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# **The Important Role of Ethical Values in Education**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to show the importance of ethical values in education. This paper attempts to answer the question, "Why we need to teach ethical values in education?" It is because the present situation has become more urgent to be able to provide ethical guidance for the young. Ethical values lead to how to live a good life. This paper contributes to the understanding of ethical values in education as an essential factor for the survival of human beings.

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## **Introduction**

In the twenty-first century the ethical situation of the world is complex and contradictory. The influx of so much information and the flood of so many views on what is right and what is wrong, good or bad, or just and unjust leaves the individual in a state of constant perplexity in today. Thus the necessity of instilling awareness of ethical values in the young cannot be avoided. Concern for moral education continues to be of top priority. It should be remember that ethical development is largely part of a social process and not just an individual phenomenon because in this world there is no such thing as a solitary human being. Human beings live in a social world where the needs of each must be balanced against those of the rest, so that the ethical thinking arose.

A society can sustain itself only if there is some sort of justice and equality for the individual. It may not work fully in practice because there is, and always will be, individuals who suffer injustice on the one hand and on the other, those who may get much more than their rightful due, but the principle holds. Such principles must be presented in the social and cultural institutions of a society. It is moral principles that modify the dignity of human beings. This means that ethical values depends on whether one, racial, national or international. However this morality is not inborn. Therefore ethical values have to be taught, and the teaching of morality has always been an important role in education. No doubt the first ethical lessons for the child are imported by the family, but ever since schools emerged to educate the young, it has been the task of schools and teachers (education) to teach the young to moral.

The world today with its rapid technological advances, its impact on the way of life therefore calls for a greater need for ethical values. We may suffer value conflict in various fields such as, politics, religion, work, family relationships, health and many others. The complexities of life have multiplied which make ethical choices more difficult. The present situation is such that it has become more urgent to be able to provided ethical guidance for the young. In fact, each and every member of human race needs some basic moral training if our society and the human race are to survive. It is generally said that education is rather a set of practical activities connected by a common objective. Education is a necessary condition for survival of the human species. One of the aims of education lay down by D.J.O's Connor as follow:

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"To put men and women in touch with and train them to appreciate the cultural and moral achievements of mankind."<sup>1</sup>

This shows that the aim of education is to equip a "person-in-society" to have a certain minimum of skills and altitudes in common. However one of the most vital purposes of education has been the development of ethical and spiritual values. A system of ethical and spiritual values is indispensable to group living. No society can survive without a moral order.

### **Issue between Ethics and Value Education**

Ethical Education is a particular brand of education that focuses on teaching children to be virtuous and law-abiding citizens. This type of education has been part of both state and religious institution but is no longer used in Western societies. However, in Japan and other Eastern countries, moral education is still very much a part of the school systems. Values may be plentiful everywhere in education. They are involved in every aspect of school practice. They are basic to all matters of choice and decision-making. Using values, teachers evaluate students and students evaluate teachers. Society evaluates courses of study, school programs, and teaching competence. And society itself is evaluated by educators. When we estimate the worth of an education policy, we ask the question, "what kind of values do we employ?"

There has an issue between the learning of ethics and academic values. The majority of parents and societies at large consider that it is important to have their new members of society who are qualified with bright and good-character persons and to behave properly. They want their own well-being to be affected by the children who are reared and socialized. Now, the parents and the public shy away from the hearing of the words, 'moral' or 'ethical' education. They believe that the learning of the subjects such as 'sociability', 'good citizenship', 'character development', 'cooperation', and 'disciplines for child' are requirements of well-ordered society. Teaching ethics has an important and necessary place in education. Students who graduated from universities may be well educated persons in their professions but it is not enough. Aristotle (384-322 BC) also says,

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."<sup>2</sup>

And also a high school director in United State of America sent a letter to his teachers every year for opening ceremony. In this letter, he says:

"I am one of the people who escaped a concentration camp. I have witnessed things that no human being should have ever seen: gas chambers built by highly trained engineers, children poisoned by well-educated doctors, babies killed by experienced nurses, women and children shot and burned by people who were high school graduate and post graduate. Therefore, I suspect education. My request from you is: Help your students to become more civilized human individuals. Your efforts should not generate educated monsters to become skilled psychopaths. Reading, writing, mathematics is only important when they help your children to become more human."<sup>3</sup>

So, since the parents and the public have such a strong desire and concern, the ethical education has once again become very essential topic in educational circles and educational research in the last few decades. Then is only one reason, why ethical value should be the concern in education of the schools Recently in Japan; the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

<sup>1</sup> Connor. D.JO'.(1958). *An Introduction to the philosophy of Education*. London: Butter and Tanner .P.8.

<sup>2</sup> www.sciencedircct.com.

<sup>3</sup> Giilcan. Nur Yeliz. (2015). *Discussing the importance of teaching ethics in education*. New York : Elsevier Ltd. www.sciencedircct.com.P-2622

Administration is attempting ethical education to be official education from the status of maltreatment education.

But some parents consider the requirement of the ethical learning to give their children because their aim of sending their children is to have academic values which are necessities for the foundation their early children's education. They thought that there is no need to give the children the ethical training. So, there has been controversial between ethical curriculum and academic value education.

However some parents and scholars believe that there is no need to argue that issue. It is mistaken controversial because 'ethical education' and 'value education' can be used interchangeably and synonymously. The education domain is very broad and some ethical values can be educated through value education by the help of poems and stories which contribute the children's mentalities with moral values. Thus, the nature of ethical education can be said a kinds of values education. In this way, the controversial argument on ethical value becomes less and less.

### **The Relation between Ethics and Education**

Education is widely regarded as a moral enterprise. Teachers are always drawing attention to what ought to be said and done and how students ought to behave. They are concerned with imparting moral values and improving individual and social behavior.

What kind of moral behavior should a teacher advocate in his classes? Should he seek to promote the behavior that he values or the behavior valued by his community? Should he encourage the growth of certain character traits that he believes are desirable or should he let the child's character form itself in response to the expectation of the classroom peer group?

One's answers to these questions will depend on one's ethical attitudes. Any teacher who takes his vocation seriously must seek to answer the questions and justify his attitudes. He will be assisted in doing so by a formal study of ethics.

Ethics is the study of values in the realm of human conduct. It deals with such questions as: What is the good life for all men? How ought we to behave? It is concerned with providing "right" values as the basis for "right" actions. At one time ethical systems were linked o religions. Today, however, the ethical systems of the Western world, although largely derived from religious teachings, are usually justified on other grounds. The United States has separated church and state and as a result religious teaching has been banned in American public schools. But this ban in turn has stimulated a desire to substitute some kind of moral training.

Can moral values be taught in the same sense that factual knowledge is taught? Socrates sought to answer this question. Assuming that moral virtues were latent in each individual, he maintained that the teacher could bring these values into the students' consciousness. Virtue, we may say, can be taught, if by teaching virtue we mean helping students become aware of it.

### **Education as a Moral Agency**

Some philosophers of education have argued that education is tantamount to the development of persons. This view is advocated by Paul Hirst (1946-2003). He gives an argument for the aim of education. Hirst argues that education is the achievement of various forms of knowledge, achievement of knowledge is necessary for the development of

rationality, and the achievement of rationality is tantamount to those achievements characteristic of persons therefore education is tantamount to the development of persons. Hirst's hypothetical syllogism is a valid argument as well as a sound argument. Hirst pays emphasis on rationality in his syllogism and his syllogism clearly and distinctly spots light to the aim of education.

It can be said that one of the criteria of education is knowledge and understanding in breadth. This breadth requires some degree of mastery of all the logical types of knowledge. The phrase, form of knowledge and experience, is meant that all those extant ways in which man make rational sense of the worlds and our experience in it. Disciplines and subjects which are administrative arrangements are ultimately made up of these forms. According to Hirst, there are seven forms of values education. They are as follow:

"(1) logic and pure mathematics, (2) empirical (physical) science, (3) social (human) science and history, (4) aesthetics,(5) morality and ethics, (6) philosophy, and (7) possibly religion, although there s a problem with verifiability in religion."<sup>4</sup>

According to Hirst, these seven forms represent all the possible ways in which man can make rational sense of the world. When a man know a particular proposition, he know it because he has understood certain clusters of concepts and accepted certain ways of supporting claims with appropriate evidence. There are then these different ways of being rational and being aware.

So true knowledge should be viewed not only from the perspective of instrumental value but also from that of intrinsic values which are important for making human beings ethical. It can be said that what a man know are the constituents of his mind. To a large extent it is a man that he is what he knows. The concept of consciousness or awareness is central to the notion of mind. It is consciousness that differentiates things with minds (such as people) from things without minds (such as machines).A person without a mind is a person in name only and is so called, perhaps, only for social and moral reasons. Therefore the development of mind is crucial for a person. From this, it can be thought of as simultaneously developing the person. If so, to think of a person, then the development of mind is one aspect of the development of persons. Education then becomes the key to understanding how a person develops. It is a man what he is largely the result of what sort of an education that he got. If a certain 'form of knowledge and awareness' is omitted in his education, then he is to that extent deficient as a person. It can be said of Hitler and others like him that they are inhuman to the extent that the form of ethical understanding was omitted in their education. A fully developed person has a full complement of all the available forms of knowledge and awareness; he has a well-rounded education.

In his work "Philosophical Issues in Education An introduction", Comal makes an evaluation on the view of education is tantamount to the development of persons. According to him, this view bases upon a number of assumptions. The view that education is tantamount to the development of person bases upon a number of assumptions. The first assumption is that mind is not inborn. It is an empirical thesis based on observation of infants. The second assumption is that mind is an essential attribute of being a person. It is a logical thesis. It claims that mental capacities such as reasoning ability, self-consciousness, emotional capacities, capacity to desire and change desires, capability of speech and conceptualization and so on, are the most important features of persons. The third assumption is that mind is best

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<sup>4</sup> Hamm. Cornel M.( 1997). *Philosophical Issues in Education : An Introduction* New York : The Falmer Press.p-46

developed in the early years through a process of inculcation approximating apprenticeship learning, and in the more mature phases of development through a process of deliberate initiation, primarily by teaching. It is also an empirical assumption. The last assumption is that learning from experience presupposes conceptual categories to make experience possible. It also is a logical thesis. These are reasonable assumptions; therefore the view that education is the development of person is also reasonable.

However, there is a reasonable objection to that view. According to this objection, in order to be in a position to acquire knowledge one must already be rational in the minimal sense of having the dispositions to be consistent, to assess statements on relevant considerations, and to be critical of one's beliefs. These minimal conditions of rationality are sufficient for characterizing anyone as a person. And since education is the acquisition of worthwhile knowledge, it must be the case that only persons can receive education. Hence education is not the development of mind and persons, since these are presupposed for education to take place.

Such an objection is worthwhile to take consideration but does not really defeat the main thesis above. The objection addresses the problem of the genesis of rationality and personhood, whereas the propose definition of the aim of education is about development of rationality and personhood. Nevertheless, it is still correct to say that education is helping people to become more fully persons by acquiring in a more complete way those powers of rationality which a young child possesses only in a minimal and undeveloped way. In this sense education can still correctly be thought of as development of persons.

Moreover, to be fully developed person, there are the three components of moral agency in education - knowing, affect and action. Although they do not always work together they must be taken into consideration in education. To give proper ethical guidance is necessary no matter the difficulties that may be encounter, but these matters can be overcome to a great extent only if the persons are taught think and reflect before acting. They must learn that knowing, affect and action play an important role in ethical action. To foster morality in the people they must first be taught to think critically about what is right and good and make the right decisions.

The moral lessons and ethical values have been inherited down through the ages. Each new generation and each individual may alter or add to that heritage, but the heritage provides a foundation. It is accepted that in Myanmar culture and tradition, if a person lacks ethical consciousness or knowledge, he or she is more likely to do bad deed. It can be explained that a person may not be able to distinguish what is ethically good and what is ethically bad without ethical knowledge. We must learn to know right from wrong and good from bad. It is not however blind obedience but lessons we learn from those with greater experience and lessons learn from one's own experience. That is why knowledge and education are of great importance in Myanmar life. With respect to 'affect' Myanmar society takes account of the emotion only in so far as they awaken sympathy and compassion. Nevertheless emotion such as will and desire play crucial roles in ethics. Thus education provides many and varies opportunities for human beings to act. to live out their developing values and ideas, and to reflect on what they value in light of their ethical experience.

### **Eastern Perspectives on Ethical Values in Education**

China and India are close neighbors of Myanmar. Myanmar is being situated between these two great giants. Their culture and civilization has influenced not only Myanmar but other Asian countries.

China has given priority to ethical values in education since ancient times. "Zhi Yan" schools emerge firstly in China during the "Yu Shun Period". The nearest meaning of "Zhi Yan" is the nurturing of youths to become good and righteous persons. The most eminent of Chinese philosopher, Confucius (B.C. 551-479) exerted great influence on education and the core of Confucian values have been preserved in education.

Confucians emphasize moral cultivation because they believe people are intrinsically good. Confucius maintained that human being is basically good-natured and Lao Tzu (circa 6 century B.C.) said that men are more or less of the same nature though their habits may differ. However human relationship in society is complex and good nature is not enough to carry out moral obligations. Thus people always need to cultivate morality and minimize their personal desires.

Zen Zhi (B.C. 505-436) and Mencius (B.C. 372-289) advocated criticism of one's thought and emotions for development of the self. Zhun Zhi (B.C. 298-238) also gave precedence to moral development. He held that morality can be cultivated by observing one's environment and emulating the example of leading personalities. Moral purity can only be obtained through training and effort. In modern times, the Chinese revolutionary Dr. Sun-Yet-Sen also considered the world as a single large community which therefore calls for good relations among human beings, and this therefore calls for moral conduct such as kindness and cooperation.

Education in China today gives first priority to ethical values and it is linked to cognitive and physical training. The Chinese value human dignity and self-respect above everything else. They maintain that it is more important to be a human being of integrity who knows the distinction between right and wrong than to be able to read and spell correctly. The Chinese emphasize that knowledge must be put into practice.

The Indian education policy holds that to live a good life, both material development, such as food, clothing and shelter ex. and spiritual development, such as truth, happiness, peace and stability are necessary. Hence to be able to achieve this, the learner (or student) must be trained and guided in the way how to think, how to feel, how to conduct himself or herself. In other words in education there must be proportionate development in the three important fields of knowledge, skills and ethics.

At present, it is said that India is going through a period of social and political changes that have put at risk the ancient ethical values of Indian civilization. India, a huge country with a multitude of ethnic races with their diverse cultures, Indian education must overcome the outlook of those who still cling to the age-old caste system, gender discrimination and regionalism to achieve unity among diversity. The task of education then lay down a system of values to retain the ancient important traditions of love of truth, goodness and beauty. Moreover, people must be made to understand that the real moral values, such as *Metta* or loving kindness advocated by Gotama Buddha, the self sacrifice of Jesus, the love of truth advocated by Gandhi and selfless of Mother Theresa are the standards that people should live up to. These values are universal.

Accordingly it is maintained that there are five main groups of values such as: (1) Truth (2) Right Action (3) Peace (4) Love and Kindness and (5) Non-violence. All these values and attitudes must be instilled in education at the elementary, secondary, and university level. It can be said that the Indian perspective pays attention to ethical values in teaching.

### **Myanmar Perspective on Ethical Value in Education**

To this day the majority of the Myanmar peoples are Buddhists and Buddhist teaching and precepts still play a prominent role not only as a religion but in all aspects of daily life, social, moral etc. The Buddha's view of education was not confined to formal education alone, but was a most comprehensive view and He held that it begins in the home.

In Myanmar culture, parents and teachers are revered after the Buddha, Dhamrma and Sangha for children owe a debt of gratitude to them for their well- being. According to Buddhism, education should not be confined merely to "book - learning" or acquisition of information but to becoming a decent person who carries out his responsibilities in life.

The Buddha laid great emphasis on the duties and responsibilities of all elders not only parents and teachers. A child is a person who is learning many things. Morality must be instill from childhood by parents as well as teachers, but all elders who see a child doing wrong must therefore correct him or her. This is part of the education of a child to make him a useful social being. For education in the most generation sense includes the physical, moral and intellectual.

Buddhism teaches that in social life the morality of the individual or personal ethics should be cultivated from childhood. By morality is meant respect for life, that is, to recognize the right lo life of all living beings.

### **Conclusion**

The national education policy of today aims to nurture in students a sense of national identity, promote cultural awareness and national unity. It gives equal importance to developing knowledge of science and technology and to set down a system of ethical values. It will make every effort to prevent the breakdown of morality which it maintains is the very foundation a society. Education will therefore be employed as an instrument for the development of social and ethical values.

In Education, philosophical studies enhance the capacity for problem solving, the ability to understand and express ideas, and the power to frame cogent arguments. In the culture in which it is practiced, philosophy can be a critical voice, a defender of ideals, a creator of visions.

Powerful forces, both outside and inside moral philosophy, have conspired to marginalize value theory in contemporary moral philosophy. Yet the foregoing demonstrates that ethical values have undergone a considerable revival in recent moral philosophy.

The present day Myanmar education policy is the motto "Morale, Discipline and Knowledge". For education in the most general sense include the physical, moral and intellectual. These are the three main parts which must be synchronized for development. To get a better ethical value in education it would be necessary to look at the mora education courses taught in schools and universities.

In the East, it is maintained that morality can be taught and that there must be instruction in ethical values. Thus it must be admitted that although teaching children the moral codes and values of the society in which they live is necessary, it must be supplemented by teaching them how to reflect and reason they have been taught. The culture of each society or nation, which includes the religious and philosophical outlook, their history and traditions, must necessarily be taken into account especially in contemporary times when no nation can stand alone and isolated. Although, cultures are different, we have to search for unity in diversity that is shared universal values as humans. There is thus a need for consensus on what

ethical values are to be regarded as norms. The most important assets of a nation are the citizens themselves. If the citizens have ethical values, the nation will progress at a much faster pace.

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