

## SOME IDEAS ABOUT SPECIFICITY AND METHODS OF FOSTERING VALUE-BASED RELATIONS WITH NATURE

*Dear Readers!*

The interpretation of the concept 'value' is extremely varied and brings a historic background. Values are fostered since childhood through the process of sharing and analysing individual experience based on certain concepts such as goodness, beauty, love, etc. Rules and standards are also important for value development. All people tend to seek values and their cognition ("When Values Change", 1999). 'The Dictionary of Psychology' explains that value attitudes as if determine all human works, the main patterns of behaviour, different actions or even a single act (The Dictionary of Psychology, 1993).

The issues of moral values are highly relevant as they are closely related with the human upbringing, fostering of his value attitudes (The Sketches of Ethics, 1984). Secondly, modern education is in a state of global crisis partially because of the absence of a value-based design of its strategic functions (Sankar, 2004). The development of value-based attitudes is a complex process. In general, morality or moral is the most conservative aspect of inner culture, it changes slowly and gradually. However, children and teenagers have less preconceived ideas and habits than adults. Therefore, their relation with the world is in the making, they are more flexible and susceptible to outward influences (Gurevičiūtė, Galkutė, etc. 1997). J. Piaget is sure that the middle childhood (the age of 6-11 years old) is the most suitable period to foster moral issues. L. Kohlberg referring to various research points out three stages in the evolution of morality. The second stage includes children aged from 10 to 13 and is called *the self-decided moral agency*. The third stage represents the moral agency using all individual moral standards. This kind of morality develops or fails to develop in the period of adolescence (Kliminskienė, 1999).

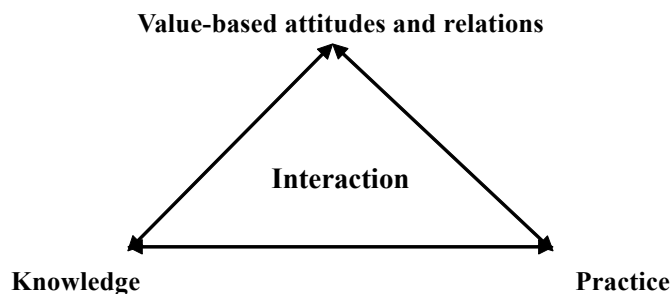
The tutors who attempt to develop respect for nature in the values of their pupils should know and utilize the mentioned peculiarities of the age boundaries. Primary school shares a great responsibility in this process while pupils are curious, sensitive to nature, influenced by the processes of the outward world at this age range (Atutienė, 1999).

Love for nature, the importance of its protection should be instilled since childhood. Experience acquired in the family is further developed at school where value-based attitudes are continually established, a strong individual opinion about the surrounding nature is developed. These considerations presented by Kliminskienė and Kliminskas (1998), Vaitkevičius (2000), Šapokienė (1998), Gajauskaitė (1990), etc. have become extremely important having assessed the data of recent research. The survey of parents conducted by Miltenienė and Mockevičienė indicates that only 36% of the applicants indicates that they taught their children to love nature, involved children into practical tasks: to perceive the world of nature, to take care about animals, 44% of the parents admitted that they paid little attention to the above mentioned factors or agreed they did not pay any attention as they supposed their child would gain this knowledge at school. 20% of the parents stated it was not the main goal of their family. Most of the researchers agree that very often the media ignore the development of positive value-based attitudes and impose many things without any value-based orientation. Hence, in respect of nature, school is mainly responsible for

the fostering the value attitudes of the pupils (Miltenienė, Mockevičienė, 1998). Since 1998, active enthusiasts have launched a project “The Animate World and Me” which involves the city pupils who have pets (Bobrova, 2000). L.Bobrova states that the curriculum of this project developing children’s care for their animals is one of the most effective pedagogic and psychologic methods that builds up mental, emotional and physical well-being of schoolchildren, enriches their free time trying to reach harmony with nature (p.10).

Research carried out in Russia revealed that actually half of the primary school essays reflect a pragmatic relation with nature, ‘Nature is our greatest treasure’, ‘Forests must be protected because pencils and rulers are made of wood’, ‘Dogs are important because they guard houses’, etc. Such pragmatism of the primary schoolchildren is nothing but a result of the pragmatic content of comprehensive educational school. Children simply repeat the clichés mentioned by their teachers (Jasvin, 2000). Most probably, a similar situation can be found in Lithuanian schools (though not enough research have been carried out). In conclusion, it can be said that contemporary school is not yet ready to perceive and instil the shallowness of consumerism (Uktveris, 1997).

Having reviewed the positions of various authors on the issue of the development of value-based attitudes in respect of nature in comprehensive schools, the following conclusion can be made in diagram form:



**Figure 1. The development of value-based attitudes in respect of nature**

The diagram demonstrates that the development of value-based attitudes is non-effective without knowledge and practice. Symbolically it looks as an exclusive triangle. The interaction between knowledge and value-based attitudes is rather complex. Value-based attitudes are certainly affected by the knowledge gained during the learning process. However, on the other hand, the settled attitudes often hinder people to accept the knowledge which may seem inappropriate. Gained knowledge itself does not change the behaviour of schoolchildren. In order to introduce changes, value-based attitudes must be altered, i.e. individual opinion on what is valuable and what is not, what is right and what is wrong, etc. The crucial aim of school work is to impart required knowledge concerning human life, nature and its protection from the ecology point of view. Schoolchildren should know exactly what they do, how to behave oneself in the surrounding nature, how to make moral decisions (Lekevičius, 1997).

Moreover, it is important for pupils to acquire knowledge not only from literature or textbooks, but also from the active practical work at school (Lamanauskas, 2003). It is necessary to teach children to observe and perceive natural phenomena, to pick herbs, to protect animals and birds, etc. According to V.Bernotas, such important practical activities help to foster pupils’ morality, honesty and other valuable personal qualities (Bernotas, 1999). Only interaction with nature, observation and research can help children to perceive, cherish and love it, to shape an active position in regard to nature (Lukavičienė, Urbonavičienė, 1999).

Therefore, developing value-based attitudes in respect of nature in the hearts of children is

a long and complex process requiring an absolutely necessary aspect - continuous contact with animate nature. Moreover, without a direct contact with nature, the ability to perceive different forms of life in practice the process will be non-effective. This issue is extremely urgent and relevant in city-life where a child's interaction with animate nature is restricted to the minimum (Kliminskienė, 1997).

Motiejūnienė, Makarskaitė, Bučiuvienė and many other authors emphasise a more frequent interaction with nature and untraditional methods and forms in the development of value-based relations with nature. Obelevičius states that a picture of planting a sapling will not affect the child very much. However, if all children plant one sapling outside the classroom, the effect will be different. In the first case a child will obtain only theoretic knowledge and very soon forget about it. The other case provides a real life experience that has an educational effect. Thus, having planted a tree, a child will not dare to hurt it and will always remember this experience. The author believes that it is worth postponing a few theoretic classes for such an effect (Obelevičius, 1995).

Galkutė, Gurevičiūtė (1997) and other authors believe in direct and straightforward measures of fostering human and environmental moral values, such as *prohibitions, preachments and morals*. In critical situations they can be effective. However, their frequent use may produce an opposite effect. Moreover, very often a senior student does not have full trust in their teachers. According to the authors, indirect methods are more effective and are called *a silent strategy*. This strategy is based on the following principle: we can and have to create such conditions which would automatically develop morality in the soul of the child. However, we shouldn't instil it by force. The purpose of child training is to help children to discover their own values themselves (Motiejūnienė, Lekevičius, 1997).

Kliminskienė concluding the methods, attitudes and possibilities to develop due respect for life and nature states that a positive emotional and valuable relation with nature will be developed only if we continually correlate with nature: perceive, observe, protect, understand it. Only the wide diversity of living nature forms will let us perceive its majesty and divine perfection. Only care for pets, help for the suffering and wounded creatures, sympathy for others can change a passive feeling into an inner revolution, into a conscious act of goodness, into a motivation to be active, into a desire to change oneself (Kliminskienė, 1997).

The revision of modern scientific information sources maintains that little attention is paid to the aspect of fostering value-based relations with nature as not enough research in the field has been carried out. Also it is important to elaborate the most appropriate model of fostering value-based relations with nature. All these questions are mostly connected with science education process in comprehensive school. It is important to shift our attention from *fact-based knowledge* to *value-based knowledge* at all educational levels. **Science education** today should be much more value-based than many years ago. It can not be neutral. It must contain a spiritual dimension. Generally speaking, it is obvious, if we want to improve education of the young generation, the process of fostering value-based relations and sensual perception of nature should be devoted more attention.

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