UNIT 15 MORAL DEVELOPMENT, MORAL LEARNING AND MORAL EDUCATION

Structure

15.1 Introduction
15.2 Objectives
15.3 Different Approaches to the Concept of Moral Education
   15.3.1 The Psycho-analytic Approach
   15.3.2 Learning Theory Approach
   15.3.3 Cognitive Developmental Approach
15.4 Moral Judgement and Moral Action
15.5 Moral Learning – Different Sources
   15.5.1 Moral Learning Outside the School
   15.5.2 Moral Learning Inside the School
   15.5.3 Moral Education and Curriculum
15.6 Let Us Sum Up
15.7 Unit-end Exercises
15.8 Suggested Readings

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The term development suggests a progressive change towards some complex level – a change usually of an irreversible nature. We can think of an end product towards which the process of development is directed or aimed. This is true especially in the case of biological development. A caterpillar, for example, passes gradually through certain stages and ultimately develops into a butterfly. But there is no similarity of human cognitive or moral development and the biological maturation or development. One cannot conceive of any end-product in educational or moral development of the child. Children deprived of sensory stimulation, perceptual variation or interaction with adults fail to develop cognitively, emotionally or morally. Social and physical interactions have been shown to be necessary factors for development of human personality.

Hirst and Peters (1971) hold that human development is essentially an evaluative concept. When we talk of a morally developed person, we are presupposing some idea of what it means to be morally mature or developed. This, in turn, depends upon a view of morality that one can justify.

In this unit, we shall try to discuss different approaches to moral development and contexts and conditions that can facilitate the development of the child into a morally mature individual. The specific objectives which instigated the author to write this unit are stated.

15.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the psycho-analytical, social learning and cognitive developmental approaches to the concept of moral development,
15.3 DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE CONCEPT OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

There are three distinct viewpoints about moral development. These approaches are: i) psycho-analytic approach, ii) the learning theory approach, and iii) cognitive development approach. These three approaches do not represent contradictory view points but rather complementary explanations of moral development: each offers insight into some aspect of moral growth. A brief description of each of these view points is attempted as under. Since each of these theoretical positions may have different implications for moral education, the teachers should examine them in some detail.

15.3.1 The Psycho-analytic Approach

This approach is manifested in Freud’s monumental works. It considers morality simply as conforming to cultural standards or norms through the process of internalization. For Freud, the acquisition of morality by the child is due to development of the super-ego, which occurs in the child as a result of internalization of moral imperatives derived from standards of adults, especially the parents. These moral imperatives help to control the impulses of the ID and they work as “conscience” or ego-ideal. The conscience or super-ego, thus formed prevents the child from transgressing the social norms. The more a child is attached to the parents, the stronger will be the super-ego formed, because the child, for fear of losing parental affection will not show the kind of behaviour that parents do not like. Children who lack close attachments with their parents or are neglected or ignored by them display hostility to others. Such children develop very weak conscience or super-ego.

In acting as ego-ideal the super-ego provides positive standards required by the society. It represents the voice of parents or society. When the ego-ideal fails to reach its own standards, feelings of guilt develop. That is why a conscientious child considers himself/herself guilty even where there is a slight transgression in thought or action, of social norms and standards of conduct. Some children become extremely self-punitive or even masochistic when some offence is done by them unwittingly. Such a development tendency is not a sign of positive mental health; this may involve them in acute psychological or even psychiatric problems. As teachers or even parents, therefore, we must remain cautious that no such abnormal symptoms develop.
Evaluating Freud’s theory of moral development one can hold that Freud suggests no positive theory in this regard, for his whole stress is on unconscious mental processes. You already know that development of what he calls the super-ego is the result of inhibition or suppression of the id related tendencies for fear of parents in the childhood which progressively gets generalized for significant others and then to the society. However, Freud holds that proper and adequate love relationship with parents are important in moral development.

15.3.2 Learning Theory Approach

Learning theorists such as Bandura and Eysenck assume that moral behaviour/conduct is the result of reinforcement, resulting from the child’s modelling himself/herself after an admired adult. Individual differences in the moral behaviour are explained in terms of conditionability (Eysenck 1964). Criticizing the development of centralistic concepts like conscience or ego-ideal as hypothetical (for, they are beyond any empirical scrutiny), the learning theorists hold that moral behaviour is a learned behaviour, like acquisition of skills or habits. They consider three types of mechanisms which explain development of moral behaviour. These mechanisms are: i) reinforcement, ii) rewards and punishment or threat of punishment, and iii) modelling or imitation (Downey and Kelly, 1982). You are already familiar with Skinner’s operant conditioning, according to which behaviour can be modified or shaped by proper scheduling of reinforcement. By following Skinnerian techniques of operant conditioning using praise or approval by the teacher or parents, children can be taught socially desirable behaviour. The deviant behaviour (if already acquired by the child) can be overcome by use of such techniques. While desired behaviour can be promoted by praise, attention, smiles or approval, the disruptive or unwanted behaviour can be eradicated by showing disapproval, and withdrawal of privileges. But this is also true that application of such negative gestures, in the case of some categories of children may act adversely, because of reaction formation. Even Thorndike, later, modified his law of effect and stated that rewarding a desired response strengthens the response, but punishing an undesirable response does not necessarily weaken it. Eysenck (1960, 1964) holds that learning of any moral values can be based on learning theory. The difficulty with the findings of learning theorists, however, is that they conducted their experiments of conditionability on animals and extended the generalizations on humans.

- Social Learning and Development of Moral Behaviour (Modelling and Imitation)

According to social learning theorists, Bandura and Walters (1963), for example, children adopt desirable behaviour patterns not only as a result of reward and punishment but also through imitation. Imitation, they claim, plays an important role in learning of deviant as well as desirable behaviour. Such claim has been substantiated by cross-cultural as well as laboratory studies. Moral and other types of behaviours are learnt by observing the elder’s behaviour rather than through deliberate instructions. Children learn more by imitating what elders do than by what elders ask children to do. Reading of good literature is also found to have a desirable effect on children’s moral behaviour. Bandura (1963) demonstrated the effect of observational learning on children’s behaviour. He recommended
that children should be encouraged to do self-reading of good literature, to watch such programmes on television, etc.

The other important finding of Bandura and other social learning theorists is that "Children model themselves on adults they like". In order to study the effect of rewards and punishment through modelling or imitation on children's social and moral conduct, Bandura et. al. (1963) conducted experiments. They took four groups of students. The first group was made to watch a film in which a model was being punished for aggressive and hostile behaviour. The second group saw a film in which a model was rewarded for showing the same type of aggressive and hostile behaviour. One control group was shown a highly active but non-aggressive model. The second control group saw no model at all. When these children were observed subsequently while they were at play, those who had witnessed the aggressive model being rewarded, indulged in significantly more hostile behaviour than children in any other group.

Bandura's findings are of much practical use even in regard to restraining an individual from doing an immoral act; whereas Eysenck's conditioning theory holds that children have to be punished so that they refrain from immoral or undesirable acts. Bandura's social learning theory suggests that children may learn equally well or even better learn to inhibit undesirable behaviour by simply watching a model being punished.

Evaluating the learning theories approach Dagar and Dhull (1994) write:

"While we appreciate the contribution of learning theorists regarding development of moral behaviour in children through modelling, shaping or conditioning of desirable responses, we should, however, not forget that such techniques only ensure moral training but not moral education, for in such techniques no cognizance is taken of moral reasoning, or moral judgement. The learning theorists actually work on mechanistic paradigm in which children are treated as passive learners who cannot interpret the world around them and apply their own principles according to differing demands of the situations."

15.3.3 Cognitive Developmental Approach

Among the early investigators, in the West, in the field of moral development, the name of Arnold Gessel deserves special mention. According to Gessel moral development is a maturational process which unfolds itself as the child grows in age. However, Gessel is concerned with moral conduct only, without any regard to moral reasoning or moral judgement. According to him there are three distinct stages of moral development: i) obedience to authority, adult instruction and commands, ii) rigid adherence to rules even in the absence of authority figure; iii) personal morality which is autonomous in character. These three stages occur in the life of individuals at different age levels. Gessel in fact tells more about what children think instead of how they think.

- Piaget's theory of moral development

In developing his theory of moral development, Piaget draws much from famous sociologist Durkheim and Great German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant. Durkheim held that we are moral beings in so far as we are social
Piaget considered the distinction between heteronomy and autonomy of the "will" as given by Kant. On the basis of this distinction, he distinguishes between conventional morality and rational morality. When children are at the stage of heteronomy of the will, their conduct is dependent on the approval of significant others. They refrain from undesirable conduct because of fear of disapproval of significant others, or for fear of being found out. This morality is called conventional morality when the individual, however, reaches a stage of autonomy of the will (which in fact is rarely reached), one's moral behaviour becomes spontaneous, and is directed by their own moral choices.

Piaget wanted to explore the nature of children's moral judgement, and he chose three areas to study the same: i) their attitudes towards rules, ii) their judgement of right and wrong, and iii) their assessment of justice and fairness. On the basis of both longitudinal and cross cultural studies he established that moral judgement is not determined by rewards, punishment or even imitation rather it is a developmental process through gradual cognitive restructuring.

First of all Piaget (1932) stated: "all morality consists of a system of rules, and the essence of all morality is to be sought for in the respect which the individual acquires for those rules". Piaget was not only concerned with the child's practice of rules (his moral conduct) but also with the way the child perceives these rules as a restraint on his actions. In his investigations, Piaget chose rules children follow in pursuing the game of marbles. The characteristic of this game is that it is played by children only and the rules followed in this game are seldom passed on by adults but learnt from other children during the game itself.

He observed that:

i) Very young children have no regard for the rules at all.

ii) By the age of 6 or 7, they become aware of the rules of the game and regard these rules as fixed or immutable. This is children's heteronomy.

iii) At a later stage the child begins to realize that these rules of the games are meant to regularize the game. They are not sacrosanct and if need be, modified by mutual consent of other players. This is the time autonomy begins to emerge. At about 12 years of age the child gets an insight as to how the rules are formulated. In Piaget's view, cooperative activities between peers and their mutual understanding and sociability constitute the essential conditions for the autonomy to develop.

With regard to the second area of his investigation (i.e. children's judgement of right and wrong) Piaget finds a progression from heteronomy to autonomy. For a young child something is right if the adults approve of it, and wrong, if they disapprove it. This is the stage of heteronomy of the will at which children judge actions on the basis of material consequences rather than on the basis of intentions behind their actions. For example, we may consider two boys - a boy who forcibly takes away a full packet of biscuits in order to give it to a man on the street, who may die of hunger, if immediate relief is not provided and another, who steals one or two biscuits, when the shopkeeper is searching for something else.
Moral Development, Moral Learning and Moral Education

You can pose this or another such incident to some of your students and discuss the answer in terms of heteronomy and autonomy of the will.

Children at heteronomous stage may judge the first act to be more wrong than the second. Piaget terms this stage of the formation of moral judgement as "moral realism" which can be explained in terms of the child's ego-centricity. A child at the ego-centric level is limited in his ability to distinguish himself and his own feelings with those of others. He is capable of seeing things from his own point of view and cannot conceive that others' points of view are possible. He cannot internalize and generalize rules and apply them in a flexible manner. A child's moral judgement begins to be flexible when he consents to his ego-centricity and starts viewing things and situations in perspective. In the above example of stealing, an older child may argue that though it is bad to steal but not so bad (and sometimes good also) if one steals to save the life of others. Consideration for others and a respect for human life start assuming an important role in the life of the individual as he moves from heteronomy to autonomy.

Let us come to the third aspect of Piaget's theory of moral development, that is children's sense of justice and fairness. While for a young child, fairness means equal (same) treatment to all, the older children include consideration of the needs and desires etc. of others in the definition of fairness. For the latter fairness involves equal treatment only if the needs and desires of parties in question are the same. Under this concept of fairness (moral development), which is based on mutual respect and consideration for others, the people start seeing the world from the point of view of other people.

Piaget, thus, talks of two kinds of morality – the conventional morality and rational morality. At the stage of conventional morality, children tend to have obedience to adult's commands and uncritical adherence to rules which have come from the authority. On the other hand, at the autonomy stage, the children follow rules not for the sake of fear of the authority or society, but because after critical analysis of the rules, they have accepted these as their own. Application of these rules is not rigid or immutable but modifiable through mutual agreement, under circumstances when their application becomes unjustifiable or unfair.

Children, however, do not practice either conventional morality or rational morality to the exclusion of the other, but move from one stage to the other through a process of maturation and cognitive restructuring. According to this theory, the order of moral development is invariant. That is, for the very young child the rules are sacrosanct, immutable and rigid laid down externally and cannot be questioned. But as he/she grows older he/she finds that rules have a purpose to serve and hence modifiable. At a still later stage moral development becomes rational and autonomous. However, it may be noted that what is fixed is the sequence of stages and not the rate of progression through the stages. So the theory is like his cognitive theory, stage-specific and not age specific. It is facilitated by the child's interaction with physical, social and cultural environment.
Kohlberg’s theory of moral development

Kohlberg (1966) made a significant contribution in complementing and supplementing Piaget’s theory of moral development. Like Piaget he, too, stresses that moral development is a cognitive-developmental process and is based on moral judgement, that is, on the reasoning a child makes.

Kohlberg’s criticism of Skinnerian approach in moral developments

According to Kohlberg, the Skinnerian approach to moral development is overtly indefensible because the very idea of “shaping” of behaviour is an attack on the freedom and autonomy of the individual. Secondly, the Skinnerian approach is, in fact, concerned with learning (conditioning) of certain virtues like honesty, truth, non-violence, non-aggression, cooperation, punctuality, obedience to authority, law abidingness, etc. and not with moral judgement or moral reasoning or moral autonomy. As such, it encourages only what Piaget named conventional morality. It is an attempt to systematically instill in the young socially important virtues using rewards and punishment leading to stamping in of the responses that teachers or parents or any other significant person for that matter, considers socially or morally desirable. The learner has no freedom to judge the worth-whileness or to think on his/her own. Kohlberg calls this approach as a “bag of virtues” approach. Being authoritarian, it cannot be called moral education but rather moral training, conditioning or even indoctrination.

Kohlberg’s stages of moral development

According to Kohlberg, there can be six stages of moral development in such a way that a development of a higher stage logically depends on the development of the preceding stage. Each stage reveals a different kind of motivation for acting morally. At stage one the child acts according to the motive of punishment and obedience. At this stage, the child would say that it is wrong to disobey his/her parents because he/she would be punished for doing that. At stage two (the instrumental – relativist orientation) satisfaction of needs is the criterion to determine whether a particular action is right or wrong. Stages three and four are described by Kohlberg as stages of conventional morality or conventional role conformity. At stage three the actions and judgements are primarily oriented towards seeking approval of the significant others. Stage four is marked by the respect for authority and the given social order. Stages five and six are based on self-accepted moral principles. At stage five, for example, one is considerate of the rights of others and, tries to respect others’ rights as much as one’s own. It is a kind of self-accepted mutuality. At the sixth and the final stage, the individual acts according to his/her own conscience or principles of ethic’s. These six stages are grouped in three levels: the pre-conventional level, the conventional level and the post-conventional level.

Definition of moral stages

Level I. Pre-conventional Level

At this level, the child is not responsive to cultural rules or labels of good and bad, right or wrong but interprets such labels in physical or hedonistic
consequences of actions (punishment, rewards, exchange of favours). This level is divided into the following two stages:

Stage (i): The punishment and obedience orientation

Simply the physical consequences of actions determine their goodness or badness. Avoidance of punishment and deference to power are valued in their own right and not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order.

Typical response: I will not disobey my parents, because I will be punished by them.

Stage (ii): The instrument relativist orientation

Right action is one that instrumentally satisfies one's needs and occasionally the needs of others. Human relations are considered like those of a market place. Elements of fairness of reciprocity and of equal sharing are present but they are always interpreted in terms of expediency. Reciprocity is a matter of “you scratch my back and I will scratch yours”; not of loyalty, gratitude or justice.

Typical response: If you help me, may be I will help you sometimes.

Level II. Conventional Level

At this level, maintaining the expectations of the individuals, family group or society is prescribed as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate consequences. The attitude is of loyalty to the individual, group or the society at large, of actively maintaining, supporting and justifying the order and of identifying with the persons involved or the group. The following two stages constitute this level.

Stage (i): Good boy-nice girl orientation

Behaviour at this stage is judged by intention — “he/she means well”. The intention or will becomes important. One earns the approval of others by becoming nice or good. One acts not with the intention of pleasing others but with the motive of being good so that others appreciate. So one conforms to socially desirable behaviour.

Stage (ii): The law and order orientation

Here the orientation is towards maintaining the given social order - its rules and regulations and the authority. As such right behaviour consists of doing one’s duty, showing respect for the established lawful authority for its own sake. It is conventional morality.

Level III. Post-conventional, Autonomous or Principled Level

The moral values and principles defined at this level have validity and applications beyond the authority, the group or persons holding the principles and beyond the individual’s own identification with these groups. This level has also been classified in two stages.
Stage (i): The social contract, legalistic orientation

Generally with utilitarian overtones, right actions tend to be defined in terms of general rights of the individuals, and standards which have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. Apart from what is constitutionally and democratically agreed upon, the “right” is a matter of personal “values” and opinions. The result is based on the legal point of view but with an emphasis on the possibility of changing the law in terms of rational and just considerations of social utility (rather than freezing it in terms of stage (ii) (Law and Order). Outside the legal realm, free agreement and contract is the binding element of obligation.

Typical response: It is the law that people consent to. We all have obligations to work through the agreed structure and to get the law, which appears wrong, changed. When injustice is committed, it is best to work through the system to end it.

Stage (ii): The universal ethical principle orientation

Right is defined by the decision of the conscience in accordance with self chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical, the golden rule, the categorical imperative, unlike the ten commandments. Such rules are universal principles of justice, the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

Typical response: The law should be subordinate to the higher Principles of Justice. One should act in accordance with these caper-ordinate principles rather than maintaining a simple conformity to the law.

These stages are structures of moral judgement or moral reasoning. The structure of moral judgement needs to be distinguished from the content of moral reasoning. Kohlberg cites the example of a moral dilemma in order to bring home this point. The dilemma raises the virtue of stealing a drug to save the life of a woman. The inventor of the drug is selling it at an exorbitant price (say ten times its cost). The woman’s husband cannot raise the money and the seller refuses to lower the price or wait for payment in installments. What should the husband do?

The choice endorsed by a subject (steal, desist from stealing) is called the content of his moral judgement in the situation. His reasoning about the choice defines the structure or form of his moral judgement. According to Kohlberg the reasoning centres on the following 10 (ten) issues of concern in usual moral dilemmas:

1) Punishment
2) Property
3) Role and concern of application
4) Role and concern of authority
5) Law
6) Life
7) Liberty
8) Distributive justice
9) Truth
10) Sex
A moral choice involves choosing between two or more of these values as they conflict in concrete situations of choice.

The stage of structure of a person's moral judgement defines: 1) What he finds valuable in each of these moral issues (life vs. law) i.e. how he defines the values. 2) Why he finds it valuable, i.e. the reasons he gives for valuing it. For example at stage 1 life is valued in terms of power or possessions of the person involved. Stage 2, for its usefulness in satisfying the needs of the individual; at stage 3, in terms of the individual's relations with others and their valuation for him; at stage 4, in terms of social or religious law; only at stages 5 and 6, is life seen as inherently worthwhile, apart from other considerations.

15.4 MORAL JUDGEMENT AND MORAL ACTION

After examining the growth of moral development, we must consider the relation of moral judgement and moral action. Just as logical reasoning is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for mature moral judgement, mature moral judgement is a necessary but not sufficient condition for mature moral action. One may reason correctly in terms of principles of ethics but may not live up to these principles. For translating moral reasoning (or moral judgement) into moral action, some other factors are also necessary. These factors may partly include the situation and its pressures and partly one's motives, emotions and strength of the "will". Moral reasoning, though, is one factor in moral behaviour, it is the single most important factor yet discovered in moral behaviour. Moral judgement is the only distinctively moral factor in moral behaviour. One of Krebs's studies indicated that "strong willed" conventional subjects resisted cheating much more than weak willed conventional subjects. But at stage 1 and 2 (a moral stage) strong willed subjects cheated more, not less than the weak willed subjects. For then they had the courage of their (amoral) convictions that it was worthwhile to cheat to avoid punishment. Traits like will, courage, determination etc. are important factors in moral behaviour but only in the presence of mature moral development. In themselves such factors are not moral factors. They acquire moral significance only when informed by mature moral judgement.

Empirical researches in the area of moral development show that "fixation" of an individual at a particular stage of moral development can be explored in terms of other aspects of social and moral life. Haan et. al. (1968), for example, working with college students found that very few cases reached the stage of principled morality (i.e. stage 5 and 6 on the Kohlberg scale of moral judgement). Those few who came up to the stage of principled morality were found to be highly independent of their parents, to be able to play an active role in social and political organizations and relied very little on religious doctrines and moral guidance. Those who were found at the conventional stage of morality were generally conservative, found to play little part in social or political activities and they conformed to conventional standards of morality set by parents and other authority figures.

15.5 MORAL LEARNING – DIFFERENT SOURCES

In the preceding units of this block, we have discussed some of the psychological and developmental factors which need to be kept in view while educating children for moral behaviour. In this context, we also realized the
teacher's responsibility to execute this task. A moment's reflection will show that there is a feature of moral education that makes it very difficult for the teachers to fulfill their responsibility. The difficulty is that children, before they start coming to school absorb from their environment, especially home, a good deal of moral learning consciously or unconsciously, rightly or wrongly. It is because moral learning is not like learning a foreign language where the child knows nothing before he joins the school, but rather it is like the mother tongue which is acquired by the child from interaction with parents or with significant others. Obviously when the child comes to the school, he has already acquired a lot of moral learning from parents or from other sources outside the school. Furthermore, throughout their time at school also they have to make moral decisions. Keeping in view the fact that students would have acquired many moral attitudes, beliefs and habits before they start coming to the school, the problem is how to convert this moral learning into moral education. One thing, as teachers, however, we should remember is that instead of condemning the already acquired moral learning, we must acknowledge and accept the same and guide the students to help them become more reflective on moral issues.

Before we go about our task any further we must clearly examine and understand the different sources of moral learning outside the school and some of the hidden sources inside the school.

15.5.1 Moral Learning Outside the School

It is well recognized that society plays a central role in the development of moral attitudes and values. Different societies are based on different social norms and also they create different norms. It is from the society at large that children absorb most of their values, attitudes and beliefs. Within the society, parents, for example make deliberate attempts to guide children in the acquisition of values. Most parents regard it as their responsibility and they start making efforts from the earliest age.

- Child-rearing practices and moral learning

There is no doubt that most parents do make deliberate attempts to develop social and moral values in their children, but the ways adopted for the purpose vary from parent to parent. Some parents are authoritarian, others may have a democratic bent and still others might adopt a Laissez Faire approach – that is a completely non-interfering approach.

Children brought up in authoritarian home environments prefer to follow decisions given externally to them; that is, they prefer behaving or doing things as they are asked to, and feel insecure if they are required or expected to make their own decisions. Kay (1975) stresses the role/importance of moral rigidity vs. flexibility found in the parental practices which affects and is reflected in moral conduct and behaviour of children. He suggests that it is only by being morally flexible, that is, considering particular circumstances surrounding a moral issue instead of applying blindly a rule that one has been taught that children develop moral dynamism which is more likely to lead them to moral autonomy.
These kinds of parental attitudes (authoritarian, democratic or otherwise) are reflected in the parents' reflection to even routine events of behaviour of their children but these have a definite bearing on children's morals, learning, and moral development. For example, the parent's reactions would differ widely when their child is physically attacked by some other child (his/her peer). Some parents will say: “never mind dear, I think he was upset at something”. Others may become aggressive and hostile and may ask their own child, “What did you do to him first?” Or “You must have done something wrong to him.” Still others would say, “If he hits you next time, see that you hit him harder, I don’t want you to come home after being beaten.”

Then there are social class differences found in child rearing practices which affect their moral development. Some studies suggest that most children from families of a high status defer immediate gratification and consider long term consequences. Children from such families are less likely to break promises, tell lies or steal, whereas middle class parents spend more time answering children’s questions, giving them reasons why they are expected to behave in a certain manner etc. William Kay (1975) stresses the importance of personalism in child rearing practices. Parents who treat their children as “persons”, worthy of consideration and respect, are more likely to help them learn to respect others and show consideration for them. All such different kinds of attitudes need to be considered on the part of teachers while dealing with their problems on moral issues.

**Moral learning via imitation:** Apart from deliberate attempts made by parents a good deal is learnt implicitly and unconsciously. Children are more likely to do as their parents do than what they preach. Some attitudes of parents are uncritically acquired by children. Racial prejudice, for example, is acquired implicitly. Situations where parents’ practices are incompatible with what they preach (i.e. one rule for myself and another for the rest of the world) create confusion in children. There are parents, who for example, show laxity in sexual matters but insist on strong sexual discipline for their children. Such parents do more harm than good to them. All such factors create problems for educationists.

**15.5.2 Moral Learning Inside the School**

It is a mistake to assume that all the moral learning that goes on outside the school is unreflective and uncritical while all that goes on inside it is always educational in the full sense. Some parents undoubtedly work to promote moral education with rational as well as care oriented, while on the other hand, much of the moral learning inside the school, is unreflective, dogmatic and heavy-handed. Moral learning that takes place inside the school is the result of the way teachers organize their work, react to behaviour of students, use punishment, exercise discipline, handle their classes etc. Moral attitudes are caught from every interaction of teachers and students.

The school adds to this kind of unreflective moral learning both by its deliberate attempts and through unconscious absorption. You must have observed teachers saying, “be quiet, when I tell you to do so”, “We must not talk when we are in the classroom”, and the like. All such injunctions provide the wrong kind of basis for morality, for they are based on either respect for or fear of authority of the teacher.
Then there are many hidden sources of moral learning in school. Many attitudes, values and habits are assimilated by students in a largely unconscious manner. The moral values, etc. which a teacher holds and the manner in which he/she holds these will be communicated to his/her students whether he/she wishes or not. The individual teacher’s values will be clear from the way he/she sets about his business in the classroom, the kinds of relationships he/she develops with his/her students, the way he/she organizes learning, the way he/she refers to the mistakes of students, his/her use or abuse of punishment, in general his/her entire approach to the job of teaching. The teacher who, without question or seeking explanation, requires a student (who has not done his/her homework), to write it out ten times by the next day, is clearly promoting a different kind of moral learning from the one who asks whether any circumstances at home made it difficult for him/her to do it.

From all these and other sources both inside and outside the school, children acquire moral attitudes, beliefs and habits of behaviour. But all these kinds of moral learning are required to be converted into moral education. We must accept that we as teachers contribute to such “context” and also provide a “form” of moral education. Let us now see how we can provide both form and content of moral education to the moral learning that the child has already absorbed.

• Providing content and form to moral education: There appear to be at least three reasons of why we need content for moral education. First, children from an early age need rules, norms, criteria of choice, and standards of behaviour for making choices. Though as children they are not faced with any big moral problem, yet a moral choice has still to be made. The child, for example, may argue: “Should I, to avoid punishment, tell mother that I did not even enter the kitchen, or should I tell the truth? Should I eat my friend’s share of sweets when he is not looking?, and so on.” Children have such moral problems from a very early age, not necessarily on a grand scale.

Secondly, they need to develop settled habits and dispositions to carry out the rational moral choices they may later come to make. They develop such dispositions if they are helped to some standards or norms of behaviour when they are very young. Aristotle rightly said, “We become virtuous by working virtuously.”

Thirdly, moral education cannot be planned or practiced in a vacuum. Even though our main objective or concern is with proper form or manner of moral education, this can only be taught through some content.

Providing a content for some fixed norms or standards morality puts us into a problem. The problem is that it is impossible to set universally acceptable, valid basis for any particular set of moral precepts. However, as Dewey suggests we can take the help of broadly accepted social norms as respect for human life, for truth, for honesty, etc. on the basis of which we can suggest that people should not kill, steal, lie, cheat, etc. We should not assume that since there are no absolute, universally acceptable norms/criteria, therefore, our hands are tied to provide any kind of positive guidance. If our concern is that students should be brought, as soon as
possible to think for themselves and to make up their own mind on the issues then a kind of experience is to be encouraged which is likely to be productive or most fruitful to further experiences. However, it is necessary that the guidance a child is offered at an early stage should never be heavy handed or dogmatic at any cost. A light and easy touch is essential if we want him/her to gradually attain autonomy of will. Any moral precept that is forced upon the child in an aggressive, hostile manner, perhaps accompanied by severe punishment for some transgression of value(s) makes it unlikely for the child to even be able to obtain a detached objective view of his/her moral behaviour. Thus, the child, whose infantile explanations of sex are dubbed as dirty by the parents and accompanied by severe punishment, will always find it difficult to divest himself/herself of such an attitude. In such cases the dangers of “fixation” are immense. Too dogmatic an attitude on the part of teachers or parents, too severe a reaction to certain kinds of behaviour is likely to lead to fixation and this could be counter productive to the cause of moral education. A dogmatic attitude over moral issues is obviously authoritarian. It suggests that whether they (students/children) understand the reason or not, they must accept our direction simply because we insist upon it. A child trained or indoctrinated in such a dogmatic manner can never think of achieving autonomy, and will be fixed at the most at stage two or three of Kohlberg’s scale of moral development.

15.5.3 Moral Education and Curriculum

Most teachers in India as also in other countries feel and accept that moral development of students is an integral part of education qua education. It is rather impossible to not be involved in and responsible for the moral development of students without ceasing to be a teacher. But the existing socio-political scenario, as we find it today, presents the most dismal picture, where education appears to have lost its context and relevance. We have already indicated this fact in an earlier unit of this block. There is no denying the fact that education being imparted in schools, colleges and universities needs a different kind of orientation, a kind of orientation which is rooted in human or moral values.

There are some important questions that need clarification or discussion before we think of making curricular provisions for this kind of education which is based on or grounded in human values. These questions can be: is morality a subject of instruction and can it be time-tabled like other curricular subjects or can moral problems be dealt with as they occur in the context? If yes, are there to be specialist teachers incharge of moral or value-education work or is every teacher considered equally responsible in dealing with value or moral problems and educating them morally.

- **Moral Education as a subject:** This has probably remained as one of the most controversial issues whether to include moral education as a subject, like other subjects in the school curriculum or not. Educationists and thinkers are giving serious thought to it. While moral education has been ever considered as of paramount importance it was probably never given the status of a distinct subject examinable like other academic subjects. It is because value education or moral education is not just one of the subjects but the very logical base of education *per se*. Introducing it as a subject is not only to relegate its position but also to negate the very basis of
education. Since morality is all around us, it need not and should not be taught as a separate and distinct subject. Studies have shown that attempts made at direct moral teaching resulted in failure with regard to development of moral conduct. Hartshorne and May (1928) showed that moral traits like honesty, truthfulness, consideration for others, etc. could not be effectively inculcated by direct instruction in moral values, and any effort made in this direction did not have any lasting effect. Those who received such direct moral education at Sunday school did not prove any more honest or truthful than those who did not receive any such guidance. However, a few authors like Bair (1975), J.P. White (1975), Hirst (1974) argue for introducing moral education in the curriculum of the child.

When we think of introducing moral education as a separate and distinct component of curriculum of the child, we are likely to face certain practical difficulties. Some students, for example, might assume that matters of morality belong only to the moral education period. Secondly, in the achievement oriented society of today the students will think of achieving higher scores, even if they have to use unfair means, as actually happens in the case of other subjects. The fact is that development of morality is non-examinable in the formal sense at any rate. Then there may be problems from the teachers' point of view. First, who is to be responsible for moral education as a subject? What qualification can be assumed for such a specialist? If an expert in moral education is recruited, will he/she be more moral than other teachers in the school? And will not such a situation have unfortunate repercussions on the image of other teachers? If there is a teacher in charge of moral education, does this mean that others may feel relieved of their responsibility in this area?

The author feels that all teachers should have a proper orientation in moral education and all will have to be equally responsible for the moral development of students. The fundamental implication of this kind of argument is that if every teacher obtains a proper view of and deep insight into moral education, together with its methodology, types of questions or issues asked, and reasoning involved, it should be made an integral part of any teacher-education programme.

There are, however, some thinkers who, though are not in favour of treating moral education as a curricular subject, have given alternative approaches to deal with this important theme. A synoptic view of these is attempted below.

**McPhail's life-line programme:** McPhail (1972) took up a project on moral education entitled life-line programme. He suggested that the most appropriate means of providing students with opportunities of practising a "considerate life-style" was the introduction of "structures" in schools, which encouraged the practice of democracy. In his view, moral education was more likely to be developed by organisational structures which facilitated and promoted communication between teachers and students. Through such communication both the teachers and the students learnt to understand and respect each other as persons. Thus they learnt to consider their feelings, needs and intentions.
In order to communicate effectively we, first of all, not only need to listen to others but also to be aware of what they implicitly convey through gestures, and other aspects of nonverbal communication. We should try to understand properly what has been communicated by others. If we fail to interpret clearly the intent of what they communicate, we are likely to hurt their feelings.

It is suggested that to enable students to acquire the skill of proper communication is to organise the school on democratic lines, under the guidance of the teacher, but not his direction. In such a democratic set up, there should be no “elite” who can be considered as the most or only responsible person(s). All students should be allowed to participate in different activities to enable them to accept responsibility and to take autonomous decisions.

- **Sugarman’s approach**: Like McPhail, Sugarman does not support the view that moral education should be imparted as a separate subject of curriculum. Sugarman (1973) points to certain qualities in the school and particular opportunities that can be provided for moral education. He discusses three areas of interest in this connection. The teacher-pupil relationship, the rule system, and nature of learning situations.

It is not that any one kind of learning situation will contain all the qualities or basic requirements for helping them to develop worthwhile attitudes or values. Group work may be arranged which can provide opportunities for pupils to develop consideration for their peers in an intimate face to face situation. Similarly, group discussion allows all the participants to contribute their points of view even though these views may not be in agreement with those of other members. All such activities should be organized in an open and flexible environment, where everybody may put forth his/her views.

Similarly, the rule system of the school should also reflect the open and flexible approach which alone can help students develop autonomy. He suggests that the school system should have a firm framework of rules and regulations to guide them. But such a firm rule-system should not be rigid enough to retain control beyond a limit compatible with growing autonomy of the older people. Flexibility when it crosses a reasonable limit acquires rigidity which is inimical to moral education, because it undermines the ability of students to think for themselves and to make moral decisions on their own. The teacher’s behaviour all through should remain rational, open and flexible suited to the demands of the situation.

Now, you will be able to appreciate that the structure and social climate of the school play an important role in developing moral character in students. The personal relationship between members of the staff, between staff and the Head, and among students should be based on mutual respect as persons. In establishing this kind of relationship the head can be and often is the most important person. If the Head keeps his/her status distinct and different from the rest of the staff members, he/she becomes unapproachable by the staff and the students and very often is feared as an authority rather than respected as a person. This may block any kind of useful interaction. If such a hierarchy is encouraged the position or status becomes all important and then there will be little opportunity for social
interaction. This kind of hierarchy will create elitist character in the school which implies that others are of lesser value as persons. In such an environment respect for persons, which is one of the cornerstones of morality, is likely to be sacrificed.

A school whose social or moral climate does not recognize the uniqueness of individuals is not consistent with any kind of moral education programme. In order that the students can take the path of morality and other human values by developing their personal identity they must feel wanted, respected and treated as important members of the society.

Schools that have an inflexible hierarchical system backed by rituals and traditions become rigid where no communication is possible. While a firm authority structure is essential, especially for younger pupils, its rules, principles and form of punishment must be clear, defensible or justifiable on rational grounds. Hirst (1974) also mentions that the maintenance of rules, traditions and rituals, for which there is no apparent rationale, is not conducive to moral development. The school should provide a kind of climate, where persons are recognized and respected. For attaining the goal of moral education, we do not think that there is any need to consider moral education as a separate and distinct subject in the curriculum, rather, as J.P. White (1975) argues - the curriculum already affords ample opportunities for dealing with moral issues in the school within the context of other curricular subjects.

15.6 LET US SUM UP

The main intent of this unit is to enable you to have an insight into the concept and theories of moral development so that you can understand the moral development of your students and guide them in a way that they can modify their behaviour to attain autonomy of making moral judgments which are in tune with the rational concept of moral education. In keeping with this broad objective or aim we have discussed how moral development takes place. In this regard three viewpoints - the psycho-analytic, the social learning and cognitive developmental approaches are highlighted. Of the developmental approaches, Piaget’s viewpoint and Kohlberg’s stages of moral development have been zeroed in. Then a relationship between moral judgement and moral action has been attempted, showing that though moral judgement is one of the factors that determines moral conduct, yet it is the single most important moral factor, in the absence of which other factors like courage, will or ego, strength, etc. will not only become irrelevant but may have a strong negative effect.

It has also been brought out that the child from the very beginning faces a problem of choice which necessitates the making of moral judgement. So he/she obtains moral learning from both outside and inside the school. Such learning need not necessarily be moral education. It has been clearly reiterated that we should accept the child with whatever moral learning he/she has obtained without any regard to whether it is right or wrong. Efforts should be made to convert this learning into moral education which has both a form and content. We should help the child to develop autonomy and respect for others as persons. This is possible when we as teachers behave with our students the way we want them to behave. But how to go about all this? To understand this important question, we have tried to discuss the place moral education should
have in the curriculum of the child. We have tried to reason out why moral education should not be treated as a subject like History, Political Science, Physics, Logic, etc. and pointed out the difficulties associated with the implications if it is introduced as a school subject. In addition empirical studies have been cited to show that attempts made at direct moral teaching resulted in failure with regard to development of moral conduct. So keeping this in view certain alternative strategies have been recommended which have already been substantiated by empirical research in this area.

15.7 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. What are the three distinct approaches to moral development? Briefly explain their implications for moral education?

2. Explain the six stages of moral development as propounded by Kohlberg.

3. Explain the different sources of moral learning inside the school?

4. Should moral education be considered as a separate subject in the school curriculum? If not, why?

15.8 SUGGESTED READING


