abuse, juvenile delinquency (Ara & Mahjabeen, 2010). The fact that educated people are also interested in unethical problems and bribery is disgraceful. Anisul Haque, a renowned author and engineer, quoted an instance of his university life, asked the students how many of them would bribe during their future service life, and 86% of them shamelessly answered that they would bribe (Billah, 2012)). Haque said, "There are hundreds and thousands of educators, doctors, engineers and researchers in higher education institutions. Yet the country's situation

is so miserable. What's the reason? The morals[sic] is gone" (Billah, 2012).

To explain this regrettable phenomenon, moral actions are the product of the reciprocal interplay of personal and social influences (Bandura, 2002). Conflicts arise between self-sanctions and social sanctions (Bandura, 2002). An example for this is when people committed crimes that might be right from their own point of view but not appropriate to society. Moreover, the social norms, values and ethics could not be ignored by students as a social well-being. Educational institution could play an intermediate role in transferring these norms and values to individuals, as well as national laws, judges and universal virtues. Development should not be aimed at developing things, but at developing people (Mishra, 2010).

To promote moral development of students, Halstead & Taylor (2005) recommended the inclusion in educational institutions of several values. They are cultural diversity values, cultural identity, national awareness, intellectual and academic values, peace, international understanding, human rights and values of the environment. Equality between men and women, antiracism, job and economic values, education and common human values like peace, unity and cooperation. Since VE is necessary for ensuring cultural coherence, human development, environmental

sustainability and promoting peace, it has been taught in several countries of the world like USA, UK, Canada. It has been taught with different names as moral education, character education or ethical education.

If we consider Bangladesh education system, religious and ethical education has been taught in primary and secondary levels. There is no such a separate course where the common cultural, religious and social values have been taught. In Bangladesh's latest education policy, which was published in 2010, moral education was suggested in this policy as one of the fundamental courses at the secondary level (Rahman, Hamzah, Meerah, & Rahman, 2010). Most of the teachers have a positive perception of ethical issues, few of them have different behaviors and practice (Jahan & Islam, 2014). Under this circumstance, the importance of VE at the higher education level in Bangladesh has not yet been investigated. Therefore, this study aims to uncover the value of including VE at the higher education level through the perspectives and experiences of teachers and students.

Considering the current situation of developed countries, we can see that they have been facing challenges in regulating in-school bullying and violence. As for an example of the United States, violence, harassment, and antisocial behavior have reached epidemic proportions in schools and on the streets (B. White, 2015). The demise of these types of character was caused not only by individual moral failure, but also by the inclusion of multinational capitalism, pluralism and social mobility, communication media and popular culture. In addition, the education of character could be related to the education of value. Eleven principles for the launching of character education at school have been established (Lickona, 1996). The related concepts were promoting core ethical values; providing incentives for moral action for students to build character; involving a substantive and rigorous academic curriculum that recognizes and encourages all learners to succeed; aiming to improve intrinsic motivation for students; and requiring moral leadership from both staff and students.

India as a representative of Asian developing countries also acknowledges the necessity of incorporating VE in educational insitution. Mishra (2010) suggested VE is so important for India's higher education and should be included in India's universities as a separate course. Considering Gandhian peace and religious outlook, it is possible to combine meditation, yoga, moral values and social activities with VE course (Mishra, 2010). Inversely, through an interdisciplinary approach, VE could be taught as part of other subjects. A powerful secret VE system could also mediate the moral construction of students on ' the good student ' and ' the good citizen ' in the long term (Thornberg, 2009).

VE is important not only for the students but also for the teachers' professional and moral development. In India, casteism, political influence, bribery and many more unfair practices have weakened and demoralized the teaching profession (Kalita, 2015). Professional value development of the teacher is therefore mandatory for VE

teaching. In this case, educators need only remember the differences that were universally correct or wrong, seek information and choose to act to overcome the moral malaise that enables ethical violations to go unchallenged (Johns, McGrath, & Mathur, 2008).

In addition, VE could play an important role in science education. It can construct science students ' ethical perspective, attitude and behaviour for scientific knowledge. In Dutch universities, a pilot survey was conducted on the values of education and sustainable development. The study found that the Dutch university curriculum should incorporate an ethical perspective for sustainable development in science education to enhance the professional and responsible attitude of students towards the use of scientific knowledge (Muijen, 2004). Students must learn to answer theoretical and practical problems in a more complex and multi-dimensional manner than simply finding a ' technical solution (Muijen, 2004). A discourse could be an effective way in this regard to defend their own reality and other people's truth.

Besides, religious education may play a major role in improving the importance and ethics of students. One of the results of a research carried out in the UK Church School in Parish found that religious education has an impact on the value development of students (Hawkes, 2005). The research participants reported that the reason behind the value creation of the students was not only to express importance to the students by role modelling, but also to care for the relationship between teachers and students (Hawkes, 2005). UK Church school parents were also told that church-based education helped their children develop moral values and ethics (Hawkes, 2005). Since the research was conducted at primary school, it would have different outcomes to consider adult students at higher education level.

In contrast, British schools and Europe have been influenced by greater religious involvement (Halstead & Taylor, 2005). There has been a clear official view that religious education and collective worship are fundamental to the moral and spiritual development of children (Halstead & Taylor, 2005). Eventually the number of British people who strongly believe in God was increasing, which could impact people's attitudes towards religious education (B. White, 2015). On the other hand, the U.S. education system lacked such a link with religion and church as Britain and Europe (Halstead & Taylor, 2005). This could therefore be said that America has experienced extreme levels of violence lately, such as school-shooting.

Considering all the previous research findings, it has been perceived that VE is necessary in all the disciplines of education. VE could promote social coherence, tolerance and peace in the society. VE is therefore necessary in both developed and developing countries. It is also very significant in developing and promoting scientific knowledge. It could construct students' and teachers' ethical values and attitudes to obtain, promote and sustain scientific knowledge. Reflecting on all the studies, the researchers therefore

attempted to search for an answer of the question, what do teachers and students think about the necessity, scope and challenge to include VE at higher education level? Since students are the core of the education systems and teachers are the facilitator in learning, both of them can explain their thought, perception and feelings with their practical experience. Therefore, the researchers aimed to reach both of them to collect the data to identify the necessity, scope and challenges to include VE in HE level.

Methodology

This research followed the qualitative method, while the literature might yield little information about the phenomena and researcher needs to learn more from participants through exploration (Creswell, 2002). The central phenomenon of the research was to explore the participants' views, opinions and perception in including VE as a course in higher education level. Since the researchers didn't find adequate information on this phenomenon in Bangladesh context, qualitative research was conducted to learn more about the central phenomenon from participants via semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews allow participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

In total, 30 participants were selected purposefully. Among them were 10 university teachers, 10 graduate students from the Institute of Education and Research (IER) who had a VE course in their higher studies, and 10 graduate students from different disciplines who didn't have a VE course in higher studies were selected for sampling. Teachers were from 10 different fields of study: Chemistry, Institute of Modern Language, Sociology, Microbiology, Political Science, Marine Science and Fisheries, Pharmacy, Communication and Journalism, Accounting Department were selected as participants. Students from 10 different majors: Chemistry, Language (Pali), Botany, Statistics, Human Resource Management, Physics, Accounting, English Language and Literature, Institute of Modern Language, Islamic History and Culture were selected for interview.

University teachers were in group 1, students who had VE course were in group 2 and students who don't have VE course were in group 3. The purposeful sampling technique was applied where researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2002). Here in this study, researchers tried to select participants, whether they were "information rich".

In qualitative approach, researchers' trustworthiness is crucial for data collection and data analysis. This trustworthiness could be defined as to eliminate researchers' bias perspective and increase their truthfulness of a proposition about social phenomenon (Golafshani, 2003). Since both of the researchers were university teachers, participants who were students might feel imbalance power between

themselves and interviewers. Therefore, before collecting data, the researchers asked for the consent from participants and recorded the consent in an audio tape. The participants were told that they could withdraw their participation in anytime during the interview session. The researchers were committed to participants to preserve the data in a secured device. They were also committed to participants that their information wouldn't do any harm in their academic or personal lives. Researchers used the pseudo name of participants and their information was not used for any other research purposes.

Researchers collected data from different sources (teachers & students) via semi-structured interview questionnaire. The questions were organized under four areas: participants' view on VE, possibilities and challenges for including VE, suggestion for course content & how important teacher attitude is. Both teachers and students were asked the same questions which could be related to 'triangulation (Golafshani, 2003). Then, the data were analyzed through coding to identify categories and themes.

Findings & Discussion

Six trends are defined after the process of data analysis. These themes are chosen according to the frequently mentioned statements of the participants.

Significance of VE

Teachers and students from different fields of study shared the importance of VE in the development of ethical values and ethics for students. They agreed that to grow students as a good human being, VE is important and useful. One of the science teachers said that,

There are many courses like this in foreign countries. I have studied philosophy courses such as ethics or science ethics. There is a connection between science and ethics. I always advise the student to be frank. Students in science collect data and use it as they wish, but staying honest in their own position is important. Which data collect from the laboratory, they should properly give their teacher. It is also very important for medical students. (Liakot, group 1)

Researchers asked the student group who took the VE course a question: do they think they're different from the other students who couldn't get the chance to take the course? On this topic, the students have mixed reactions. Many students (7 out of 10) shared that they thought they could describe having knowledge, of values and that they thought they felt responsible in their lives to reflect their values. One of the students said:

Yes, with other students who had no VE course, I found the difference with me. I haven't found them respectful of teachers. They weren't building a good teacher relationship like us. We do have a really strong junior and senior relationship. For any

problem, we support each other. I think values are helping us to develop empathy. Yet I haven't seen this kind of action from other field students. I think it would be beneficial for them to create value if VE could be included in their subject. (Fazlur, group 2)

On the other hand, a few students said that at higher education level they did not think they could grow their value. Rather, their ideals and morals were established by families, communities, and friends throughout their youth. They argued that it might not be feasible for adult students to develop new values and ethics at a higher level.

Many of the teachers said that VE should not be included as an additional course at the higher education level. They suggested incorporating a few value-related topics as a hidden curriculum with regular courses. For example, one of the opinions of the teachers was,

To practice value education, we don't need extra classroom here. It can also be used for topics that have already been taught as mandatory subjects. (Nazmul, group 1)

All but three respondents agreed that VE is very important to students. Participants expressed that the UGC and other regulatory bodies should take initiative in including VE as a higher education level course.

VE and Job Market Economy

Some of the teachers and students shared that if VE includes students in each department of higher education level because it is an extra subject for them, they would oppose it. In their future career, they might not find it useful. Because VE has no advantage over skill development and job creation, they will consider it a burden. Inversely, there was a counterargument among many respondents that VE is also necessary for career life.

One of the objectives of our education is to help students have a job after their graduation completion. David Blunkett, the British Secretary of State for Education and Employment, argued on the knowledge economy and higher education that "Globalization and the arrival of the knowledge economy undoubtedly intensify competitive pressures on higher education institutions. Learning has become big business" (Graf, 2009). German universities concentrated on a non-profit venture, while Britain, the United States and Australia are closely linked to the commercialization and export of higher education services (Graf, 2009). Teachers recommended here in this study that VE should not be included as a compulsory subject. Rather than being taught with regular subjects.

As education becomes a commodity that has forced universities to analyze academic programs in terms of costs versus benefits that could neglect the institution's core values (Berg, 2005), it also has an ethical responsibility. One of the duties of business is to meet ethical obligations, which means upholding a set of values, standards or behavioral principles that represent a concern about what customers, staff, investors, the society and other stakeholders find to be equitable, fair,

or in accordance with the moral rights or reasonable expectations of stakeholders (Carroll, 2000). In this study the respondents accepted that VE could be useful to increase the professional development, transparency and trustworthiness of students throughout the career life in every field of study.

Despite the labor market economy's influence on higher education, another respondent clearly explained why VE should be included. He said so,

The most troubling thing in today's world is the "decay of morality...!" And to find the cause of it, we noticed that the education system has no value education and its lack of practice. When a human being grows up, he mixes himself with different complicated functions every day, where moral education becomes looser and faded. So at the higher level, students get busy with their career-related study where there is no connection between value educations. They become what they want, but without morality, when they become a professional! Ultimately, it makes them heinous. We should remember that our study's objective is to serve humanity. And that is why we badly need education to value. (Amin, group 1).

Classroom Conflict and Teaching Value Education

Several challenges and opportunities are shared by respondents to implement VE at a higher level. To settle on a certain quality, one of the possible obstacles would be to resolve classroom conflict. Some of the respondents at the higher education level who had the VE course shared their experience on religious issues in classroom conflict. They believe teachers should be neutral, liberal, and show respect for the opinion of the students. Jasmine said that

We had a dispute over a religious issue in our class. Another group of students argued that religions should be modified according to our present requirement, while another group of students argued that we should be adjusted according to religious education. The first group was persuaded by the teacher and another team left the classroom. Without expressing his own view, I think the teacher should offer a neutral opinion. I think it hurts the feelings of any group of students. Furthermore, I don't think students have acted responsibly because in the future, you may face any kind of conflict, it doesn't mean you will leave the situation. (Jasmine, group 2)

In this study, it was found that the attitude of their VE teachers does not satisfy students who have already had a VE course at the undergraduate level. Few of them were in conflict with the opinion of their teachers in the classroom. They said teachers should be progressive, open-minded and tolerant of their opinions. Research was conducted by (Meyers, Bender, Hill, & Thomas, 2006) showed that teachers could avoid conflict in the classroom and manage the classroom by communicating with students showing respect, clarifying the student's

goal; addressing students outside the classroom, focusing on the feelings and empathy of students and involving students in the problem solving.

In addition, some of the students claimed in this study that the grading of the course had also created tension between students. We felt their ranking would be reduced by writing dissimilar views, values and viewpoints on the examination paper from educators. A finding from another research could be mentioned here that students accused their teachers of having the most frequent conflicts for grades, examinations and excuses (Tantleff-Dunn, Dunn, & Gokee, 2002). To resolve these disputes, researchers suggested that teachers are able to carefully clarify the policies before classes, improve the objectivity of grading and exams, and enforce policies that eliminate the need to determine the validity of the arguments of students that could strengthen the sense of equality among students (Tantleff-Dunn, Dunn, & Gokee, 2002).

Value & Religious Education

In this study, it was found that teaching religious issues at the higher education level would be a sensitive topic. Researchers therefore attempted to find the opinion of the participants on religious study in the course of VE. Except for one, all participants expressed the importance of teaching religious issues as part of the VE. The participant who opposed the religious study said

There are many countries where religious books are not needed, because religion makes certain confined values. They teach values through ethical books... In this situation, Motaher Hossain Chowdhury's "Songskritir Kotha" is a good article. It's going to be the best article written about culture around the world. It's about value education. His first line is- Religion is the culture of the mass people, but in the educative and elegant people "Culture is the religion". Value education is more than the religious lesson. (Bishal, group 1)

Religion, a sensitive issue in Bangladesh, has been discussed in this report. Most people would not accept the opinion of any unbeliever towards religion. In this situation, avoiding conflict over religious issues in the classroom would not be easy for a non-believer educator. Researchers therefore attempted to understand the importance of including religious education in the context of VE.

The majority of the participants said that religious education should be included as a vehicle of moral education in the VE course. Books of religion and spiritual knowledge tend to promote an attitude of respect for values, morality and ethics (Kalita, 2015). In this case, White (2004) argued that students should recognize all religions in order to respect the opinions of others and should be motivated to assess them and improve their credentials. Therefore, the ability to study all religions should be integrated into the curriculum of VE. Value-oriented learning with a comparative religion course

could promote social harmony, liberal attitude and a less fanatical approach to religion (Rama, Anitha, & Vasudhakar, 2014)

On the other hand, Mason (2003) argued that all the students of a pluralist society should have the right to know about the neighbours' religions which is not easy to incorporate in a religious school. Therefore, at higher education level students could have the freedom to know different religions and core ethics. At higher education level students are treated as adult and if they could have the opportunity to know about core values of different religions it could be expected that they could develop the respect to others' beliefs, thoughts and rituals.

Teacher as Role Model

All participants shared that a VE course instructor should be a role model in practical life to draw on their values and ethics. Having their instructors as role models would encourage the growth of students' values and ethics. Hawkes (2005) found that the respondents of his study believed that in addition to role modelling, the relationship between teacher and student is essential to communicate values to the student. All teachers and students should therefore demonstrate mutual respect, compassion and kindness. Managing the classroom dispute and other obstacles would be beneficial to educators.

One of the respondents gave an example to why an educator should be an icon with values that are followed.

The attitude of the instructor is very significant. Because whenever my teacher says that I should not smoke, and when I see him smoking, it is clearly contradictory. What he believes is important and what he really does in his real life, because unless you do it yourself, you can't implement the stuff. (Itu, group 2)

Aligned with the participant's comment the researchers from different fields also argued that teacher should demonstrate ethical behaviour to teach VE to students. One of the researchers of physical education argued that "teachers with character serve as role models for telling the truth, respecting others, accepting and fulfilling responsibilities, playing fair, earning and returning trust and living a moral life" (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 49). Therefore, teachers should be concerned in practicing ethical behaviour to encourage students to lead a moral life.

There were various opinions on the competence of the teacher. Many of the respondents thought it was necessary to teach VE to students by a particular specialist. On the other hand, many of them thought there was no need to have a specialist in the subject. Instead, specialists can train teachers on how to teach VE through ToT (Training of Teachers).

Teaching Method

Most students who have completed VE courses were found to be disappointed with the teaching methods of their teachers. Students believed more realistic approach than theoretical approach should be taken. They

expressed that group discussion, teamwork, real-life experience-based assignments could be incorporated into their curriculum, and many more creative learning methods and techniques. For example, one of the opinions of the participants is given below

Teacher taught us by the method of lecture that we did not like. I think it should be based on practical work on the ground. The teacher could let us go out of the classroom at least once a week to find out how we can implement values. (Champa, group 2)

Most of the participants expressed in this study that VE at the higher level should focus on practical rather than a theoretical approach. Adults tend to believe and learn from action instead of words (Anthanassou, 2008). Learning through practical life experiences could therefore be a useful technique for effective teaching of VE. Therefore, adults want to know significant and relevant things in their lives (Sutherland & Crowther, 2008). VE subjects should therefore be linked to the social context of students and applicable to real life. If they are allowed in real life, self-regulatory mechanisms for ethical actions do not work (Bandura, 2002). Activities of practical life experience could therefore be valuable for the ethical and quality growth of students. Teamwork helps students learn from peers and through dialogue solve a problem. Developing interpersonal and communication skills is also beneficial. Group learning is a valuable tool to help adults learn more and become more aware of it (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010).

Adult education is challenging because the purpose of adult education is not only to achieve the personal gain of learners, but also to address inequality issues (racial, gender, religious, etc.), to lead the individual empowerment and/or social transformation (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). VE course would address social inequalities to engage students in critical thinking about their own opinions and acting as a responsible person through transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). The dialogue could be an effective approach in this case. An effective dialogue between facilitator and learner is a very powerful way to listen (Vella, 2002). Therefore, for effective learning, both teachers and students need to listen carefully to each other.

In the same note, Lumplin (2008) argued that to build students' ethical values it is necessary to develop their moral reasoning process. The author suggested that student could easily rationalize their unprincipled behaviour like telling lie, cheating during the test, or stealing something. If their moral reasoning is developed, they can identify their wrong and unethical deeds (Lumpkin, 2008). Eventually, they could take action according their moral reasoning process.

CONCLUSION

VE would help to enhance social cohesion, tolerance, moral values, and justice. Individual and social life, it can have a positive impact. It is necessary not only for a country, but also for the whole world, to develop a student as a responsible citizen. It might therefore lead to

universal solidarity and compassion. Higher-level VE will help a learner thinks critically about the moral values, morals, and norms that might turn their consciousness into action. When the topics relate to their life experiences, adult learners could learn effectively at a higher level. The teacher should therefore be careful in choosing the material, respecting the students, and being free, progressive, and neutral. In this regard, the teacher can keep the famous words of Socrates in mind: "I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think."

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