

Ethics and Educational Leadership and Influence

Ways in which teachers shape moral
formation in students



Bill Prevette

Introducing ethics

- Students - an important aspect of becoming a mature, responsible citizen or leader is having a strong sense of moral and ethical values
- Moral values decisively affect society
 - A major factor in the decline of the Roman Empire was the loss of moral strength; society crumbled from within
- Each society follows some model for its moral formation

Introducing ethics

- Each person already has morality and ethics, whether we realize or not.
- Your ethics are the organized ideas of right and wrong you use to decide whether a belief, attitude or behavior is good or bad, right or wrong
- Your morality is how well you live up to the ethical system you believe is true

Introducing ethics

- Individuals and societies have often sought to guide and direct their moral behavior by appealing to a single principle or maxim
 - Famous slogans
 - The majority rules
 - Majoritatea are dreptate
 - Do unto others as you would have done to you
 - Ce tie nu-ti place, altuia nu-i face
 - The end justifies the means
 - Scopul scuza mijloacele
 - Other examples
 - Pestele incepe sa miroasa de la cap
 - Sa moara si capra vecinului

Introducing ethics

- C.S. Lewis observed that an ethical system ought to address what constitutes a healthy individual, society and overall goal for the society or individual.
- Ethical slogans tend to address three relationships that are basic to any ethical system
 - How I should relate to myself (my internal ethics.)
 - How we should relate to each other (our group ethics.)
 - What our overall purpose or goal ought to be and how it affects us individually and collectively.

Introducing ethics

- Most ethical principles share a common problem - they require information or abilities none of us possess. We don't know enough and/or cannot do enough to make any of these ethical systems really work.
- For an ethical system to be truly effective over time, two things should be true:
 - One would have to know all of the possible options, alternatives and consequences of any ethical choice, and then choose the best one
 - One should have the power to carry out the best ethical choice. This is not a very realistic possibility

Introducing ethics - conclusions

- An ethical system is only as good as its grasp of reality. Christian ethics hold that there is a spiritual reality (God) that can and does greatly influence our physical reality.
- A person's ethics are the organized ideas of right and wrong he or she uses to decide whether a belief, attitude or behavior is good or bad
- A person's morality is how well he or she lives up to the ethical system he or she has accepted.

Ethics in education

How can teachers and educators more actively influence the moral development of children and youth

Education is value-based - students are constantly learning values in the course of their education

Character education

- Has been knowing a renaissance of sorts
- Local communities and grass root parent coalitions desire character development education for their youth
- All have a responsibility to form their conscience
- We are not born with our consciences already formed

Principles of personal vision

(S. Covey)

- Self-awareness
- Social mirror
- Determinism (stimulus/response theory)
 - Genetic
 - Psychic
 - Environmental
- Between stimulus and response, man has the freedom to choose

Principles of personal vision

(S. Covey)

- Three central values in life (Victor Frankl)
 - The experiential
 - The creative
 - The attitudinal → paradigm shifts
- Taking the initiative
 - Resourcefulness & Initiative
- Reactive vs. Proactive people
 - Reactive language vs. Proactive language
 - Reactive people - driven by feelings
 - Proactive people - subordinate feelings to values

Interaction with students

- Do you have a compass in your head, a magnet in your hearts?
- What are your desires?
- Primary colors - Red, Green, Blue



Interaction with students CHARACTER

- **Honesty is foundational to Moral Development**
- **Are you being honest?**
 - Institutions (school, church, etc.) cannot make you honest
- **Do you have personal dignity?**
- **Do you instill dignity and respect in students**

Interaction with students PERSPECTIVE

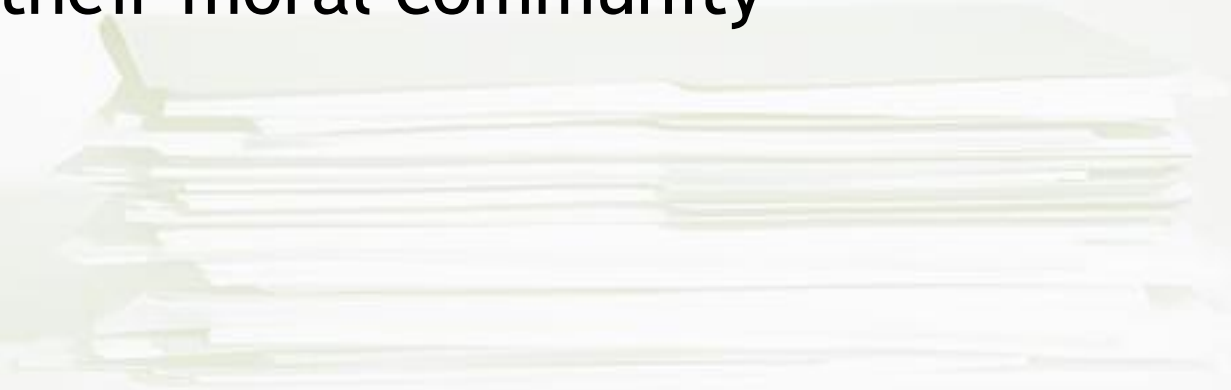
- What are you going to see in your life?
- Do you know where you would like to go?
- How do you see your problems?
 - Are you a problem person or a possibility person?



Interaction with students COURAGE

- Examples of people who had courage
- Courage can be contagious
- Taking risks
- Failure
- Michael Jordan, Beethoven, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein

Moral Formation

- What is the content of the moral domain?
 - What is the means by which we pursue moral development in own lives?
 - The job of teachers - to bring new members into their moral community
- 

Moral Formation

- Moral reflection is done against the background of an existing moral consensus
- The ability to critique a society by the light of its own moral commitments - an important aspect of social progress (Walzer)
- Children are surely capable of moral insight
 - Different than adults (they are part of a moral community already)

Moral Formation

- Humans are capable of both:
 - Greed and generosity
 - Rationality and irrationality
 - Discipline and random behavior
- A democratic society requires the development of some of these traits over others
- Decisions to be made with attention to the intellectual, moral and psychological requirements of democratic life

Moral Formation

- The job of education
 - To prepare every member of the moral community to be able to offer “internal critique”
 - To teach children customary morality in such a way that they can become reflective about it



Integrating structure and content in moral education

- “Whose values?”
- Mistakes:
 - Moral education / sex education
 - Moral education / religious education
 - Not enough of the above



Three basic approaches

- **Indoctrinative**
 - Presupposes a justified content and proposes to teach that content in a variety of methods
- **Romanticist**
 - Provide the nurturing context in which the natural tendency to develop a moral agent can “flower”
- **Cognitive-structural approach**
 - Construction of moral reasoning capacity (interaction between one’s genetic, developmental and biological endowments and experience with the physical and social worlds)

Six Pillars of Character

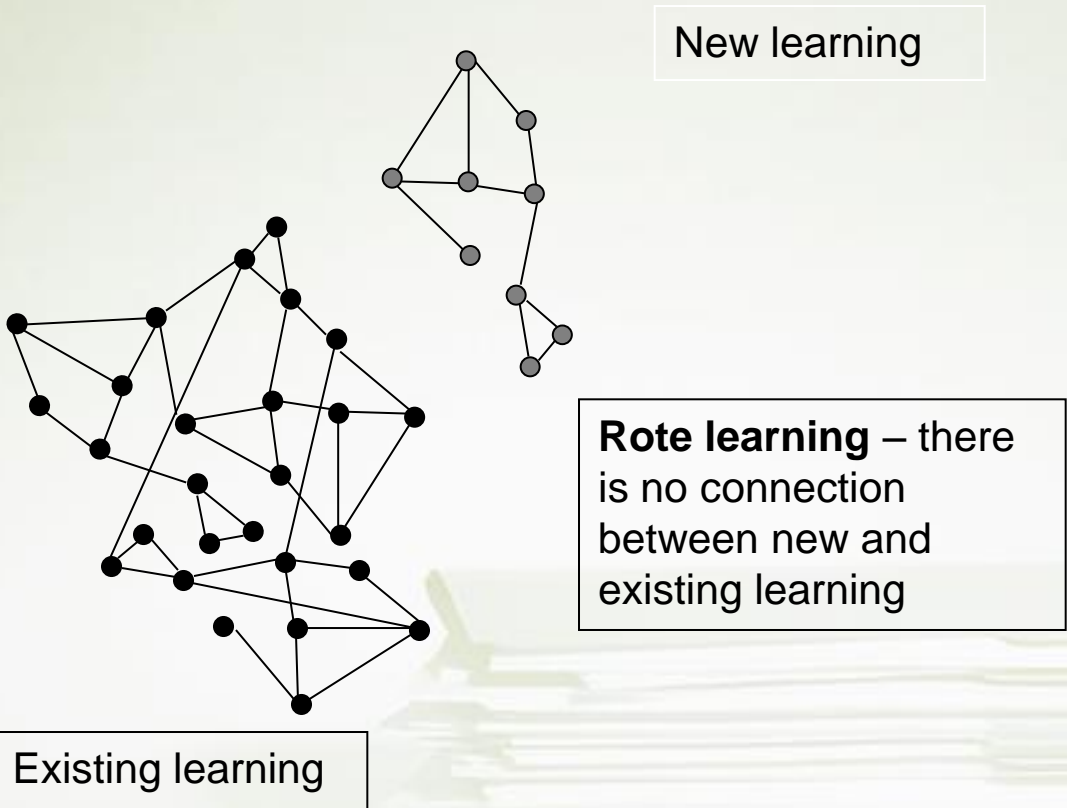
- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship



Four domains

- **Society**
 - Truth, human rights, law
- **Relationships**
 - Others for themselves
- **The Self**
 - Each person - a unique being of intrinsic worth
- **The environment**
 - Duty to maintain a sustainable environment for the future

Constructivism (1)



- Learning is personal 'meaning making', and it involves making neural connections

- Only the learner can make these neural connections

- The existing learning of every learner is unique

- Only active methods require students to make these connections

Constructivism (2)



New learning

Existing learning

Deep learning – the learner makes connections between new and existing learning:

- 'Understanding' is created. That is:
- The learner can reason with the new learning
- Learning is less likely to be forgotten

- Learners make errors and omissions in constructing their learning, and these must be discovered and corrected. This requires active learning too.
- There are more connections in the brain than atoms in the known universe! (So the diagram is a gross simplification)
- Connections make learning, memory and intelligence. They literally grow the brain
- The brain is like a muscle, the more it is used, the stronger it gets

Transformational teaching

- Presence and pursuit
 - Being open
 - Taking the initiative
 - Preparing ahead
 - Undivided attention
- Listening
 - Level I - “listening to you for me”
 - Level II - “listening to you for you”
 - Level III - “listening to you, for you and through you”

Transformational teaching

- **Accountability**
 - “Account” for the set agenda
 - Goal-focused
 - Voluntary
 - Realistic
 - Flexible
- **Curiosity**
 - Powerful questions
- **Encouragement**
 - Refreshing hope along the way