



CONTEMPORARY VALUE ORIENTATIONS AMONG PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS - A CROSS CULTURAL STUDY

Dr. (Mrs) Umme kulsum

Professor & UGC Post Doctoral Research Awardee, Department of Education, Bangalore University, Bangalore 560056.

ABSTRACT

The ongoing external changes occurring on the international scene on the political, economic, cultural and social levels give rise to interacting relations with traditional and contemporary values in the various societies. Indian society is at cross roads so far as its value choice is concerned today, Anti social forces are constantly whipping the minds of people to deviate from cherished path of nationalism. The younger generations, who are there in our schools and colleges, have to be imparted with right type of values that would sustain them as good and responsible citizens of tomorrow. But the contemporary value system imposes a kind of conflicting relation with the values of the past and present. It tries to impose its effect on the values by considering them as central universal values representing the common factor from the historical patrimony of the humanity. An attempt has been made in the present study to examine the contemporary value orientations of professional college students from two different cultures of India and USA. The data for the study were obtained using multidimensional scale constructed and standardised by the researcher for the purposes of the present study to measure contemporary value orientations with respect to: Self oriented-personal values, Conservative-traditional values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-Spiritual values respectively. The findings of the present study revealed very interesting results. It was found that Indian/American students pursuing professional courses differ significantly in their possession of contemporary values orientation with respect to: Self oriented-personal values, Conservative-traditional values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-Spiritual values respectively. Based on the findings of the present investigation the researcher has drawn practical and feasible implication for policy making in the area of quality professional education.

KEY WORDS: Contemporary Value Orientations. Self oriented-personal values, Conservative-traditional values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-Spiritual values.

Introduction:

The ongoing external changes occurring on the international scene on the political, economic, cultural and social levels give rise to interacting relations with traditional and contemporary values in the various societies. Indian society is at cross roads so far as its value choice is concerned today, Anti social forces are constantly whipping the minds of people to deviate from cherished path of nationalism. The younger generations, who are there in our schools and colleges, have to be imparted with right type of values that would sustain them as good and responsible citizens of tomorrow. But the contemporary value system imposes a kind of conflicting relation with the values of the past and present. It tries to impose its effect on the values by considering them as central values as universal values representing the common factor from the historical patrimony of the humanity.

Education, must develop the ability to value freedom and the skills to meet its challenges; it must develop the ability to recognise and accept the values which exist in the diversity of individuals, genders, peoples and cultures and develop the ability to communicate, share and co-operate with others; it must develop the ability of non-violent conflict resolution and promote the development of inner peace in the minds of students so that they can establish firmly the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing and caring; it must cultivate in students the ability to make informal choices; it must teach them to respect the cultural heritage, protect the environment, adopt methods of production and consumption leading to sustainable development with harmony between individuals and collective values and between immediate basic needs and long-term interests. And finally it must cultivate feelings of solidarity and equity at the national and international levels. Strategies to achieve these aims and the lines of action in respect of the content, teaching materials and resources, programmes of reading, expression and the promotion of foreign languages, educational establishments, training of teachers, action on behalf of vulnerable groups, research and development at higher education level. Need to be worked out by the concerned authorities. There has to be co-ordination between the education sector and other agents of socialisation, regional and international co-operation, have to be designed to promote education for peace, human rights and democracy.

The bewilderment in the upcoming youth poses a threat to the educational system, whose sole responsibility is to make worthy human beings. Imbibing of culture along with skills is indispensable. Teaching of values is the expected aim of education. But what can be said if the values are themselves in question. The values are a matter of conception and are different for different people belonging to different cultures. The need is to make the students well adjusted with the world and with themselves. This effort to change and to improve is the most striking feature of the present system of education. Educators must constantly strive for preservation of cultural identity and traditions, besides being aware of intercultural interdependence in response to increasing globalization. The education systems have to facilitate a desirable core of values, through a given professional course curriculum, which includes the following dimensions:

1. Awareness of human rights combined with a sense of social responsibilities.
Caution is taken that rights are not separated from duties, that the concept of human rights is not imposed but related to cultural traditions and regional contexts.
2. Value of social equity and democratic participation in decision making and government.
3. Understanding and tolerance of cultural differences and pluralism.
4. A spirit of caring and compassion, which should be extended not only to the family members and colleagues, but to all the disadvantaged, the sick, the poor and the disabled, for the well being of humankind and our planet.
5. Co-operative spirit
6. Enterprising Spirit a quality which is needed not only for economic productivity and competitiveness but for all life situations.
7. Creativity: always needed for technological advances, social progress, economic dynamics and all other human endeavors.
8. Sensitivity to gender equality.
9. Open-mindedness to change
10. Sense of obligation to environment and sustainable development.

Based on this background given above an attempt has been made in the present study to assess the contemporary value orientations with respect to: Conservative-traditional values, National-ethnic values, Self oriented-personal values, Social-community values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-Spiritual values among professional college students of two different cultures. In order to realize this, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives in mind.

1. To develop a scale to measure the contemporary value orientations with respect to: Self oriented-personal values, Conservative-traditional values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-Spiritual values respectively.
2. To find out whether Professional college students differ in their possession of Self oriented-personal values, Conservative-traditional values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-Spiritual values respectively.

Methodology of the Study: The general survey model has been employed in the study. General survey model designs to be administered on an entire population, a group selected from the whole population, sample or sampling in order to make a general judgment about the population consisting of many items (Karasar, 2004). The population of this study composed of professional college students from USA and India. Sample of 400 professional college students from USA and India were drawn from engineering colleges. The sample selection procedure was based on random sampling design.

Instrumentation: The data for the study were obtained using multidimensional scale to measure contemporary values. The scale was constructed and standardised by the researcher for the purposes of the present study. Six categories of contemporary values were generated from the operational definition of contemporary values. They are Self oriented-personal values, Conservative-traditional values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-spiritual values respectively.

The questionnaire in its initial stage of development was subjected to rationale logical analysis by some selected experts in tool construction after which, it was duly modified. The scale was tried out on a sample of 100 students and necessary item analysis for item selection employed. This process resulted in finalising 60 items out of 198 items. This scale was further treated for test-retest reliability and the reliability coefficient was found to be highly satisfactory. ($r=0.77$). All this procedure confirmed a high validity and reliability of the tool for collecting data for the purposes of present investigation. The scale in its final form included some questions pertaining to background information of the subjects along with 60 items measuring contemporary values of professional students. The tool was administered to 400 students pursuing engineering course in India and USA. In order to score the value orientation scale, the items were rated on a four-point scale ranging to strongly disagree to strongly agree for the positive item and in reverse order for negative items for the purposes of quantification of values. The data obtained have been analysed on the computer with "SPSS for Windows, ver.: 18.0" program. Signification of the analyses made has been tested at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance.

Results and Conclusions: The present study was undertaken to assess and compare the contemporary value orientations of engineering college students belonging to two diverse cultural backgrounds. A Cross-Cultural comparison of contemporary value orientation with respect to Self oriented-personal values, Conservative-traditional values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-spiritual values of engineering students. The analysis of data collected revealed some interesting findings as per the details given in the table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Mean Scores of Professional College Students

Contemporary Value	Indian Sample (n=200)		American Sample (n=200)		“t” Values
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Self oriented-personal values	23.35	10.37	27.86	11.02	7.78**
Conservative-traditional values	28.34	11.40	20.21	10.48	13.77**
Social-community values	20.30	9.81	25.33	11.26	9.15**
National-ethnic value	24.81	11.34	22.30	10.29	4.33**
Scientific-innovative values	21.28	10.91	26.11	12.34	7.21**
Moral-spiritual values	26.31	12.01	24.78	11.75	2.15*

** Significant at 0.01 level

* Significant at 0.05 level

With the comparisons of mean value scores of Indian and American engineering students the finding revealed significant result, indicating that these engineering students from two different cultures possess varying measure of contemporary values with respect to its six dimensions namely Self oriented-personal values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-spiritual values. Beside this the significant results were obtained from the comparisons of professional college students from two different cultures namely Indian and American respectively on all the six dimensions namely Self oriented-personal values, Social-community values, National-ethnic values, Scientific-innovative values and Moral-spiritual values. Comparisons of mean value scores reveals that Indian engineering students possessed highest mean score ($M=28.34$) in Conservative-traditional values followed by ($M=26.31$) in moral-spiritual dimension and ($M=24.81$) in national-ethnic dimension of contemporary value orientation compared to their counterparts American engineering students with highest mean contemporary value orientation in self oriented-personal value dimension ($M=27.86$) followed by ($M=26.11$) in scientific-innovative dimension and ($M=25.33$) in social-community dimension of contemporary value orientation respectively. The findings also revealed that Indian engineering students possessed lowest mean score ($M=20.30$) in social-community dimension of contemporary value orientation followed by ($M=21.28$) in scientific-innovative dimension and ($M=23.35$) in self-oriented-personal value dimension of contemporary value orientation compared to their counterparts American engineering students with lowest mean con-

temporary value orientation in conservative-traditional value dimension of contemporary value orientation followed ($M=20.21$) followed by ($M=22.30$) in national-ethnic value dimension and ($M=24.78$) in moral spiritual dimension of contemporary value orientation respectively.

The difference between the scores given by Indian and American professional college students has showed a statistical significance in terms of the possession of contemporary value orientations. This difference is in favour of, self oriented-personal values, conservative-traditional values, social-community values; national-ethnic values scientific-innovative values and moral-spiritual values respectively. Based on these findings, we can conclude that the Indian professional students prefer more traditional-conservative value orientation than American professional students prefer more self-oriented-personal values, sensitive to scientific-innovative values with social-community value orientations. Indian engineering students with conservative-traditional value orientation along with moral-spiritual orientation and with national-ethnic outlook need to be exposed to social-community and scientific-innovative dimensions of contemporary value orientation as per the results of the present study. Whereas, the American engineering students needs to be exposed to the contemporary conservative-traditional value orientation along with moral-spiritual dimension of contemporary value orientations. Beside this, the American engineering students needs a good exposure of National-ethnic dimension of contemporary value orientation respectively.

It is interesting here to compare the findings with those obtained by Cantril (1966). After an exhaustive cross cultural study of the developed and developing nations, the five different phases in the patterning of concerns, distinguished by Cantril (1966) are:

Phase- I is characterized by acquiescence to circumstances, unawareness of the problems, passivity due to fatalistic acceptance.

Phase II is marked by the awakening to potentialities, there is frustration and as people goad themselves to be rid of these constraints and hopes, there is an interim period of relative social chaos, irresponsibility and lack of discipline following the breakdown of established loyalties and controls.

Phase-III is distinguished by the awareness of means to realise goals there is sensing of potentialities perceived becoming real. Frustration and discontent are bearable as faith is in some way confirmed. There is marked impatience, as the goals are within sight.

Phase IV Here faith is confirmed in both goal and the means devised to attain them. This leads to assurance and self confidence and to a heightened feeling that self direction is possible through responsible action.

Phase V is marked by satisfaction and gratification with the way of life achieved, which promises continued development. Here people feel that the continual gratification will occur and feel assured of its emergency.

When Cantril made the study in India in 1955, he put India in phase –I, where people were not even aware of their problems and there was fatalistic acceptance. India has come a long way since then. The present investigation, at least as far as this Indian sample studied is concerned, has reached the phase IV, that is the reason the professional engineering students of India scored high on Conservative-traditional values followed by moral-spiritual dimension which is characterized by the faith in the goals and the means devised to attain them. The American sample can be confidently placed at phase V, where they seem to be assured of the emergence of the gratification already attained through possession of social-community value dimension contemporary values followed by scientific-innovative dimension of contemporary value orientation as per the findings of the present investigation.

From the findings of the present study the following educational implications were drawn. Cross cultural study like this throws light on the role of culture and its influence on the system of education. Educational system in any given society draws its content from the society itself. The finding of the present study is in accordance with the trends of the social and cultural system. The content of any course content reveals the values and its culture which needs to be transmitted to the younger generation. From this point of view the professional college students from the two cultural background pursuing engineering course are to be exposed to the values of contemporary society of today when there is crisis of not only natural resources, there has been crisis and degradation of values also. They need to be not only take care of themselves by possessing personal-self oriented but also the community at large and possess social-community values with highest concern for nationalism possessing national-ethnic dimension of contemporary values respectively. Scientific-innovative dimension of contemporary value orientation occupies a special place in the whole course curriculum of engineering professional course. Moral-spiritual dimension of contemporary value orientation need special treatment the course curriculum of engineering professional colleges in both the cultures. With the degradation of these values the present day society if torn apart. This dimension of contemporary values needs lot of emphasis in contemporary society, as the social order and social fabric has collapsed leading to unrest of all types. The harmony and peace is the need of the hour.

Also we need to educate the youth for proper utilization of natural resources along with conservation and preservation of natural resources. Beside this, pollution of all the natural resources is also escalating at an enormous rate. We need to educate bio-ethics and social responsibilities to our children and youth. As far as manmade systems are concerned, here also there have been displacements, replacements and disturbances. The present day society has undergone massive and fast change. Social order is at stake, with the growing and alarming social evils. The present day society needs lot of attention and correction for the survival of human race on this planet. The present day youth who would be tomorrow's responsible citizens' needs proper education for the sustenance of life on this planet. They need to be made conscious about their future roles and responsibilities by highlighting the role of values and moral commitments. Educational systems are meant not only to cater to the basic physiological needs but also to a greater extent social and psychological needs also. The philosophical needs, with all the value systems get utmost priority in the whole need satisfaction realm of human existence. Thus in order to account for all-round development of individuals at different levels of educational system, there should be commitment on the part of teachers in translating these into realities for leading a quality life in the society. From this point of view the whole value education component need to be integrated in the curriculum of the professional courses. For this to happen, the existing professional course curriculum needs overhauling and renewal to

accommodate the value component in every bit of the content. Next the teachers teaching in the professional courses, needs continuous in-service teacher training programmes in various subjects they are teaching so that they develop the needed skills to explore the hidden curriculum -values in every subject they are teaching.

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