

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 176 (2015) 509 – 513

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

IETC 2014

The importance of ethics in the teaching profession

Marta Gluchmanova*

Technical University of Kosice, Bayerova 1, Presov, 08001 Presov, Slovakia

Abstract

Speaking about the profession of teacher, it is necessary to consider contemporary global ethical issues in education and educational research. There is an opportunity for students to develop a critical stance towards some of the most pressing ethical issues in education and educational research in contemporary societies. In a school context and with the support of school polices, programs and practices, ethical education helps students to develop for example in depth knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Sakarya University.

Keywords: ethics; teaching profession; human dignity; teacher;

1. Introduction

I state that one of the principal goal of teacher's work is to help remove the hurdles that teachers face every day in order to do their jobs. There are numerous ethical dilemmas that educators face on a daily basis. Michael, G. Gunzenhauser provided some background on ethical theory to explain the extent to which ethics as we have traditionally understood it in education has helped – but not completely – how educators respond to the challenges of being a professional educator. But first, the author very briefly summarized the various ways that educational theorists have approached these issues in the most recent literature on ethical teaching and ethical leadership. I will mention some essential works that centers the importance of ethics for educational practice, and all are especially recommended as resources for making ethics central to educational practice: Gert Biesta (2006) argues that we should go “beyond learning” in how we think about educational practice; Felicity Haynes (1998) draws from a broad

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0-000-000-0000 ; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .
E-mail address: marta.gluchmanova@tuke.sk

range of ethical theory to argue for an ethics of consequences, consistency, and care; Robert Nash (2002) explains how “three moral languages” – rules and principles, character, and basic beliefs – can be brought to bear on ethical issues and professional practices; Ken Strike (2006) bases his ethics for school leadership partly on John Rawls’ social ethics. When students define *ethics*, they connect the term to specific expectations that society has for professionals in professional settings, such as codes of ethics. When students define *morals*, the term (or its variant morality) is usually reserved for prescriptive standards of behaviour imposed by some powerful entity. For these students, they consider the latter term to be outdated and dogmatic. According to Gunzenhauser moral principles are the basis of deontological ethics, and rules and duties are the basis for moral actions. Deontological ethicists consider these principles to be universal and categorical, and in ethical conflicts, deontological ethicists argue over which rule or principle should be more prominent. From the consequentialist ethics, the educator can draw the importance of the consequences of one’s actions and the justification for a public education that serves all children to the best of their abilities. A moral actor can make the notion of consequences as complicated as she would like, considering even what kind of society she helps to create by acting the way she does in a certain situation. In that sense it can form the basis for a social ethics. Concerning the virtue ethics the most important set of virtues in the school are the ones that are being cultivated in the students. What virtues are the adults modelling for the students and encouraging through curriculum? To what extent are the difficulties the teachers having with the curriculum affecting the students? What is it they are learning? Virtue ethics can be more helpful if we could get a handle on those effects (Gunzenhauser, 47-50).

Then Gunzenhauser argues for three tenets of professionalism for educators: 1. As a professional, an educator is in a position to profess substantive beliefs about the meaning and value of education. In other words, a professional educator has a philosophy of education and engages others who may have different ideas about the meaning and value of education. A philosophy of education grounded on the care of the self is a philosophy of possibility. 2. As a professional, an educator is in a position to exercise ethical and professional judgment. An educator is in a position to continually develop ethical and professional judgment throughout his career and in his various positions of responsibility. Further, professional judgment spans the positions of educators throughout the educational sector. Active/ethical professionalism applies to educators, school leaders, school boards, teacher educators, graduate educators, and policymakers. 3. As a professional, an educator is in a position to acknowledge and resist opportunities to enact normalization on herself, students, and colleagues. One very important part of articulating an active/ethical professionalism is being clear on the role that resistance plays in order to achieve more defensible educational aims than those that are encouraged by high-stakes accountability policy. To act ethically, an educator needs to understand how and why her work must at some level be resistant (Gunzenhauser, 126-127).

2. The importance of ethics

When I stress the importance of ethics in education, it constitutes the repository of their social and cultural values, and the medium of their historical memory. In common usage multicultural education generally refers to education about different ethnic groups. As dialogue on cultural difference and education has spread to other nations, it has become more sharply focused on complex issues of identity, diversity, and citizenship. "the relationships between democracy, citizenship, and education cannot be treated in isolation from the question of multiculturalism." Several vectors of globalization have converged to raise the topic of multicultural education to the level of public, or at least professional, debate around the world today. The increasing cross-national mobility of people and the transnational communication of ideas that took place in the twenty-first century has fed into the contours of diversity around the world. It has also led to international dialogue. With increased human mobility and increasingly thick networks of communication, the common social fact of unequal educational experiences and outcomes is increasingly the subject of transnational dialogue. Educators around the world are faced with new challenges of balancing local, national, and global norms and moral as well as ethical values in the process of educating children. While fostering a sense of citizenship remains an important function of mass schooling, it is becoming less and less viable to do so at the expense of socializing children for their futures in a global society (Sutton, 100).

Schools should ensure multicultural perspectives are incorporated into all aspects of school life by: promoting diversity as a positive learning experience, incorporating multicultural perspectives across all learning domains, incorporating multicultural, anti-racism, and human rights perspectives in school policies and practices, enhancing teachers' and students' intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication skills. Teaching multiculturalism in the classroom is important. At the basic level, multicultural education provides a fundamental education for all students, with the purpose of eliminating discrimination because of ethnic origin and background. By incorporating many cultures into the classroom, schools can celebrate diversity, learn about cultures around the world and raise awareness. There are four steps to bring multiculturalism into each classroom: 1. Provide a basic education for all students – it means to keep in mind that there are stereotypes for international students. By understanding that you will be teaching students from many different walks of life, you will have won half the battle. Therefore, do not favor or ignore international students specifically. You may feel like you should favor these students so you can teach them more, but it is important to treat all of your students, international or not, with the same respect and understanding. 2. Address language and cultural norms: dispel myths that are often associated with certain cultures; avoid using jargon while speaking; be willing to use multiple forms of communication to convey ideas; repeat and recap information; use visual aids for clarity; teachers encourages the usage of multiple modes of learning: including logical, mathematical, literate, kinesthetic, music and spatial methods; active listening may also help when there is a moderate language barrier; reading material on cultural norms may also help with transitions. Gestures in one part of the world may not mean the same thing in others. 3. Make it a learning experience - if you have just a few international students in your classroom, the best way to integrate their new perspective into your classroom is to integrate their cultures into the curriculum as well. One of the best ways for younger students includes incorporating fairy tales and folklore into the learning. Storytelling is a great way to have your students learn about new customs.

In connection with contemporary global issues in multicultural and globalized school environment I would like to stress ethical and human approach. Humanity and human dignity are the terms used in moral, ethical, and political discussions to signify that a being has an innate right to respect an ethical treatment. Young people must be able to measure current events against the yardstick of the principles of humanity, dignity and law and not just in terms of economic or political criteria; develop resistance to feelings of impotence and indifference and refuse to become hardened the face of complex and negative world events; develop tangible bonds of solidarity with the suffering or needy; develop the strength to reject acts which take account only of the end to be achieved and not of the consequences to themselves and others; to incorporate the minimum standards of behaviour to respect in the event of conflict in the values handed down by official educational establishments, families and social authorities and in the rules of the society.

3. Human dignity in the profession of teacher

When we speak about human dignity in the globalising teaching of ethics, it is necessary to state that in the process of ethics education, disparate (including potential) moral agents meet, in which various levels of ability to respect others can be observed (Bergem, 95). This is connected to the fact that some students at preschool age, but most at school age, come to a completely new school environment and dispose of varied levels of expressing appreciation and respect towards others. In the teaching profession, a very demanding and responsible job connected to a constant inflow of new students arises for, first of all, teachers (but, naturally, also for other pedagogical workers) to lead them in their reasoning and decision making, and to such behaviour and actions that are manifested in the form of respect towards all human beings, and mainly parents, teachers, other pedagogical workers, classmates and all other people they come in contact with. Teachers of ethics could be a significant stimulus (in the interaction with, especially, parents, but also other adults, primarily relatives, i.e. members of the nuclear and extended family) when forming students on their journey to achieving higher quality, or added value, of human dignity of a moral agent in the future (however, depending on the behaviour and actions of every individual). A crucial role of teachers, as well as the teaching profession as such, is to, together with parents and families, help students on their path from potential to full moral agents, which also means that they help children and youths in developing awareness of those

times when respect and appreciation towards man depends, to a large extent, on his/her behaviour and actions (Strike & Soltis, 42). This also concerns emphasising the fact that respect and appreciation on the part of teachers (and also other adults) towards students at a higher school age (starting with puberty) depends, to a certain extent, on their behaviour and actions (Joseph & Efron, 213). In this way, the level of human dignity becomes partly dependant on their behaviour and actions.

With regard to the above facts in school and out of school environment, I assume that the principle and value of human dignity should be among the most significant in the mutual relationship of the teacher towards students and vice versa. Education at school should be directed at a full development of human personality and a strengthening of respect for human rights. It should help mutual understanding, tolerance and friendship (Fitzmaurice, 49). This aspect especially emphasises awareness of the obligation to accept this value and show respect, above all, on the part of teachers towards students. On the other hand, it embodies the obligation, or commitment, within the teaching profession, so that teachers lead and educate children and youths to mutual respect and appreciation towards the human dignity of other children as well as adults.

The globalising features in education are discipline and violence in and out of school which are becoming a problem of the present era (Morrell, 43). It has been a long time since good teachers rejected corporal punishment as a means which, in education, does not lead to anything good, but only humiliates human dignity and either nurtures self-conscious people or leads to further aggression and violence. In schools, we can most frequently come across verbal aggression, which, in many cases, may negatively influence not only the mentality of the teacher but also students. With regard to the problem of aggression and violence, I would also like to point out some aspects which are closely connected to shattering human dignity, or humiliation of individuals or some groups of students by means of behaviour or actions of teachers, or, possibly, their classmates or other individuals who are, in some way, involved in the school's functioning. It is often true that if the teacher does not respect the student's dignity, then he/she cannot expect his/her own dignity to be respected. Many of us remember teachers who formed our lives in a positive way but also such teachers, or principals, who degraded children's dignity, favoured boys over girls, or vice versa, or were only interested in children of influential parents (Billings, 66).

4. Conclusion

Every teacher should show an equal level of dignity to every person as an individual starting with their first common lesson. Teachers' respect towards the dignity of their students should also be manifested through how they fulfil their professional obligations; one of which is to clarify to the students, at the very beginning, the details of their study, the criteria of evaluation, the dates of their sessions, etc. Each lecture or seminar should start on time, and provide students with help or advice if necessary. Teachers at all levels of education should ensure the cognitive, intellectual and moral progress of their students and show them appropriate respect and appreciation. Keeping the set rules and requirements for fulfilling students' obligations and making sure that they do not change in the course of the term or school year merely through the teacher's wilful decisions is also a way of showing respect for the human dignity of students on the part of the teacher.

I state that a moral way of life helps the development of human life, it protects and supports it. At present, contemplations on these global ethical issues have been revived, thanks to, in part, discussions on ethics and morality regarding various professional aspects of human life. Many deal with moral issues occurring in individual professions and look for ways to solve them. With regard to these activities, there is an effort to integrate moral reasoning in people's professional lives in order to achieve happiness and contentment, or to minimise negative consequences. The new characteristics of the globalized world and its accelerated process of modernization have caused society to face situations considered unthinkable until then.

Acknowledgement

This paper is supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency, contract No. APVV-0432-10.

References

- Bergem, T. (1990). The Teacher as Moral Agent. *Journal of Moral Education*, 19 (2), 88–100.
- Billings, J. C. (1990). Teaching Values by Example. *The Education Digest*, 56 (4), 66–68.
- Biesta, Gert J.J. (2006). *Beyond learning: Democratic education for a human future*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publisher.
- Fitzmaurice, M. (2010). Considering Teaching in Higher Education as a Practice. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(1), 45–55.
- Gunzenhauser, M., G. (2012). *The Active/Ethical Professional: A Framework for Responsible Educators*. London, New York: Continuum.
- Haynes, F. (1998). *The ethical school: Consequences, consistency, care ethics*. London: Routledge.
- Joseph, P. B. & Efron, S. (1993). Moral Choices/Moral Conflict: Teachers' Self- Perceptions. *Journal of Moral Education*, 22(3), 201–221.
- Morrell, R. (2002). A Calm after the Storm? Beyond Schooling as Violence. *Educational Review*, 54(1), 38–46.
- Nash, R. (2002). *“Real world” ethics: Frameworks for educators and human service professionals*, 2nd edn. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Strike, K. A. & Soltis, J. F. (2004). *The Ethics of Teaching*. New York: Columbia University.
- Sutton, M. (2005). The Globalization of Multicultural Education. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 12(1), 96-108.