

Chapter 1

Understanding Learners’ Self–Expressed and Self– Professed Core Personal Values for Effective Teaching and Learning

ABSTRACT

Adult learners, beyond being practical in their learning focus (based on andragogy), tend to use values (core and peripheral) to guide their attitudes, learning pursuits and behaviors, and other aspects. One approach to profiling learners may be based on learners’ self-professed core personal values as those that cannot be contravened without causing offense and negative learner reactions. The professing of core values is not only by spoken/written/shared expressions (which can be “cheap talk”) but also by actions. Observing the actions of learners, one may infer underlying values (albeit in a noisy way). For effective teaching and learning, instructor and curricular alignments with learner core values may be integral to the success of the teaching and learning efforts. This work provides a literature review of learner values and learning and explores the implications of considering such values in instructional design and teaching and learning.

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INTRODUCTION

“Values” define what people see as important based on micro-to macro senses of fundamental truths or principles. Milton Rokeach (1973) suggests that values are the “core concept across all the social sciences” and is a “main dependent variable in the study of culture, society, and personality, and the main independent variable in the study of social attitudes and behavior” in his book. Values are “desirable transsituational goals, varying in importance” and serve as guiding principles (S. Schwartz 1994:21) (Hitlin, June 2003, p. 119). Values address five main issues:

(1) they are concepts or beliefs, (2) they pertain to desirable end states or behaviors, (3) they transcend specific situations, (4) they guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and (5) they are ordered by relative importance (S. Schwartz 1992; Schwartz and Bilsky 1987, as cited in Hitlin, June 2003, p. 119).

Values are “mental structures existing at a higher level of abstraction than attitudes” (Howard 1995; Rokeach 1973; Schuman 1995; S. Schwartz 1992, 1994; Williams 1979)” (Hitlin, June 2003, p. 120). Values inform people’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors at various scales, from individual (micro) to group (meso) to mass-scale social or even universal scale (macro), depending on the unit of analysis. The sources of individual and social values are thought to come from various cultural influences and to evolve based on individual experiences and personal growth, social interactions, education, work life, and other aspects. Individuals, who have somewhat coherent identities, may have sets of values that also generally align and are not contradictory. Having a value system enables professionals to decide between competing values (Rest & Narváez, 1994, p. ix), each with positive aspects but which may not be practically achievable or potentially mutually exclusive.

One common categorization of human values is from the Rokeach Values Survey (1973), with 18 “terminal” values and 18 “instrumental” ones. Terminal ones are desirable “end-states” of human existence, and instrumental ones are “preferable modes of behavior” (“Rokeach Value Survey,” Apr. 12, 2019). The terminal ones include “True Friendship, Mature Love, Self-Respect, Happiness, Inner Harmony, Equality, Freedom, Pleasure, Social

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