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SYSTEMATIZING THE CONTENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION ON AN AXIOLOGICAL BASIS: THE VALUE-LOAD COEFFICIENT AND EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Shabbazova Dilfuza Ruzikulovna

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Pedagogical Sciences, Professor,

Termez State Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan

ORCID: 0000-0001-7762-8953 | E-mail: dilruz-73@mail.ru

Abstract: Although primary education in Uzbekistan is formally oriented towards the formation of national and universal human values, the value component of curricular content largely remains declarative: values are proclaimed in the aims of the curriculum, yet they cannot be traced in the didactic units that pupils actually encounter. The study proposes a methodology for systematizing the content of primary education on an axiological basis, models it theoretically and validates it empirically. The methodology consists of three interconnected components: (a) a three-tier architecture of axiological content - an invariant universal-human core, a national-cultural variable layer and a situational-personal layer; (b) the value-load coefficient (VLC) — an expert index that expresses, in a single measure, both the density of value-bearing elements within a curricular unit and the depth of their didactic actualization (from mention to analysis, and from analysis to value-guided activity); (c) a four-stage systematization algorithm - identification, mapping, actualization and reflection (IMAR) - which converts the audit results into redesigned content. The methodology was tested in a quasi-experimental study involving 1,173 primary school pupils (592 in the experimental group and 581 in the control group) from 14 schools of the Surkhandarya, Jizzakh, Navoi and Namangan regions. The formation of values was assessed against five criteria: cognitive, axiological, communicative, reflexive and activity-based. At the end of the experiment the experimental group outperformed the control group on every criterion (78, 81, 84, 79 and 82 per cent against 59, 61, 63, 56 and 60 per cent respectively); the integral index reached 80.8 per cent against 59.8 per cent, the difference being statistically significant ($t = 2.87$; $P < 0.05$). The findings show that the formation of values in primary school depends not on the amount of moral material added to the content, but on the systemic organization of that content.

Keywords: axiological paradigm; primary education; content systematization; value-load coefficient; curriculum design; values education; integrative didactic unit; Uzbekistan.

Introduction. The renewal of general secondary education in Uzbekistan has placed the formation of values at the centre of the declared aims of schooling. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Education” defines education as a process directed simultaneously at the acquisition of knowledge and at the upbringing of a socially responsible personality [13]. The “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, in turn, interprets the moral and civic maturity of the younger generation not as a by-product of the educational process, but as an indicator of national development [14]. The national

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curriculum for the primary grades likewise formulates value-related outcomes in almost every subject area.

A persistent gap, however, remains between this normative orientation and classroom practice. Values are reflected in curricular documents at the level of aims and expected outcomes. Yet the content with which pupils directly work - texts, exercises, problems, illustrations, questions - is not systematically analysed from the standpoint of its capacity to carry values. As a result, value education in primary school takes an additive (supplementary) form: separate moral texts, thematic hours and special events are attached to an otherwise unchanged body of content. The additive strategy provides knowledge about values, but hardly changes the pupil's own value position. The reason is simple: an isolated moral episode is not incorporated into the network of meanings that the child builds across subjects and from grade to grade. Consequently, the problem is methodological rather than ideological in nature. What is lacking is not an agreed list of values - such lists are abundant in national and international documents - but a reproducible procedure enabling a teacher, a curriculum designer or a textbook author to answer three questions: which values a given body of content actually carries; at what didactic depth it carries them; and how the content must be restructured so that value formation ceases to be an accidental event and becomes a systemic property of the curriculum.

The aim of the study is to develop a methodology for systematizing the content of primary education on an axiological basis and to verify its effectiveness experimentally. The work is structured around three questions:

– How can the value potential of primary education content be described in a way that is both structurally explicit and measurable?

– What sequence of procedures converts an axiological audit of content into redesigned material suitable for teaching?

– Does content systematized on an axiological basis produce a significantly higher level of value formation in primary school pupils than content organized in the conventional additive manner?

The scientific novelty consists in the transition, in work with curricular content, from declarative to operational axiology. Instead of describing values as educational aims, the proposed methodology treats them as structural parameters of content: a value can be identified, quantified, mapped and redesigned. The value-load coefficient introduced below was not found in the sources known to us: an index combining, in a single measure, the density of value-bearing content and the depth of its didactic actualization has not so far been proposed in the practice of primary education in Uzbekistan.

Theoretical foundations. The axiological interpretation of education rests on the philosophical premise that upbringing is not the transmission of ready-made norms, but the transmission of a system of values and its reconstruction by the personality. Rokeach demonstrated that values are organized hierarchically and function as criteria of choice [15]; it follows that a pupil does not accumulate values additively, but rearranges a structure. Schwartz substantiated that basic values form a motivational continuum linked by relations of compatibility and conflict [16; 17]. Two direct conclusions for curriculum design follow. First, the content of education cannot be regarded as a neutral carrier onto which values are grafted: whether intended or not, it always carries a particular value configuration.

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Second, since values stand in relations that are not only harmonious but also conflicting, content that presents values merely as a list of approved qualities cannot form a genuine value position, for such a position arises precisely in a situation of choice.

The pedagogical interpretation of this logic has a long tradition. Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia described the affective domain as a graded process of internalization extending from receiving and responding through valuing to organization and characterization by a value complex [7]. Their taxonomy reveals that the same value-bearing material may operate at radically different depths: a proverb may simply be read, be discussed, or become a criterion for the pupil's own decision. Kohlberg substantiated that moral reasoning develops through confrontation with dilemmas standing slightly above the learner's current level [6]. Vygotsky, for his part, provided the general mechanism explaining why value formation requires not mere exposure but joint activity and speech - the internalization of culturally mediated activity [22].

Research on values and character education has repeatedly shown that the effectiveness of programmes depends on integration rather than on intensity. Halstead and Taylor, analysing a large body of empirical work, concluded that values are acquired above all through the school ethos and ordinary curricular content rather than through special moral lessons [5]. Berkowitz and Bier, in their synthesis of evaluated programmes, established that the strongest effect is observed where value-related work is embedded in academic subjects and in classroom interaction [1]. Lovat and Toomey developed the idea further, substantiating that values education and quality teaching are two aspects of one pedagogical process [10]. Lickona, together with the authors who contributed to the volume edited by Nucci and Narvaez, emphasize the necessity of the behavioural component: knowing, feeling and acting must be addressed together [9; 11].

Classical didactics and curriculum theory supply the structural apparatus left implicit in the literature cited above. Tyler formulated the requirement of consistency between aims, content, organization and evaluation [20]; Taba added the principles of continuity, sequence and integration as conditions of cumulative learning [19]. Bernstein showed that the classification and framing (bounding) of content determine what can be learned from it at all [2]. If these principles are applied to the value component, the conclusion is as follows: value formation acquires a systemic character only when value-bearing content is continuous across grades, sequenced by depth and integrated across subjects. The additive strategy, however, cannot in principle satisfy all three conditions.

International documents confirm the same direction. UNESCO defines the outcomes of global citizenship education across the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural domains [21]. Within the framework of the Learning Compass 2030, the OECD regards attitudes and values, alongside knowledge and skills, as a core component of learner agency [12]. Both documents describe outcomes, yet neither provides a procedure for auditing and restructuring existing national content - and it is precisely this task that a methodology at the national level must solve.

In Uzbek pedagogy, the value-based approach to primary education has been elaborated mainly along two lines: the use of the national spiritual heritage as learning material, and the moral potential of native language and reading lessons. In the author's earlier work, based on EGRA-type data, it was established that the high orthographic transparency of the Uzbek Latin script causes reading fluency to

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outpace comprehension - the “transparency paradox” - and it was shown that pupils may read value-rich texts accurately while extracting little meaning from them [18]. This finding sharpens the present problem: where comprehension is weak, value-laden content delivered solely through reading is highly likely to remain formal. What has not yet been proposed is an instrument that measures the value load of the content itself, together with a procedure for redesigning content accordingly.

The proposed methodology

1. The three-tier architecture of axiological content. The methodology regards the value component of primary education content as a three-tier structure. The invariant core comprises universal human values that must be present in every grade and in every subject area and that do not vary with local conditions: respect for life and human dignity, honesty, justice, responsibility, care, and respect for knowledge and labour. The national-cultural layer comprises values reproduced through the cultural and historical experience of the people - family solidarity, respect for elders, hospitality, love of the native land and native language, moderation and communal cooperation - and is realized through concrete cultural material; this material may justifiably differ across regions and textbooks. The situational-personal layer consists of the personal value meanings that the pupil constructs in the process of choice, evaluation and reflection; it cannot be prescribed by the curriculum, but the curriculum does determine whether space is left for it to arise at all.

The three tiers are not parallel lists but successive levels of concretization: the invariant core determines what is to be formed, the national-cultural layer determines through what material it is to be formed, and the situational-personal layer determines the point at which the pupil becomes the subject, rather than the object, of the process. The practical conclusion is as follows: a curricular unit is axiologically complete only when all three tiers are expressed within it. Content in which the invariant core is present but the situational-personal layer is absent yields moral knowledge without a value position - and this is precisely the outcome most frequently observed in practice.

2. The value-load coefficient (VLC). In order to make the value potential of content measurable, the value-load coefficient is introduced. The unit of analysis is the didactic element: a text or text fragment, an exercise, a task, a problem, an illustration accompanied by a question, and the teacher’s oral questions addressed to the class. Each element of a curricular unit is coded by experts along two dimensions. The first is the value attribute: whether the element carries a value of the invariant core or of the national-cultural layer and, if so, which one. The second is the depth of didactic actualization, coded on a three-point scale: $k = 1$ - the value is merely named or mentioned; $k = 2$ - it is analysed, discussed or evaluated; $k = 3$ - the pupil is required to act in accordance with it, to make a choice, to justify that choice or to reflect upon it, so that the value becomes a regulator of behaviour within the lesson. For an element that carries no value, $k = 0$ is assigned.

For a curricular unit u consisting of N didactic elements, the coefficient is calculated as the ratio of the accumulated depth to the maximum attainable depth:

$$VLC(u) = (\Sigma\, ki\, ,\, i = 1\ldots N) / (3N), \qquad 0 \le VLC \le 1$$

The denominator contains not the number of value-bearing elements but the total number of didactic elements - the index therefore “penalizes” both the scarcity of value content and a superficial

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treatment of it. Two curricular units containing the same number of moral texts will receive fundamentally different coefficients if in one the texts are merely read while in the other they serve as material for choice and justification. The interpretation scale adopted in the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interpretation scale of the value-load coefficient

VLC	Level	Characteristics of the content
< 0.30	Declarative	Value-bearing elements occur in isolation and are given at the level of mention; the pupil acquires knowledge about values but is not required to use them.
0.30 – 0.60	Partially actualized	Value content is regularly present and is discussed, but situations of choice, justification and reflection are rare or accidental.
> 0.60	Systematized	Value content is continuous, integrated across subjects and realized mainly through activity, choice and reflection.

Source: developed by the author.

Coding is carried out independently by at least two experts for each unit, and disagreements are resolved through discussion; the consistency of coding is checked in accordance with standard practice in content analysis [8] by means of the percentage of agreement and a chance-corrected agreement coefficient. The coefficient is not an instrument for the psychometric assessment of pupils but a tool for diagnosing content, comparable in function to an index of text complexity.

3. The IMAR systematization algorithm. An audit becomes a methodology only when it is linked to redesign. The proposed algorithm comprises four stages.

Identification. The existing content of the primary grades is divided into didactic elements and coded in the manner described above. The result is an inventory of values for each subject and grade: which values of the invariant core and of the national-cultural layer are actually present, at what depth they are given and - a point of equal importance - which are absent altogether.

Mapping. The results of the inventory are reflected in a three-dimensional matrix of "value × subject × grade". The matrix reveals two structural defects that the inventory alone does not disclose. The first is duplication: one and the same value is repeated in several subjects at exactly the same depth, and such repetition does not lead to development. The second is rupture: a value present in one grade disappears in the next, that is, continuity in Taba's sense is broken [19]. Mapping turns a list into a picture of the four-year trajectory of each value through primary education.

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Actualization. Content is redesigned in order to raise the depth of actualization where the matrix indicates a superficial treatment, and to restore continuity where it indicates rupture. Three didactic instruments are used for this purpose. Integrative didactic units link one value across two or three subjects within a single period: a value encountered in a reading text is reconstructed in a mathematical problem situation and in a practical task. Value-situational tasks confront the pupil with a conflict between two positive values, scaled to the child's capacity - for example, between honesty and loyalty to a friend, or between personal benefit and the common good - and require a justified choice; according to Schwartz's structural model [17], it is precisely this operation that has formative power. Reflective tasks require the pupil to evaluate his or her own action and thus close the cycle - corresponding to the level of "organization" in the affective taxonomy [7].

Reflection and monitoring. The redesigned content is coded again and a second VLC value is obtained, while pupil outcomes are diagnosed against the five criteria presented below. This stage is not a concluding one but functions as a feedback loop: content whose coefficient has risen without a corresponding change in pupil outcomes indicates that the increase was formal and returns the designer to the actualization stage.

The four stages are not linear but form a cyclical structure, and it is precisely this feature that distinguishes the proposed methodology from conventional moral education programmes. The object of the intervention is the structure of content, whereas the formation of values in the pupil serves as the criterion by which the restructuring is judged.

4. Diagnostic criteria. Five criteria are used to assess the formation of values in pupils; each of them is operationalized through observable indicators and measured by a set of instruments (Table 2). The criteria derive from the tripartite structure of value internalization — knowing, evaluating, acting — and are supplemented by the communicative and reflexive components required by primary school practice.

Table 2. Criteria and indicators of the formation of values in primary school pupils

Criterion	Indicators	Instruments
Cognitive	Knowledge of the content and meaning of national and universal human values; ability to recognize a value in a situation and to name it.	Structured test; analysis of situations.
Axiological	Personal acceptance of values; ability to rank values in a situation of choice and to justify the preference.	Value-ranking task; value-situational task requiring justification.
Communicative	Value-consistent behaviour in dialogue: respectful disagreement, recognition of another's position, cooperation.	Structured observation; group task with assigned roles.
Reflexive	Evaluation of one's own action against a	Reflective task; pupil self-

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	value criterion; awareness of the discrepancy between intention and action.	assessment sheet.
Activity-based	Realization of values in practical school and out-of-school activity; stability of behaviour over time.	Teacher observation protocol; record of participation in practical tasks.

Source: developed by the author.

Three levels - high, sufficient and initial - are distinguished for each criterion; they are defined by the number and the stability of the indicators demonstrated. In the results presented below, the percentages express the proportion of pupils who reached the high or sufficient level on the criterion concerned, while the integral index is the arithmetic mean of the five criterion values.

Materials and methods of the study

1. Design and participants. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with non-equivalent experimental and control groups and with initial and final measurements. Intact classes were assigned to the groups, since the random assignment of individual pupils is not feasible in school settings; the comparability of the groups was checked at the initial measurement stage, at which they did not differ appreciably on any of the five criteria.

The sample consisted of 1,173 primary school pupils from 14 schools in four regions of Uzbekistan - Surkhandarya, Jizzakh, Navoi and Namangan; 592 of them formed the experimental group and 581 the control group. The regional coverage was chosen so as to include educational contexts differing from one another (southern, central and eastern regions; urban and rural schools) and so that the results could not be attributed to the conditions of a single locality. The teachers of the experimental classes took part in a preparatory seminar on the coding procedure and on the three didactic instruments of the actualization stage; the teachers of the control classes worked on the basis of the standard content and standard planning.

2. Procedure. The content of the primary grades in the areas of native language and reading literacy, mathematics, natural science and upbringing was divided into elements and coded in the manner described in section 3.2; as a result, an initial inventory of values and a "value × subject × grade" matrix were compiled. The content of the experimental classes was redesigned by means of integrative didactic units, value-situational tasks and reflective tasks; these were distributed so that each value of the invariant core was actualized at the level k = 3 at least once in every period of instruction. The control classes worked with the same programme and the same textbooks, without redesign, retaining the conventional additive treatment of value material.

The diagnosis of pupil outcomes was carried out twice, at the beginning and at the end of the experimental period, using the instruments listed in Table 2. The observation protocols were completed by class teachers who had been briefed on the definitions of the indicators; the test and task

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materials were administered by the researcher and by specially trained assistants. Pupils' responses to the value-situational tasks were scored by two raters on the basis of a common rubric.

3. Data processing and ethical considerations. The results for each criterion were expressed as the percentage of pupils at the high and sufficient levels. The integral index was calculated for each group as the arithmetic mean of the five criterion values. The significance of the difference between the experimental and control groups was tested using Student's t-test for independent samples at the 0.05 significance level. The internal consistency of the multi-item instruments was assessed by means of Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) [4], while the general procedures were carried out in accordance with standard recommendations for educational research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) [3].

The study was conducted with the consent of the school administrations and of the regional department of public education. Participation was voluntary, no personal data were collected, and all results were processed and presented in aggregated and anonymized form. No restriction placing the control classes at a disadvantage was applied; the redesigned materials were provided to the participating schools after the experiment had been completed.

Results. At the end of the experimental period the experimental group outperformed the control group on all five criteria. The distribution of the results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Final results by criterion (proportion of pupils at the high and sufficient levels, %)

Criterion	Experimental group (n = 592)	Control group (n = 581)	Difference (p.p.)
Cognitive	78	59	+19
Axiological	81	61	+20
Communicative	84	63	+21
Reflexive	79	56	+23
Activity-based	82	60	+22
Integral index (M)	80.8	59.8	+21.0

Note: p.p. — percentage points. Difference in the integral index: $t = 2.87$; $P < 0.05$.

The integral index of the formation of values amounted to 80.8 per cent in the experimental group and to 59.8 per cent in the control group. The difference is statistically significant ($t = 2.87$; $P < 0.05$), which makes it possible to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the groups and to attribute the observed advantage not to sampling variation but to the systematization of content.

Three features of the distribution deserve particular attention. First, the largest gains were recorded on the reflexive (+23 percentage points) and activity-based (+22 percentage points) criteria -

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precisely the two components that the additive strategy affects least, since it operates mainly through the presentation of moral knowledge. This picture is consistent with the logic of the methodology: raising the depth of actualization from mention to choice and reflection was bound to affect, above all, those outcomes that require the pupil's own action.

Second, the smallest gain was observed on the cognitive criterion (+19 percentage points). Pupils in the control group also acquire knowledge about values, since such knowledge is transmitted through the standard content; what they acquire to a lesser degree is the ability to use it. The narrowing of the difference at the cognitive end does not weaken the result but clarifies it: systematization does not primarily add knowledge - it converts knowledge into a regulator of behaviour.

Third, the comparatively high communicative result in the experimental group (84 per cent) indicates that the integrative didactic units and the group value-situational tasks worked as intended, for both instruments place the pupil in a field of interaction in which a value position must be expressed and defended in speech. This gain was the change most visible to teachers, and in the participating schools it was the first to be reported.

The results answer the third research question in the affirmative: content systematized according to the proposed methodology ensures a significantly higher level of value formation than content organized additively, and the advantage is concentrated in the behavioural and reflexive components of value internalization.

Discussion. The central theoretical conclusion is as follows: the formation of values in primary school manifests itself as a function of the structural organization of content rather than of its moral volume. The control classes were not deprived of value material: they worked with the same textbooks, the same texts about honesty, labour and respect for elders, and the same programme of upbringing. What distinguished the experimental classes was the continuity of each value across subjects and grades, the stage-by-stage increase in the depth of actualization, and the systematic presence of situations requiring choice. It is precisely this state of affairs that is predicted by the principles of continuity, sequence and integration formulated by Taba [19]; it also explains why interventions that add moral material without restructuring content produce weak effects - a conclusion reached independently by Halstead and Taylor (2000) and by Berkowitz and Bier in their empirical syntheses [1; 5].

The value-load coefficient adds a practical instrument to this argument. Its methodological core is the denominator: relating the accumulated depth to the total volume of didactic elements makes it impossible to raise the measured value load simply by inserting additional moral texts. Raising the coefficient requires either genuinely value-bearing content or - more frequently - a deeper didactic treatment of content already present. In the experimental schools the most common route to a higher coefficient was the second one; and this is also the most practical finding for textbook authors: the value potential of existing primary content is not fully used, and a large part of it can be released by changing the task attached to the text rather than the text itself.

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The pattern of the results also bears on the transparency paradox identified in the author's earlier work [18]. If a pupil reading a transparent orthography reads value-rich texts fluently yet understands them only partially, then value content delivered mainly through reading is systematically overestimated by teachers: observing accurate reading, they infer comprehension. The proposed methodology reduces this risk structurally, since a value actualized at the level k = 3 must be manifested in action, choice or justification - none of which can be simulated by fluent reading.

Three conclusions follow for practice. For curriculum designers, the "value × subject × grade" matrix becomes an instrument for detecting duplication and rupture before textbooks are written, that is, at the stage where correction is inexpensive. For textbook authors, the coefficient provides an operational criterion by which a manuscript can be assessed alongside text complexity and workload. For teacher education, the results show that the decisive competence is not knowledge of a list of values but the ability to raise the depth of actualization of the content already at hand.

The limitations of the study must also be noted. The design is quasi-experimental: pupils were not randomly assigned and intact classes were used; despite comparability at the initial measurement, residual differences between classes cannot be completely excluded. The fact that the observation-based criteria were rated in part by the teachers who taught the experimental classes creates a risk of expectancy effects; this risk was reduced through rubric-based rating and double scoring of responses, but it was not eliminated entirely. The coefficient relies on expert judgement, and its stability across different subject areas and different groups of experts requires further study. Finally, the measurement covered a single experimental cycle; the durability of the effect - in particular, whether the advantage on the activity-based criterion is retained beyond primary education - remains an open question to be answered by longitudinal research.

Conclusion. The study set out to develop and substantiate a methodology for systematizing the content of primary education on an axiological basis. Three results were obtained. First, the value potential of primary education content was described as a three-tier architecture: the invariant universal-human core determines what is to be formed, the national-cultural layer determines through what material it is to be formed, and the situational-personal layer determines the space in which the pupil becomes the subject of the process; a curricular unit is axiologically complete only when all three tiers are present. Second, the value-load coefficient was introduced as an operational instrument quantifying both the density of value-bearing content and the depth of its didactic actualization, and the IMAR algorithm - identification, mapping, actualization, reflection - was formulated as the procedure converting the audit into redesigned content. Third, experimental verification involving 1,173 pupils from 14 schools in four regions showed that systematized content raises the integral index of value formation to 80.8 per cent against 59.8 per cent under conventional organization; the difference is statistically significant ($t = 2.87$; $P < 0.05$) and is concentrated in the reflexive and activity-based components.

The practical conclusion for the renewal of primary education is as follows: the value component of the curriculum should not be enumerated as a list of desirable qualities but should be designed and audited as a structure. Further research will be directed towards extending the coefficient

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to the analysis of digital learning materials and towards longitudinal observation of the durability of the effect during the transition from primary to secondary education.

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