

# VALUES AND EDUCATION FOR VALUES OF TODAY'S YOUTH

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## ABSTRACT

**Thesis.** The aim of the study is to critically reflect on the challenges and current issues of value-oriented education in relation to youth. It focuses on youth as a specific generational group, internally extremely variable, in the context of massive changes in society, especially with the increase in the importance of digital technologies and social networks in the educational process.

**Concept.** In the published study, several perspectives on the issue overlap on the theoretical and research levels. Healthy, functioning families are at the epicentre of concern for any society that cares about its own future. One of the major problems of contemporary public life, especially after the emergence of the so-called new media, is undoubtedly the issue of raising children in a media-saturated environment. The line of thought of the study is concentrated on the responsibility for the future of the society also through the formation of the value system of the young generation, considering the potential of the family in the given context.

**Results and conclusion.** The study captures the essence, specifics, and selected aspects of insight into value-oriented youth education in the context of contemporary society. The present analysis is based on the knowledge of several scientific disciplines and its interdisciplinary character allows to look at the mentioned issue through the prism of one's own scientific field. The conclusion of the study highlights the irreplaceable importance of values education for youth, based on the central idea that values are the fundamental pillar of any society's development. It calls for values education, which

is primarily the task and responsibility of the family or parents, pointing to authenticity and the need to preserve unity of thought, word and deed in a given context. Considering the dynamically changing times with an emphasis on value pluralism, as well as the tremendous growth of digital technologies, the study is a beneficial contribution to the social science discourse on values education in relation to children and youth, especially family education, which is of fundamental, formative importance for the individual.

**Keywords:** values, education, youth, media, family

## INTRODUCTION

The theme of values is a topical one and is likely to remain one of the main areas of interest for the scientific or professional community in the future. It is stated that youth behaviour is strongly shaped by the attitude of adults towards youth. We reap what we sow. It is important to pay attention to values that become orientation points for youth, what young people perceive as their possibilities and opportunities, especially in times of rapid social change. Values help us to distinguish right from wrong, important from unimportant, and they are also our link with other members of society, because we do not develop values in isolation from society. Understanding values therefore requires reflecting on their individual as well as societal levels. Different people and nations or groups of people have different values and value systems. Thus, different symphonies are created, but guided by similar principles, and individual artists and the whole orchestra play according to them (Andresová et al., 2021).

Education is a process in which values are acquired. It is not a process of simple learning in which a child adopts values from his parents or teachers. In the process of education, values are acquired in such a way that the child becomes aware of the necessity of being guided by values. One of such realisations is the understanding that as a human being I am dependent on other people. Undoubtedly, as an independent individual, he arranges his life and his world. However, as a social being, he is dependent on living in society. As a spiritual being, man seeks moral and value coordinates that transcend his current knowledge, which is conditioned by the cultural environment and the formative influence of the family and educational institutions (Krupa et al., 2023). His freedom is not limited by other people; on the contrary, he needs others, he needs a socially anchored structure to realise himself. Man and his individuality are immediately dependent on social being. The realisation of social dependence is as old as humanity itself, and on the one hand this realisation caused an understanding of all human mutuality and the necessity to participate in common life (Kondrla et al., 2023). On the other hand, however, man has realised that he can also abuse this dependence, that he can exploit and blackmail others because of this dependence. It is the aspect of awareness of dependence on other people that is very

important, because it brings with it an understanding of the dignity and importance of the other person, or other people.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF VALUES EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY TIMES

A sense of responsibility of mutual cohesion and solidarity could be described as essential components of social feeling and behaviour. These are basic and underlying values that are the primary prerequisites for social cooperation to be able to cooperate with others. One of the most essential links between social life and harmony, alongside the call for the protection of human dignity, is the principle of the common good. The common good is inextricably linked to the notion of the good of everyone, as well as to the idea of a good that is not limited to the individual or collective perception of its content. It is a spiritual dimension of the good that complements social and cultural understandings and is therefore of benefit to all humanity (Maturkanič et al., 2023). The common good realised in social life can only be a good that also considers the good of the person. This is why an understanding and acceptance of the above-mentioned social dependence is essential. It can be argued that there is sometimes a between the common good and the good of an individual. However, on deeper reflection, we realise that there is not a fundamental difference between the common good and the true good of the individual. Certainly, the achievement of the common good, the good of all and for all, is only possible if at the same time the interest of the individual is preserved and the individual needs of the members of society are met. The ideal state can be considered as a situation where the individual's needs and the needs of the society or social group are aligned. However, such a situation is rare. More often we encounter a situation of the presence of conflict, i.e., when an individual has different ideas, interests, or preferences than society. Simply, the person wants something different from what is expected of him. In the so-called post-modern age, proud of its orientation towards pluralism of values, such a value conflict is quite common (Judák et al., 2023). Each individual builds his own value system, his own value orientation, and in such circumstances, it is very difficult to seek a consensus, a model of cooperation, or a model in which people would work towards a common goal. Does values education become much more difficult in such an environment? Are values and norms losing their meaning? Are they not subject to a false image of freedom that can do absolutely anything? Here we come to the problem of denial of responsibility. On the one hand, we seize the opportunity to act freely and preferably without any constraints. We reject any norms that would limit our actions. Paradoxically, on the other hand, we reject responsibility, or do not want to be responsible for the consequences associated with freedom and our free choices. For many, freedom takes the form of an expression of one's own opinion,

values, something worth fighting for. But if everything is allowed, there is no reason to fight, except perhaps to win. The winner takes it all.

It is important to note that it is the cultural environment that greatly influences the way people understand norms and regulations. Every society, community or group always associates its cultural goals with rules, rooted in mores or institutions, determining the permissible, permitted forms of paths to these goals (Merton, 2007). As for his formulation above, it can be noted that the most technically efficient procedure to obtain culturally approved value, whether culturally legitimate or not, generally takes precedence over institutionally prescribed behaviour. As institutional prescriptions continue to weaken, instability within society is continuously increasing. Francis Fukuyama (2006) points out the serious problems arising with a culture of unbound individualism in which, paradoxically, rule-breaking becomes the only rule:

- Moral values and social rules cease to be a means of omnipotent limitation of individual choice and become rather a prerequisite for any type of cooperation;
- The problem with a culture of intense individualism is that it deprives itself of community, i.e., a cohesive civic community. A true community is united by the values, norms, shared experiences, and experiences of its individual members;
- The slogan “We know no borders” (Fukuyama, 2006, pp. 26-27) becomes problematic. We want to break meaningless, outdated rules and strive for as much freedom as possible, but we are constantly demanding new rules that allow new forms of cooperation that give us a sense of belonging to a community. Such new rules always require restrictions on individual freedom. A society that continually subverts norms and values in the name of individual freedom of choice will become increasingly disoriented, isolated, and unable to fulfil societal roles and goals (Fukuyama, 2006).

Clear lines specifying the space for the different stakeholders have their justification. Boundaries protect our space in which we feel safe and comfortable. Setting limits or boundaries in parenting is an essential part of developing self-confidence and self-esteem in children. In fact, absolute freedom without any structure can be counterproductive and confusing for children. The risk of children getting lost in it is quite high.

The new, contemporary era is acquiring strange names such as: pride is turning into healthy self-esteem, greed into the law of economics, intemperance into a higher standard of living, grobianism into freedom of speech, indifference in the upbringing of children into the formation of one’s own opinion, the suppression of traditional values into the shedding of prejudices and the triumph of common sense, and frequently, in some cases, laziness has turned into a social benefit or social parasitism. One of the noticeable characteristics of our times is the tendency towards unification. The world has shrunk. The new era of global movement, the revolution in information and communication technologies and the boom in the culture industry is described

by Gilles Lipovetsky as a “world culture” absorbing quasi-traditional cultures and marked by abundance and permanent change. The main organisational principles of the world culture are the market, the consumer way of life, science and technology, individualism, and the culture-communication industry. In the given context, one can also mention the phenomenon of migration and political transformations absorbing new phenomena into political power (Šoltés, 2021).

Media has become an essential part of our lives, and in a globally connected world, technology will only support the growth and use of digital tools. The reality in which we live points us to the importance of the current young generation being prepared to take the future responsibly into their own hands. What is the role of education in today’s globalised world? Does anyone doubt the importance of education and its preference in family or school practice? In the optics of many, there is hope for change through youth. It can be observed in the history of our nation that numerous individuals have made significant contributions to the field of education, with a particular focus on the younger generation. They have sought to instil in these younger members of society a sense of positive reforming forces (Valčová et al., 2023). Miron Zelina (2010) states that education should have a positive value orientation in the sense of a positive self-concept and in the sense of a positive social citizen-human. Education is the power of love used for the good of children, not against them. If education is applied in the right way, it is the highest good for children, states Karis Kimmel Murrayová (2018). The goal orientation of education also reflects the desire to prove something, to achieve something, to do something for oneself. A person always desires, wants, and needs something (Blaščíková & Nemeč, 2023).

Our humanity, however, is not about perfection, the achievement of all goals, the insistent fulfilment of aspirations in personal and professional self-fulfilment, and unnatural perfectionism. However, it is inexcusable if we do not devote enough time to self-improvement, to fulfilling our desire to be a better person. (Lomnický, 2015, p. 11)

Tim Kimmel (2018) concludes that raising children calls for establishing a strong foundation of security in the lives of families. Reflecting on the current economic situation and materialistic world, many associate this sense of security with money. Understandably, opinions vary on the legitimate role of money in this process. Money is important, and if it serves the real interests of the family, there can be no argument. After all, it is thanks to them that we can cover our daily living costs. However, when the accumulation of money goes beyond the simple need for financing and becomes a goal, we realise the true depth of our insecurities. According to the author quoted above, children brought up in families that derive their security from money or material possessions are among the most insecure people. Money should be seen as an important part of life, but not the only or main part. The balance between the material and the immaterial has its merits. However, without setting value priorities, we will never reach an optimal balance, state meaning our

complete satisfaction (Lomnický, 2015). Lujza Koldeová's (2016) research findings focusing on the values and value orientation of adolescents in Slovak Republic and Federal Republic of Germany suggest that in ideal value conceptions, material values represent values of medium importance for adolescents, and material values in terms of making a favourable impression represent values of high importance for adolescents. However, the preference for property, finances and good economic security is not only characteristic of young people, who can be negatively influenced by advertising, consumerist lifestyle, the availability of negative examples from the environment, but also by social insecurities and negative emotions aroused by the current economic situation. A positive finding of the cited research by Koldeová (2016) is the preference for universal human values among adolescents (health, love, friendship, and family), among which the value of love and friendship is central, proclaimed as a very important value.

According to Tibor Máhrik, the reality of digital technologies, especially social networks, and artificial intelligence, which have a significant impact on the phenomenon of narcissism that "all ages in highly developed societies struggle with" (Štefěček et al., 2011, p. 224), needs to be incorporated into contemporary reflections on values and their place in the inner world of individuals and communities. Narcissistic culture poses a serious challenge, as narcissistic personality disorder complicates interpersonal relationships at all levels of a person's existence and leads individuals into profound social isolation. While the virtual world of online technologies offers unforeseen possibilities for filling inner emptiness, solipsistic grasp of own life and place in society will lead to new disappointment and consequently to greater isolation from the context of real relationships. The narcissist creates his own social bubble in which he defines the values he professes and identifies with. He is unable to embrace otherness and to deal with a critical view of his own world of values. In his loneliness, his sense of frustration and boredom deepens, creating a vicious circle of socio-pathological bonds. In such a context, the formation of an axiological understanding of the world in both the individual and society becomes a difficult challenge. The narcissistic world is curved in on itself and such a person is convinced of his truth to such an extent that he finds it very difficult to change his views, attitudes, and value orientations (Máhrik et al., 2024). Teleological perspectivism in human motivation indicates a certain way out, with "telos" representing "the actualisation of the possibilities of self-development" (Máhrik et al., 2020, p. 47) in very practical ethical and spiritual forms; however, in the narcissistic world, the 'form of actualisation' represents an ambivalent concept, as there is an absence of the objective aspect of assessing the 'form' in question, as well as the critical thinking that would help the narcissistic person to discover 'his or her own black spots'. This is why there is a growing need to create space for the metaphysical dimension in thinking about the relationship between partiality and universality in questions of value, as narcissism is characterised by the absolutisation of its own partialities

over universals that would take into account the needs and value preferences of other subjects or the whole community – “without true metaphysics and quality critical thinking, it will be difficult to accomplish these tasks” (Králik & Máhrik, 2019, p. 8903). Despite the growing importance of artificial intelligence, we believe that it is the human factor that will continue to play a key role in this process. The authentic life of the individual, whose existence is shaped by a balance of the spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions of his or her being, has become an urgent goal (Pavlíková & Tavilla, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

We identify with the statement that the society of the future runs through the family. After all, the family is the place of first socialisation and education. It should be obvious beyond any doubt that there is no ideal family, but to be born and brought up in a healthy and functioning family is ideal. A family that is both supportive and encouraging at the same time, providing the opportunity to love, and be loved. This is the starting point for the harmonious development of a child’s personality. The feeling of acceptance, of unconditional acceptance in the family, even if everything does not always work out—this is what we learn in the family as a priority. The family is also a valuable source of diverse relationships through which we learn about social life, acquire individual values reflected in various activities, time spent together and the way we interact with each other. We cannot ask children to do something that adults/parents have not taught them or that they themselves are not living. There is no luxury in raising children of being able to tear things down and start over. According to Kimmel (2018), these demands escalate in the context of an educational environment heavily dominated by the media, which can erase and reprogram children’s values faster than ever before.

Jean Giono’s novel *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1953) highlights the persistent activity of a man who does not claim a reward and yet brings tangible benefits to the world. The transformation of an arid, inhospitable wasteland into a land of abundance and prosperity was achieved by a single man relying solely on his physical strength and strong will. The future is full of challenges and hopes, we are reticent to predict it, but we are still and can be people who plant trees.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The paper is the output of the project APVV-22-0204 *Religiozita a Hodnoty Trvalej Udržateľnosti* (Religiosity and Values of Permanent Sustainability). The project is supported by Research and Development Agency.

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