Axiological Potential of Philosophy of Education

Leonid Vakhovskyi

Educational and Research Institute of History, Department of Social Work, International Relations and Socio-Political Sciences,
Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University
36003, 3 Koval St., the City of Poltava, Ukraine
E-mail address: vakhovsky81@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4163-2453

Abstract

Aim. The purpose of the study is to reveal the axiological potential of the philosophy of education and to identify ways towards an efficient impact on the value sphere of students' personality.

Methods. In order to achieve the goal, a set of methods was used: analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, abstraction, comparative method, content analysis, systematisation, generalisation.

Results. The concept of "value" is characterised, and an efficient strategy for introducing students to values, based on the principles of constructive axiology, is proposed.

Conclusion. Realising the axiological function, the philosophy of education is called to: offer certain value ideas and principles as guidelines for education; theoretically justify approaches to enriching the value experience of students in the learning process. Value as the significance of objects and phenomena can act as a goal or ideal, as a norm that sets patterns and standards of behaviour. In conditions of rapid changes in the value picture of the world, the optimal approach is the approach that provides students' involvement in the value mastering of reality, active participation in the reassessment of values, their correction and construction.

Keywords: philosophy of education, axiological potential, value, constructive axiology, acquisition of values

Introduction

One of the most important elements of the subject field of modern philosophy of education is the problem of values and value orientations. This scientific discipline, implementing the axiological function, is called to provide comprehension and in-

terpretation of new meanings and values of education, which determine the orientation of a man's activity and behaviour.

Many scholars, when speaking about the purpose of philosophy of education, note its involvement in the study of axiological problems. Nel Noddings believes that one of the key problems of philosophy of education is the interpretation of educational ideals, values and goals (Noddings, 2018). Foster McMurray outlines the "range of enquiry" of philosophy of education and also concludes that it explores questions about values, virtues and ethical judgements in an educational context. The author believes that philosophy of education should help the rational educator to understand that education is the most important factor in shaping not only the cognitive, practical, but also the value experience of a schoolchild (McMurray, 2000).

Johnston James Scott assumes that philosophy of education is not immersed in specific educational practices and its initial impetus is the cultural one. As a consequence, philosophy of education encompasses much of social ethics and is intended to help formulate and disseminate the right way of living and being in the (cultural) world of people (Johnston, 2019).

Terry Lovat and Ron Toomey have criticised the "dominant mythology" that public education systems are value-neutral. In their view, one of the tasks of public education is to instil certain values in its students (Lovat & Toomey, 2009).

The study of axiological aspects of education raises a number of debatable issues that need philosophical analysis. First of all, attention is drawn to the fact that both cognitive values (empirical adequacy, explanatory power, internal consistency, simplicity, etc.) and non-cognitive values (moral, political, economic, social, aesthetic, gender) are present in scientific activity, as well as in the process of teaching sciences. Scholars almost unanimously recognise the positive influence of cognitive values on the process and result of scientific-cognitive activity. Researchers' views on the existence and desirability of the non-cognitive values in scientific cognition differ.

Many authors believe that non-cognitive values undermine such basic characteristics of scientific knowledge as rationality, universality and objectivity. However, it is accepted that this type of value is present in scientific research at the stage of problematisation – when scientists choose which problems to solve, which subjects to investigate, which strategy to choose or adopt, and at the moment when the consequences of the use of the results obtained are considered and evaluated (Couló, 2014).

An important observation is that the issues related to values have a double significance: both for research and the community of scholars and, more broadly, for education in general (Peters, 2018).

In our opinion, the realisation of the axiological potential of philosophy of education implies, firstly, "justification" and implementation of a certain system of values in educational activity. Value ideas and principles that are suggested as guidelines for education depend on the socio-cultural context, adherence of philosophers of education to a particular philosophical direction (pragmatism, existentialism,

phenomenology, critical theory, hermeneutics, postmodernism, etc.), their subjective preferences. Secondly, philosophy of education is designed to theoretically justify approaches regarding the influence on the value sphere of the student's personality in the educational process.

In other words, philosophy of education, realising the axiological function, should answer not only the question What? (which values should be the basis of educational policy, selection of content and technologies of education, etc.), but also the question How? (what approaches should be used to form values and value orientations of students).

In conditions of the conflict of values in the modern world, the aggravation of contradictions between the traditional values and the values of the information society, the problem of influencing the value sphere on the student's personality is extremely relevant and causes heated debates. The representatives of the so-called anti-pedagogy generally deny the possibility of imposing life orientations and values on students and insist on giving a child wide powers to determine his/her own life – both the everyday and perspective ones (Vakhovskyi, 2024).

The questions of how much time should be given to the classes related to the formation of the value sphere of a pupil's personality, which subjects have a significant value potential, etc., also remain a matter of debate (McMurray, 2000).

Value as significance of objects and phenomena

It is reasonable to start the analysis of the approaches to the formation of values in the education system with a terminological review.

Many philosophical and pedagogical publications dealing with the problem of values do not explicitly define the term "value". Obviously, the authors believe that its content is generally known and no comments on it are needed.

At the same time, there is a large number of its definitions in scientific literature. Since the concept of "value" is used in many sciences (philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, political science, psychology, pedagogy, etc.), representatives of each of them pay attention to different sides and aspects of the phenomenon under study, taking into account the specifities of its context, as well as considering the research objectives. As a consequence, there is a large number of contradictory definitions with different semantic load, and at the same time there is an impression that they do not reflect the content of the concept of "value" exhaustively.

While characterising the concept of "value", it is important to make some clarifications and to put some emphasis.

Given that value is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, it is appropriate to try to "reduce" it – to bring it down to a simpler or more basic form that works better for analysis. We believe that it is important to find a basic keyword that most accurately

and fully characterises value. Such a keyword, in our view, is "significance". It would not be wrong to say that value is what is meaningful to a person, or, in other words, value is the recognition of the significance of an object or phenomenon.

It should be noted that the consideration of value as significance is common in the Ukrainian scientific discourse: it is considered as value in any material or ideal phenomenon that has significance for a person, for the sake of which he acts, invests his forces, for the sake of which he lives; with the help of value the socio-historical significance of certain phenomena of reality for society and individual is characterised (Gorlack et al., 2000); in the concept of value the positive significance of some object is reflected.

However, it is impossible to limit ourselves to the definition of the basic keyword, which is the essential characteristic of value. It is necessary to discover the source of significance, to find out what exactly causes the significance of objects and phenomena of the surrounding world. In this connection, as Mark Schroeder notes, "the traditional question of axiology" arises – whether values are subjective psychological states or objective states of the world (Schroeder, 2021).

It is true that most often discussions are held about the following dilemma: should certain phenomena of nature, society, and individual human existence be considered values, the significance of which is conditioned by their objective properties, or does value express the subjective significance of an object or phenomenon for human life.

Many philosophers and sociologists paid attention, first of all, to the objective nature of values, emphasising the objective significance of objects and phenomena as guidelines for human activity, the content of which is conditioned by social needs and interests. Based on such reasoning, it is possible, for example, to assert that water is a value because it has objective properties that make it significant and vital for human beings.

The desire to emphasise the subject matter, objective definiteness of values is quite understandable. However, values grow out of a person's needs and interests and are the most important life relations connecting him/her with the surrounding world and other people. Therefore, the very subject content of objects, phenomena, processes without a person's awareness of their significance, without taking into account "subjective psychological states" cannot be considered as a value and fulfil the functions of an ideal, a goal, a reference point in social and individual life. For example, water, which, as it seems, can be considered as an absolute value due to its objective properties, is not always vital and significant for a person (for example, in a situation when a person is drowning and may lose his/her life).

We cannot but agree with Kuznetsov, who noted that being, objects and phenomena of the world around us are both values in themselves and are not. They acquire the status of value in the system of human relations with these objects and phenomena, that is, in social practice, when the positive or negative significance of objects is revealed, the attitude to them is expressed and an assessment is given. As a consequence,

value cannot be reduced only to the positive or negative objective significance of objects and phenomena, or considered solely as an expression of their subjective significance. The author combines the objective and subjective sides and states that value is discovered when, as a result of practical activity, the ability of certain natural and social objects to be necessary for the existence and development of society or an individual person is revealed and realised (Kuznetsov, 1992).

It seems interesting to consider the opinion of the Canadian mathematician and philosopher William Hatcher that there are intrinsic values arising from the properties of each particular entity and extrinsic values that are assigned to this entity from the outside on the basis of subjective preferences. A classic example of extrinsic values is the value attached to banknotes, which in themselves are nothing more than specially coloured pieces of paper, i.e. a very ephemeral entity. It is internal values, the author argues, that are objective and authentic, because they are conditioned by the properties of objects and phenomena of reality (Hatcher et al., 1997).

Scholars also draw attention to other characteristics of value, which should be taken into account when considering the value aspects of education. It is stressed that a value can exist in the sphere of the proper, i.e. not only as an object or phenomenon of reality, but also as a certain goal or ideal; that it acts as a generally accepted norm formed in a certain culture, setting patterns and standards of behaviour. Emphasis is also placed on the existence of a prevailing system of values in a society.

It is a reasonable observation that values are considered to be the most important components of human character. Each person can use them as a reference point for behaviour and a guiding principle for personal choices that can be implemented. In addition, values cannot be seen as something immutable; they evolve and change throughout a person's life (Wajeha, 2014).

In this connection, the famous American sociologist Ronald Inglehart argued that the developed industrial society leads to a basic shift in values associated with a decrease in the importance of instrumental rationality and the prevalence of postmodern values, which significantly reduce the importance of any forms of power and authority and increase the importance of the need for communication, recognition, self-expression, intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction. He put forward the hypothesis of the value significance of what is lacking (the scarcity hypothesis): the greatest subjective value is attached to what is relatively lacking. It is the subject's attachment of significance to what is lacking that is one of the factors of value changes (Inglehart, 1997).

The rapid change of values and value orientations was pointed out by the founders of the generational theory Neil Howe and William Strauss. They demonstrated the differences in value preferences of representatives of generations who seemingly were born and lived in similar conditions. For example, members of Generation Z (zet) and Generation A (alpha), who were born in the twenty-first century, differ significantly in their value preferences (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Thus, the basic key word characterising value is significance, which is conditioned, on the one hand, by objective properties of objects and phenomena, on the other hand, it is found in the system of human interaction with the surrounding world and other people, and is connected with his/her needs and interests. Considering the axiological aspects of education, it is important to take into account some other characteristics of value: it can act as a goal or an ideal; it is a norm that sets patterns and standards of behaviour; the system of values is historically changeable.

Bringing in to the values in the educational process

As already mentioned, one of the most important tasks of the philosophy of education is the theoretical justification of approaches to influence the value sphere of the learner's personality.

Most researchers admit that education has a significant axiological potential. However, the question of how to realise it in educational activities remains controversial and problematic. Joseph Zajda states that values are an integral part of school pedagogy, but the nature of the relationship between them is constantly changing. In the 70s of the twentieth century, an extremely popular approach was the so-called "values clarification", the purpose of which was only to inform students about values. The question about their nature (positive or negative, desirable or undesirable) and, even moreover, about changing them was not raised. In the early 1980s, the so-called "virtue theory", based on the Aristotelian ethics, was reinterpreted and revived, whose proponents argued that moral concepts and values should be explained so that students could learn them through pedagogy and reflection in the classroom. It was already about desirable virtues (tolerance, altruism, asceticism, benevolence, honesty, courage, justice, moderation, integrity, etc.), but the key question remained open: whether values should only be "taught" or whether the task was to form them. For example, should the aim of education consist in making students not only aware of tolerance, but also become tolerant? A positive answer to this question, the author believes, involves indoctrination, which is considered the opposite of education (Phillips, 2014). The learning of values should be meaningful, engaging and authentic, incorporating a "sense of community", an "emphasis on cultural diversity", a "deeper and more critical understanding of democracy". But at the same time, values should be discussed in schools, rather than be imposed (Phillips, 2014).

Marian Ambrozy and Peter Saga have attempted to make some generalisations about this issue. Teaching from the perspective of values, according to them, can be done in three ways: by maintaining a certain ideological position; value-neutral; by using an apophatic (negative) understanding of values achieved by ostracising certain ideological positions (Ambrozy & Sagat, 2018).

In Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries there is a special branch of pedagogical knowledge – pedagogical axiology, which not only investigates values, value consciousness and value orientations arising in the process of learning, but also develops methods of inculcating values in the pedagogical process. A large number of theses and dissertations dealing with the formation of values and value orientations of students of secondary schools and university students have been defended in the country. Theoretically, a set of "positive" and "desirable" values approved by the state and society is substantiated and the task is set to ensure their assimilation by pupils and students.

As it can be seen, in the modern philosophy of education there is a scattering of opinions regarding the influence on the value sphere of the student's personality in the process of learning. There are at least three positions on this issue. Firstly, the idea of value neutrality of educational institutions is popular among scholars. It is argued that schools are called to solve exclusively educational tasks, and therefore the learning process should be free from values. Moreover, educational institutions are simply incapable of exerting influence in an area that is seen as entirely subjective and unmeasurable. Secondly, the function of the school is seen as only "informing" students about values, "teaching" values, and creating conditions for their assimilation. At the same time, the "imposition" of values is considered inadmissible. Thirdly, it is suggested that the learning process is inseparable from the formation of character, moral and civic education, and therefore educational institutions should "instil", "inculcate", "form" values and value orientations.

Therefore, what is the optimal approach to influence the value sphere of an individual in the educational process?

In our opinion, educational activity cannot be value-neutral, because it is carried out in a certain socio-cultural context, it must comply with the principles of educational policy of the state, it involves interaction between participants of the pedagogical process on the basis of compliance with ethical norms and rules, and it does not exclude the regulation of behaviour. On the other hand, the idea of "indoctrination", "inculcation", "formation" of values looks doubtful, because it inevitably leads to coercion, imposition and restriction of the freedom of value choice of students. The point of view about the need to inform students about values, about teaching values, excluding the imposition of value ideas and principles, should be recognised as vague and declarative.

The approaches outlined above, which allow direct or indirect influence on the value sphere of an individual, are united by the desire to offer a ready-made set of values and thus to model the space for value choice. This leads to the intellectual passivity of students and limits the opportunities for them to acquire their own value experience.

In conditions of rapid changes in the value picture of the world, we need a more subtle and approximative strategy for the implementation of the axiological function of educational philosophy. Firstly, it should take into account that the values and value orientations of students are not formed purposefully (it is an illusion), but

are formed, also spontaneously, under the influence of various factors. Secondly, it is impossible to ignore the activity of the subject in the value mastering of the world, who makes his/her own value choice and takes part in the correction and construction of new values and value systems, including the development of his/her own ones.

According to Nikolay Rozov, "at present there is a "general civilisational order" for the so-called constructive axiology, which would deal with reflexion (criticism, correction and construction) of value and worldview bases of lifestyle and social decisions" (Rozov, 1998, p. 111).

In the context of constructive axiology, the claims to "formation", "inculcation", and "instilment" of values in the process of education look dubious and ineffective. It is more correct to speak about introducing students to values, which, on the one hand, gives an opportunity to introduce the traditional, unchangeable values characteristic of a particular country and culture in the process of studying humanities disciplines, culture and art, and on the other hand, implies active participation in the construction of a personally significant system of values, i.e. allows students to become a subject of value mastering of the world around them.

As we can see, the acquisition of values in the process of education is not reduced to the adaptation of the younger generations to the eternal, unchangeable, objective, independent of man hierarchy of values, but involves reliance on the active position of students, the formation of their value consciousness. It is the value consciousness as a special form of worldview that allows a person not only to perceive, explain and understand the world through the prism of values, but also to be a subject of value mastering of reality, i.e. to participate in the re-evaluation of values, their correction and construction. Value consciousness is a wide thinking space with a common rational language necessary for mutual understanding (Rozov, 1998), it allows a person to assert his/her value relations with the world, to take an active part in the value comprehension of reality and prevents the imposition of certain ideals, values and value orientations.

Conclusion

Axiological issues occupy an important place in the research on the philosophy of education. Realising its axiological potential, philosophy of education is called not only to offer certain value guidelines for education, but also to theoretically justify approaches that provide effective influence on the value sphere of the student's personality in the educational process. The concept of "value" reflects the significance of objects and phenomena of the surrounding world, conditioned by their objective properties, which is revealed in the process of human interaction with the surrounding world and other people. Value can act as a goal or ideal, as a norm, setting patterns and standards of behaviour. In the conditions of rapid changes in the value picture

of the world, the approaches related to "teaching" values, "informing" students about values, or assuming their "formation", "indoctrination", and "inculcation", are ineffective. The strategy of implementing the axiological function of educational philosophy based on the principles of constructive axiology looks more successful and promising. The constructive approach provides for the students' acquisition of values in the process of education, which is not limited to simple adaptation of children and youth to the eternal, unchangeable, objective, independent of man hierarchy of values, but is aimed at activation of the students' value mastering of the world, formation of their value consciousness. Only in this case the student becomes a full-fledged subject of value relations, and has the opportunity to actively participate in the re-evaluation of values, their correction and construction.

References

Ambrozy, M., & Sagat, P. (2018). Axiological aspect in the context of teaching philosophy. *XLinguae, 3*(11), 218–227. https://doi.org/10.18355/XL.2019.12.03.16

Couló, A. C. (2014). Philosophical Dimensions of Social and Ethical Issues in School Science Education: Values in Science and in Science Classrooms. In M. R. Matthews, *International Handbook of Research in History, Philosophy and Science Teaching* (pp. 1087–1117). Springer.

Phillips, D. C. (2014). *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory.* SAGE Publications. https://sk.sagepub.com/ency/edvol/encyclopedia-of-education-theory-and-philosophy/toc

Peters, M. A. (2018). *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory.* Springer. https://www.danesh-namehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/Encyclopedia%20of%20Educational%20Phi.pdf

Hatcher, W., Nomokonov V., & Osokin, L. (1997). *The Ethics of Authenticity. International Moral Education Project.* Axios.

Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies.* Princeton University Press.

Johnston, J. S. (2019). *Problems in Philosophy of Education. A Systematic Approach.* Bloomsbury Publishing.

Kuznetsov, N. (1992). *Chelovek, potrebnosty, cennosty* [Man, needs, values]. Nauka.

Lovat, T., & Toomey, R. (2009). *Values Education and Quality Teaching.* The Double Helix Effect.

McMurray, F. (2000). *Philosophy of Public Education. Midwest Philosophy of Education Society.* Carbondale.

Noddings, N. (2018). *Philosophy of Education* (4th ed.). Taylor and Francis. https://www.perlego.com/book/1597601/philosophy-of-education-pdf

Gorlack, M., Kremen V., & Rybalko V. (Eds.). (2000). *Filosofiya. Pidruchnik* [Philosophy. Handbook]. Konsul.

Rozov, N. (1998). *Cennosty v problemnom myre: fylosofskye osnovanyja y socyal'nye prylozhenyja konstruktyvnoj aksyologyy* [Values in the problem world: philosophical foundations and social applications of constructive axiology]. Novosibirsk University.

Schroeder, M. (2021). *Value Theory.* The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/value-theory/

Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (1 ed.). Harper Perennial.

Vakhovskyi, L. (2024). Antypedagogika jak postmodernists'kyj projekt [Anti-pedagogy as a postmodern project]. *Education and pedagogical sciences, 1*(185), 13–21. https://doi.org/10.12958/2227–2747–2024–1(185)-13–21

Wajeha, T. (2014). Core Values Matrix of the Philosophy of basic Education in Oman (PBEO). *Athens Journal of Education, 1*(2), 167–182.