

Exercise 2.2. – Value systems

Educational objective	The students discover that different values are a possible source of conflict.
Resources	Paper and pens, a worksheet containing a list of different values.

Procedure

A list of 20 values, not in any particular order, is given to each student: social success, love, obedience, security, peace, order, human dignity, feeling good about oneself, equality, respect for others, honesty, family, solidarity, responsibility, justice, tolerance, freedom, competition, health, patriotism.

1. The students work in pairs.
2. The teacher asks the students to group the values on the list in three categories. “In the first, put those that seem most important to you; in the second, the least important; and finally those that are unclassifiable.” This work should be done slowly and with thought.
3. Feedback takes place in groups of alternating pairs, by discussion.
No hierarchy is preferable to another. No assessment or mark will be given for the activity.
The teacher should emphasise the difference between simple ideal values and effective values – those that take account of a type of behaviour.
4. Ask the students to keep their list with their first choices.

Extension

1. The students form groups of three and compare their respective systems (list of first choice) by answering the following questions:
 - Why have I chosen this value as being the most important?
 - Is this value of any importance for my practical behaviour?
 - What are the obstacles to its realisation?
 - What is my main conflict?
 - What can I do to resolve it?
 - Which are the individualistic attitudes as opposed to genuine collective commitments?
2. The students group their values under categories, for example general ethics or human rights, practical use, general or social success.
Which grouping seems to be the most significant?
When faced with a choice, an individual can act unthinkingly according to habit or look for what seem to be the best reasons for acting. We think about values when we ask ourselves not what the best means of reaching a goal are, but which goal should be chosen.
3. This process offers an acceptable solution for all parties confronted with opposing arguments when there is a conflict of interests. Although we are often tempted to use moral terms to defend personal interests, certain principles are in operation. Respect for the individual is a principle, a rule that makes the acceptance or refusal of a category of actions possible.
The most reliable criterion for knowing whether a rule of conduct favours respect for the individual is reversibility. It makes us give as much weight to the interests of others as to our own.

In groups, students should formulate a few principles such as:

- the law must always be respected
- everyone has the right to live their lives as they see fit.

They can then identify the points of view expressed and the principles.