



## **THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION OF MORAL AND SOCIAL VALUES IN MODERN PEDAGOGY: FROM FOUNDATIONAL SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY TO ADVANCED HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIES**

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### **Abstract**

By combining traditional sociocultural theories with contemporary culturally sensitive methods, this paper examines the methodical development of moral and social values within educational contexts. The study explores how school culture, instructional coaching, and pedagogical mediation act as catalysts for ethical development, drawing on the works of Vygotsky and Kohlberg. While the provided research focuses heavily on early childhood and secondary education, this article extends those principles to the higher education context, proposing advanced methodologies such as ethical case analysis, service-learning, and reflective professional coaching to foster critical consciousness and professional integrity in adult learners.

**Keywords:** Moral development, sociocultural theory, higher education, culturally responsive teaching, instructional coaching, ethical mediation, social-emotional learning.

### **Introduction**

Values are defined as guiding principles for determining right from wrong, influencing both individual behavior and collective decision-making. Values Education (VE) is the intentional effort by educational institutions to foster ethical and prosocial behaviors through a structured curriculum and a supportive environment. In the modern era of globalization, the need to nurture morally responsible individuals is increasingly urgent, as academic knowledge alone is insufficient without a strong ethical foundation.

The development of moral and social values is rooted in two primary theoretical domains:



**Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky):** This framework posits that human cognition is a social and cultural phenomenon before it is an individual one. Through mediation, teachers serve as intermediaries between students and knowledge. Key to this is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where a student's potential for ethical reasoning is realized through the guidance of a more capable mentor or peer. In the context of developing values, the ZPD is where scaffolding occurs. Teachers provide temporary support—such as language tools or ethical frameworks—to help students navigate complex social dilemmas. As these values are practiced on the social level within the ZPD, they eventually become internalized on the individual level, transitioning from external social rules to internal moral convictions.

In higher education, the ZPD remains a critical framework for professional training, as it allows for the development of advanced capabilities that may take months or years to mature through continuous mediation and reflective practice.

**Moral Development Theory (Kohlberg):** Kohlberg identifies stages of moral growth, moving from pre-conventional levels (fear of punishment) to post-conventional levels, where individuals act based on an inner acceptance of universal justice and human rights.

A significant correlation exists between an institution's culture and the moral development of its students. School culture—comprising rules, teacher-student relationships, and administrative leadership—shapes the "social atmosphere".

- **Positive Culture:** Characterized by collegiality and trust, it releases neurochemicals like oxytocin and dopamine, which strengthen learning and memory.
- **Toxic Culture:** Characterized by microaggressions and blame, it triggers a "fight-or-flight" response, flooding the brain with cortisol and diverting energy away from cognitive and moral growth.

Research indicates that moral education is most effective when integrated into both the explicit curriculum and the "hidden curriculum" of daily interactions.

- **Narrative Pedagogy:** Utilizing storytelling allows students to engage with moral lessons in a meaningful way, fostering curiosity and critical reflection. In the context of spiritual and moral education, it serves as a "cultural approach," introducing students to national traditions, cultural heritage, and universal human values. By engaging with narratives, students move beyond rote memorization to explore ethical dilemmas that challenge them to think critically about conflict resolution, fairness, and empathy.



- **Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT):** This approach uses students' unique knowledge and experiences as cognitive scaffolding, helping them see a path to success and building self-efficacy. Furthermore, it is defined as a pedagogical best practice that acknowledges and values students' diverse life experiences to foster a sense of belonging, improve learning outcomes, and close persistent achievement gaps. Rather than focusing solely on superficial celebrations of heritage, such as food or festivals, CRT is specifically designed to build each student's learning capacity by strengthening the cognitive scaffolding they bring with them to the classroom.

- **Modeling and Imitation:** Teachers serve as moral guides; students learn moral concepts through the direct observation of ethical behavior in their mentors.

To adapt these foundational principles for higher education, institutions must move beyond basic rules toward fostering critical consciousness.

1. **Instructional Coaching for Faculty:** Utilizing administrative instructional coaching as a professional learning approach helps educators create and implement culturally responsive curricula based on the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

2. **Ethical Case Analysis and Debates:** Higher education students should analyze field-specific ethical dilemmas (e.g., medical or business ethics). This moves them into Kohlberg's final stages of moral reasoning, where they must justify choices based on universal principles.

3. **Service-Learning as "Leading Activity":** Drawing on the neo-Vygotskian concept of leading activity, university students should engage in joint actions with the community. This fosters values of sacrifice and sharing, connecting academic content to real-world social responsibility.

4. **Reflective Peer Review and Journaling:** Using private speech as a starting point for mental development, students can use journaling to internalize social norms and reflect on their own biases.

5. **Cross-Cultural Mentorship:** Higher education should leverage psychological tools (language, writing styles) from diverse cultures to guide students' thoughts and behaviors, dismantling Eurocentric biases in the traditional canon.

In conclusion, the formation of spiritual, moral, and social values is a lifelong process that requires a systematic and adaptable pedagogical approach. By transitioning from foundational scaffolding to advanced instructional coaching and critical inquiry, higher education can produce graduates who are not only intellectually capable but ethically grounded and socially conscious members of a global society.



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