
*Values Education Through Geography: A Radical Critique**

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The world is upside down, the rights and wrongs don't get much
wronger

The Beat¹

As the economic crisis worsens, The Beat provide a voice for countless young people who face a world of rising unemployment, mounting injustice, and a deteriorating environment. Their feelings of frustration and alienation seriously challenge conventional notions of education and have led some teachers, including geographers, to seek more relevant approaches to social issues. This article provides a critique of one such response, the greater attention to values education within geography. It argues that much values education can be seen to be idealistic and politically biased, and that geography teachers would be better advised to seek relevance through political education.

Values Education

The inclusion of moral or values education within the geography curriculum is now widely advocated (Martorella 1977; Fien and Slater 1981; Huckle 1981). Its proponents have generally argued that geography teachers should foster personal decision making on social issues by dealing with both knowledge and values in the classroom. Teachers are to encourage students to consider 'rights and wrongs' and decide what ought to happen by using techniques such as values clarification, values analysis, and the discussion of moral dilemmas. These techniques are based on theories of moral philosophy and psychology, which focus on the individual as a moral agent and provide process criteria for sound moral judgment. In Britain, recent

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A Preparation

In considering a case confronted with a choice, Parker at the Windward and included substantialations of facts and decision-making on a range of facts and manageable proper decisions on the basis will overstate the are generally take tions of the various unlike moral philosophy debate because the resulting hardline rarely refers to the interests committed students that put them a disservice the political process.

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188

which reduce such issues to 'rights and wrongs' therefore foster a naive view of politics. Values education is the wrong analogy for much political decision making.

A further limitation of the values education approach is its neglect of alternative means whereby social goals or values may be realized. When politicians deal with the allocation of scarce resources, they seek policy which not only reflects considered goals but is likely to be effective and maintain their support. Politics frequently involves trade-offs between two equally worthy goals and the adjustment of policy in order to maintain power. The French experience shows that it is extremely unlikely that a complete nuclear power program would be cancelled or run down. Interactions between energy policy, the economy, and employment, leading to strong representations from industry and trade unions, mean that the values of the anti-nuclear lobby are likely to be compromised and realized only gradually. Practical politics is rarely reducible to the parameters encompassed by values education.

A Preparation for Disillusionment

In considering a controversial issue like nuclear power, one is immediately confronted with almost limitless information. Evidence put before Justice Parker at the Windscale Inquiry into fuel reprocessing weighed several tons and included submissions from groups and individuals whose interpretations of facts and values were widely different. In comparison, our decision-making exercises in geography are perhaps too ready to restrict the range of facts and values put before students in order to reduce the task to manageable proportions. Although it is true that politicians frequently make decisions on the basis of imperfect evidence, there is again a danger that we will overstate the rational nature of the political process. Political decisions are generally taken in the light of partial evidence, and the moral implications of the various policy choices are rarely clear. Additionally, politicians, unlike moral philosophers, avoid clarifying values and sharpening moral debate because doing so tends to divide their support and make retreat from resulting hardline positions difficult. Political debate on nuclear power rarely refers to fundamental moral values but seeks to maintain coalitions of interests committed to broad reshaping of society. By suggesting to students that politics is a rational process directed by moral debate, we do them a disservice. A false confidence in the rationality and moral efficacy of the political process is only likely to lead to disillusionment.

An Inadequate Logical Framework

A central tenet of values education is that similar processes of values analysis, clarification, and the resolution of dilemmas may be applied to

issues with widely differing content. Classroom strategies are designed to focus attention on the moral justification of decisions and develop a form of logic or moral reasoning which is considered content free. Such logic is, however, fundamentally different from that which usually guides public policy.

Values education seeks morally optimal choices based on a formal logic, but politicians seek politically feasible choices based on substantive logic. The priorities politicians give to different issues and values are determined by the ideological and social setting in which they operate; they cannot formulate policy without reference to the interpretation and significance given to an issue's content by their supporters. Public policy generally results from pragmatic, substantive logic, and we delude students if we suggest otherwise by ignoring the complex social processes which mediate between morality and politics (Muir and Paddison 1981). The current search for a coalition between the new green parties and the older socialist parties in Germany provides an example of these processes.

The 'greens' must persuade the 'reds' that new forms of ecologically sound production are necessary, and the 'reds' have to remind the 'greens' that ecodevelopment without redistribution is a contradiction. The coalition's policy on nuclear power is likely to be a compromise reflecting elements of both groups' ideologies and values. The new green politicians clearly need both moral and political skills if they are to realize their goal of halting West Germany's nuclear program.

Values education in geography may then be seen to be idealist because it neglects power, stresses ends over means, overstates the rationality of decision making, and misrepresents the type of logic which shapes public policy. These are major obstacles to our realization of relevance, but they are confounded by an associated and yet more serious weakness: the political bias inherent in values education. To perceive this bias we need to consider alternative sets of beliefs about society and social change and then acknowledge that, by reinforcing one at the expense of the other, values education acts as a form of social control.

Values and the Liberal View of Society

The dominant, liberal view of society suggests that values play a key role in maintaining an essentially benevolent social order (Eyles 1974; Horton 1966). It considers social unity to be based on widely shared values which ensure a high degree of consensus, and social change to result from institutions continually adapting to shifts in public preferences. The state is seen as a neutral arbitrator between groups with competing values and is generally considered capable of promoting the common good.

Such a view of values and social change leads liberal reformists to combine a faith in democratic capitalism with support by technocrats to

alleviate social ills. This is seen as a vehicle for social change, as mounting evidence suggests that schools should engage with the community. In their opinion, this leads to attitudes towards nature, management and planning.

Most of the values education in geography classrooms is based on Instruction legitimization, which promotes the intention of reaching a consensus over content in an idealistic way. This ignores existing technocratic structures, as they rarely include a search for genuine alternatives, and ideological bias which is common in social studies. Such a view of society.

Values and the Liberal View of Society

An alternative, radical view of society suggests that conflict between groups is a necessary part of economic production. This view is based on formal logic, and social control of the economy is exercised largely by the state. It promotes ideas which reject exploitation and the current condition because it is propagated by the state. This day-to-day control is exercised through both the state and the market. Societies can be different under different conditions, and agencies function differently.

A radical view of society suggests that their origin in the state is to maintain its hegemony and to propagate alternative interests. Values education results from the state's desire to control composition and content.

alleviate social ills. They believe in change by persuasion and see education as a vehicle for shifting values in appropriate directions. Faced with mounting evidence of threats to the planet's ecology, they suggest that schools should engage in values education and foster an environmental ethic. In their opinion, this approach would moderate materialism and exploitive attitudes towards nature and prompt support for appropriate environmental management and planning.

Most of the values education and decision making which takes place in geography classrooms reflects and sustains such a liberal view of society. Instruction legitimizes a technical and apolitical view of decision making, promotes the intentions of individual actors, neglects issues of power, values consensus over conflict, and either ignores the political system or portrays it in an idealistic way. Lessons on nuclear power may assess whether the existing technostucture can realize the 'benefits' and control the 'costs,' but they rarely include radical critiques of the nuclear society and an evaluation of genuine alternatives. The geography curriculum is guilty of the kind of ideological bias which Michael Apple (1979) perceived in the teaching of the social studies. Such perception stems from an alternative view of values and society.

Values and the Radical View of Society

An alternative, radical view of society regards it as a setting for conflict between groups or classes with different material interests. The benefits of economic production are unequally shared, and, therefore, social unity must be based on forms of coercion which take increasingly subtle forms. The social control of the poor by the rich, the powerless by the powerful, is now exercised largely through ideology and hegemony. Dominant groups promote ideas which appear to explain people's everyday lives, but in fact mask exploitation and the real distribution of power. Ordinary people accept their condition because of the hold of ideas and values which are not only propagated by such state agencies as education, but are reinforced by their day-to-day contact with technocracy. By transmitting liberal ideology through both their overt and hidden curricula, schools in advanced capitalist societies can be seen to reproduce the status quo. Conditions are little different under 'actually existing socialism' (Bahro 1981), for here too state agencies function in a repressive way.

A radical view of society regards values as social constructs which have their origin in the class struggle. While the dominant class strives to maintain its hegemony, enlightened elements of subordinate classes seek to propagate alternative ideas and values which better reflect their true interests. Values are not a primary cause of social change, for social change results from underlying economic change which produces shifts in the composition and interests of different classes and so sustains conflict. The

current crisis of capitalism is partly due to the overexploitation and pollution of the environment which results in a falling rate of profit (Schnaiberg 1980; Gorz 1980). Capital must, however, continue to exploit people and nature both to maintain profit and the consumer life-styles which have proved so successful in placating workers. It therefore seeks to transfer the blame for the environmental crisis and the costs of environmental management to ordinary citizens.

Against this background, advocates of environmental ethics are at best liberal idealists and at worst apologists for the status quo. Desirable social change can only result from broad programs of education which alert people to the common roots of inequality and environmental degradation, and link environmental well-being to wider political agendas. The task in schools is one of political rather than values education. Before considering what form such political education might take, it is interesting to speculate on the reasons why geography teachers have been advised to seek relevance through values.

Values Education as Therapy

An explanation of the recent advocacy of values education through geography is provided by radical sociologists of the curriculum. They seek a correspondence between schooling and the economic and cultural needs of the corporate state (Young and Whitty 1977; Apple 1979), in the belief that subjects like geography play their part in ensuring a supply of workers and citizens with appropriate ideas, skills, and attitudes. As the economy changes, so schools and other agencies of social control must adapt their provision to ensure continued correspondence. New authorities will arise to challenge existing orthodoxies, but, as in the case of values education, they may be unaware that their proposals serve to sustain rather than transform an unjust world.

In attempting to explain schools as agents of cultural and economic mediation between students and the state, Michael Apple looked for parallels between change in the workplace and that in the classroom. Because the control of the worker is increasingly exercised through a bureaucracy and its more unpleasant aspects by therapeutic techniques of personnel management, it is not surprising that new and increasingly subtle techniques of social and behavioral control have spread to schools. Values education can be seen as a form of therapy; an excuse to change the individual student rather than the structure of the school or the wider society. Its strategies allow the school to extend its rationalizing ethos to the private and personal disposition of students and so prepare them for a society which readily blames the individuals for their own misfortune. Values education adjusts and extends the school's social control function by providing wider criteria for the sorting of the future workforce and adjusting

students to their future rationality.

Such interpretation of education enable us to see the extension of the project of the seventies. Curriculum Project and the Geography Project represented an infusion of a more realistic preparation for geographers such as David Harvey. Positivist geography and geography at the school education to respond to the corporate state. In one which recent curriculum dominant cultural and should be seen as a recognized and incorporated behavioral and welfare charge that such participation (1979). Values education adopted the problem but teachers are unlikely worthwhile social reconstruction extension of the assumption teachers should adopt

Political Education

Social and political education in society and social change education in schools. In liberal philosophy the needs of the individual decision making on the system. If values and stress the development will be provided with them both to understand plural democracy. They will be helped to arrangements and realizing their social advance on what current

students to their future role within institutions dominated by instrumental rationality.

Such interpretations of the cultural and economic role of values education enable us to see its recent advocacy within geography as a logical extension of the profound curriculum reforms of the sixties and early seventies. Curriculum developments such as the American High School Project and the Geography 14-18 Project (Tolley and Reynolds 1978) represented an infusion of rationalism into school geography which made it a more realistic preparation for life in technocracy. Although radical geographers such as David Harvey recognized the political role of the 'new' positivist geography as early as 1974 (Harvey 1974), those concerned with geography at the school level have been less prepared than those in higher education to respond to his challenge and debate their co-option by the corporate state. In one article we cannot hope to discuss in full the manner in which recent curriculum reform has better adapted school geography to dominant cultural and economic needs, but present concern with values should be seen as a further adaptive response. School geography has recognized and incorporated the concern for values displayed by liberal, behavioral and welfare geographers but has yet to answer the radical's charge that such paths to relevance are idealist and reformist (Johnston 1979). Values education strategies are acceptable to teachers who have adopted the problem solving, inquiry techniques of the 'new' geography, but teachers are unlikely to make school geography a determining agent of worthwhile social reconstruction unless there is a radical reassessment and extension of the assumptions on which they are based. Above all, geography teachers should adopt a more realistic approach to politics.

Political Education

Social and political philosophies which prompt differing perceptions of society and social change also lead to conflicting prescriptions for political education in schools (Porter and Stradling 1982). Values education is rooted in liberal philosophy which focuses on the perceived social and political needs of the individual. As I have already suggested, it encourages personal decision making on social issues but is often ambivalent towards the political system. If values and political education are combined, the latter is likely to stress the development of political literacy (Crick and Porter 1978). Students will be provided with knowledge, skills and attitudes designed to allow them both to understand and participate within the political processes of a plural democracy. Through a study of such issues as nuclear power, they will be helped to appreciate their future role within existing political arrangements and processes and to regard the political system as a means of realizing their social needs and rights. Such political education is a major advance on what currently happens in many schools, but reconstructionists

and radicals regard it as idealistic because it takes a too benevolent view of existing social arrangements.

Radical notions of political education are derived from the conflict view of society and focus on the perceived needs of the disadvantaged. They stress the virtues of radical alternatives to existing social arrangements and seek to counter ideology and hegemony in order that these virtues may be realized. Within a radical program of political education through geography, students would be encouraged to realize that people are creators of values and the social processes whereby they find expression. Values are reflected in different political ideologies, parties and programs, and a relevant geographical education would allow students to evaluate competing conceptions of such values as social justice and environmental well-being and the political demands and the policies which stem from them (Vogeler 1977). It would also encourage a critical approach to the existing political system and acknowledge the role of power and conflict in preventing or enabling social change.

Social reconstructionists take an intermediate position between liberals and radicals. They acknowledge the plight of the disadvantaged but believe that worthwhile reform is possible within the existing political system. Their educational aims, therefore, focus on an awareness of what social justice entails and the development of collective participatory skills whereby it could be realized. Geography teachers wishing to draw on radical and reconstructionist advances in political education should perhaps look for advice to agencies outside formal education. In Britain, those concerned with urban (Webb 1981), development (Hicks and Townley 1982), community (Norton 1976), and peace education (Rogers 1982) all offer ideas and materials. Their gradual but steady incorporation into curricula places strong demands on schools as democratic institutions and serves to counter the reactionary proposals of politicians who currently seek to restructure education.

What then would a realistic study of nuclear power in the classroom involve? A brief consideration suggests that it would begin by identifying the actors in the dispute and their conflicting goals. Students would be asked to read and listen to the views of the nuclear industry, trade unions, political parties and pressure groups, and to identify the major areas of disagreement and the underlying beliefs and values in conflict. They would then consider the goal-seeking behavior of these different actors and the relative efficiencies of their different tactics and strategies. Such study would allow them to evaluate the workings of the political system and would lead to the realization that different actors command differing levels of support and power. Detailed consideration of actual decisions would suggest whether a consensus or conflict view of society seemed more appropriate and would illustrate the considerable compromises which actors must often make to realize their values. Correctly handled, the study would considerably

enhance the development of judgments and participation

Relevance — I

Almost one hundred years of geography which supported the status quo should be transformed (Webb 1981). He envisaged an education which would give people an awareness of their power to resist political and social forces free from ideological dogma and community in order that they could act in action. Teachers should have kept alive Kropotkin's tradition of political education in the tradition. It has clearly been forgotten for years, but its rediscovery and polarization, points to

As part of an attempt to counter President Reagan and P. O. Long's the reproduction of labor and the 'needs' of the economy, 'responsible' attitudes to the liberal consensus has given rise to justifies a return to income not only from the rich, but also the slow progress of labor and support a more repressive system from care to control of disaffection amongst the working reproduce forms of repressive emancipatory activity by

This article argues that education should be based on an acknowledgment of the values education and a commitment to political education. For the realization of a general

enhance the developing ability of students to make realistic political judgments and participate in social reconstruction.

Relevance — But in What Form?

Almost one hundred years ago, Peter Kropotkin argued that a school geography which supported Britain's militarist and imperialist ventures should be transformed into an agent of social reconstruction (Breitbart 1981). He envisaged an education in geography which would create within people an awareness of the social forces acting upon them and a desire to resist political and social manipulation. It would seek to provide knowledge free from ideological domination and would be based in the workplace and community in order that teachers and students could continually test ideas in action. Teachers such as Paul Goodman (1956) and Colin Ward (1978) have kept alive Kropotkin's moving plea for social relevance. My advocacy of political education may be seen as a continuation of this anarcho-socialist tradition. It has clearly been neglected by geography teachers in recent years, but its rediscovery, at a time of economic crisis and growing political polarization, points to major battles ahead.

As part of an attempt to restore the vitality of capitalism, the policies of President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher seek a stronger control over the reproduction of labour in schools. Education is to be made more relevant to the 'needs' of the economy and young people are to be given 'realistic' and 'responsible' attitudes towards the world of work (Sarup 1982). The postwar liberal consensus has given way to a new popular authoritarianism which justifies a return to inculcating 'right' values in schools and draws support not only from the rich, but from workers disillusioned by the bureaucracy and slow progress of liberal democracy. Although a majority appears to support a more repressive state, reduced expenditure on welfare and a shift from care to control in our schools, such policies produce increased disaffection amongst others. In stressing 'right' values, schools inevitably reproduce forms of resistance and so generate space for critical and emancipatory activity by radical teachers.

This article argues that a socially relevant school geography should now be based on an acknowledgment of the idealism and political bias present in values education and a rediscovery and development of realistic approaches to political education. Further words from The Beat remind us how urgent the realization of a genuinely relevant school geography has become.

*... the world is upside down
But look I can't hang on for much longer*

Note

- 1 The lyrics are from 'Sugar and Stress' on The Beat's LP *Special Beat Service*, Arista Records, 1982.

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Values Education through Geography: A Radical Critique

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