

Morality and ethics

In education



Morality and ethics and Society

- Although a contested issue with various outlooks, we can largely define morality and ethics as a question of “How is best to live?” (Seven pillars institute, n.d)
- Aristotle - “Man is a social animal” - the notion that man is bound to live in society.
- This establishes the need for a social contract
- Thomas Hobbes – the life of man in the state of nature is nasty brutish and short (SEP, 2018)
- A social contract establishes a set of rules or a code by which people can live harmoniously



- It is in this sense that we see that education within societies is a moral and ethical obligation in itself as to live in a society with established social rules and customs requires that those rules and customs are learned so that people acquire the means to live prosperously within it and ultimately, so that the society itself prospers. Essentially a method of societal indoctrination.



Historical context

- Industrialisation in Europe led to new social requirements and it is at this point in history that we witness the birth of state education. It was a changing society which required that citizens be learned in literacy and numeracy in order to meet the needs of industrialisation (Bartlett and Burton, 2016)
- This is illustrative of education being a moral obligation as part of a social contract in order to maintain active participation of citizens in society and subsequently being able to live “best”



However...

- Marx offers the perspective that class divisions within society lead to those with power exploiting those without. From this perspective, it is argued that education does not serve to benefit the progress of people and society, but to maintain a status quo in which the masses are subjugated by the ruling class (Bartlett and Burton, 2016)
- Rousseau's notion that man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains supports this and offers us a new perspective that, in fact, society corrupts our natural morality with which we are born in the state of nature, contrary to Hobbes. His focus on the innocence of the child and corrupting nature of society allows for a different outlook on the moral utilisation of education. (school of life, 2015)



- Ken Robinson (2006,2010) highlights the need for a transition of moral and ethical practice in education which will benefit a changing society. He argues for a change which moves away from the rote, hierarchichal style of education which was designed to produce an industrial workforce and ultimately dehumanised and excluded those who we now view as having additional learning needs (Ward, 2013), and towards an inclusive system which nourishes the creative talents of all individuals and prepares them for life beyond the confines of todays world.
- As a result, we see a change in the way that education is implemented today through child centred approaches that promote experiential learning through enquiry with a goal of fostering creativity in children.



- In summary, living in a society denotes a moral obligation of that society to educate its citizens. Being that societies are evolutionary, it is natural that the ethical approach to education changes with them. We see in the UK a vast disparity between how this manifested in the 20th century and the 21st. In the former we saw adherence to hierarchy and authority which largely neglected the holistic development of children and actively excluded those with ALN for the purpose of producing an industrial workforce. In the latter, we see a move toward inclusivity and child led learning which reflects the different moral code that permeates it.
- This leads us to explore how morals and ethics are practiced within the classroom.



What are
morals?

moral values are
standards of conduct
to which we
subscribe in a
particular way



How to
teach
morally in
the
classroom?

Moral formation
and
Moral inquiry



How to approach moral issues in the classroom?

1. Acknowledge that young people encounter difficult moral questions every day, and they want guidance.
2. Recognize that no subject is morally neutral.
3. Build trust in the classroom
4. Enlist support from your colleagues and administrators.
5. Have faith in your students.



Now vs 20th century

- Pivotal changes
- Ignoring the moral dimension of schooling
- Code of Professional Practice and Conduct:
'Professional educators shall exhibit consistent and equitable treatment of students, fellow educators and parents. They shall respect the civil rights of all and not discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, culture, religion, sex or sexual orientation, marital status, age, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, disabling condition or vocational interest.'



references

- Bartlett. S, Burton. D, 2016, Introduction to Education Studies, 4th edition, Sage, London
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/Education-in-the-20th-century>
- <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2246/Moral-Education.html>
- <https://www.pspc.education.pa.gov/Promoting-Ethical-Practices-Resources/Ethics-Toolkit/Unit5/Pages/Ethics,-Teaching-and-Diversity.aspx>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/how-approach-moral-issues-classroom>
- <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/socialsciencesbirmingham/2018/02/15/morality-what-it-is-and-how-to-teach-it/>
- Robinson .K, 2006, "Do schools kill creativity?" [online] Ted Talks, available at [Sir Ken Robinson: Do schools kill creativity? | TED Talk](#), accessed 05/05/2021
- Robinson .K, 2010, "RSA ANIMATE: Changing Education Paradigms", [video], available at [RSA ANIMATE: Changing Education Paradigms - Bing video](#), accessed 05/05/2021
- School of life, 2015, "Political theory – Jean Jacques Rousseau", [video], available at [POLITICAL THEORY – Jean-Jacques Rousseau – YouTube](#), accessed 05/05/2021
- Seven pillara institute, no date, "Early roots of western moral tradition", available at [The History of Moral Philosophy - Roots of the Western Moral Tradition \(sevenpillarsinstitute.org\)](#), accessed 03/05/2021
- Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy, 2018, "Hobbes' moral and political philosophy", available at [Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#), accessed 03/05/2021
- Ward. S, 2013, A student's guide to Education Studies, 3rd edition, Oxon, Routledge