

FORMATION OF MORAL VALUES IN THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Lecturer Zorica TRIFF, PhD

*Technical University of Cluj, North University Center of Baia Mare
ztriff@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT: Formation of Moral Values in the Contemporary Educational Context.

Pedagogy has transformed philosophical theories into educational practices applicable in the training of children and young people. Diversity is fundamental to understanding morality in modern society. By embracing and exploring multiple cultural, religious and personal perspectives, moral education broadens its horizons, becoming a powerful tool for shaping responsible, empathetic citizens capable of building harmonious relationships in a diverse world.

Moral education plays an essential role in child development, contributing to the formation of character, values and social skills. It not only influences children's behavior but also supports cognitive and emotional development. Through moral education, children learn to distinguish right from wrong, manage emotions and develop harmonious relationships with others. This approach not only enriches their understanding of morality, but also contributes to a more just and tolerant society. Moral education is essential for children's cognitive and emotional development. By promoting empathy, critical thinking and managing emotions, it supports the formation of strong character and ethical behavior. In an increasingly complex global context, moral education remains a fundamental pillar in shaping responsible and empathetic citizens. Shaping ethical behavior in the digital environment is a shared responsibility of individuals, family, schools and society.

Keywords: *education, moral education, values, moral education, methods, behavior*

Pedagogy has transformed philosophical theories into educational practices applicable in the training of children and young people. Diversity is

fundamental to understanding morality in modern society.¹ By embracing and exploring multiple cultural, religious and personal perspectives, moral education broadens its horizons, becoming a powerful tool for shaping responsible, empathetic citizens capable of building harmonious relationships in a diverse world.

Renaissance: Comenius (1592-1670): He emphasized the importance of universal education, which includes moral development. He proposed educational methods combining knowledge, morality and religion.
18th-19th century: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): Education must protect the child's innocence and help him become moral through personal discovery.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827): Promoter of education through love and empathy. He believed that moral education should begin in the family, where the child learns values such as trust and respect.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952): Developed a pedagogical method based on respect for the child and freedom of choice. Emphasized the development of autonomy and moral responsibility. The psychology of moral education, the development of empathy and ethical thinking Psychology provided a scientific perspective on how morality is formed, emphasizing.

20th century: Jean Piaget (1896-1980): In his theory of cognitive development, Piaget identifies two stages of morality: heteronomous morality (based on authority and external rules). Autonomous morality (the development of one's own moral judgment).

Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987): extended Piaget's theory and proposed the six stages of moral development, grouped into three levels: Pre-conventional level: based on rewards and punishments. Conventional level: based on social conformity. Post-conventional level: based on universal ethical principles.

Carol Gilligan (1936-present): Critiqued Kohlberg's perspective, arguing that women's morality is often based on relationships and empathy, not just abstract principles.

Contemporary trends

Moral education is now seen as an integrated process that includes cognitive, emotional and social elements. Social-emotional education -

1 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Plea for Human Dignity", In *Scientia Moralitas. Human Dignity - A Contemporary Perspectives*, The Scientia Moralitas Research Institute, Beltsville, MD, United States of America, 2016, Volume 1, pp. 29-43.

promotes empathy, social responsibility and peaceful conflict resolution. Intercultural perspectives - recognizes the importance of diversity in understanding morality. Impact of technology and media - emphasizes shaping ethical behavior in the digital environment. Promoting empathy, social responsibility and peaceful conflict resolution are essential components of modern moral education.² These values are cultivated through a mix of educational approaches, programs and practices aimed at shaping ethical and responsible behavior among children and young people.

Empathy - the foundation of human connections

Empathy is the ability to understand and share other people's feelings. In the context of moral education, developing empathy is vital for building relationships based on respect and trust.³ Empathy, defined as the ability to understand and share the emotions of others, is central to moral education. According to attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby, early experiences with caregivers contribute to the formation of behavior patterns based on trust and empathy.

In moral education, empathy can be developed through:

Practice seeing things from other people's point of view. Simulating situations in which the child is put in the shoes of a person who is going through a difficulty. Moral education helps children to manage their emotions, such as anger, frustration or fear, by: Exercises in self-control; Learning techniques for calming down and analyzing situations rationally. Discussing the emotional consequences of actions: Helping children understand how their behavior can affect the emotional state of others.

The importance of empathy in moral education

Awareness of others' emotions: Children learn to recognize and understand the feelings of others. Promoting prosocial behavior: Empathy fos-

2 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Valences of Education", In *Proceedings of the 23th International RAIS Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*, August 15-16, 2021, Princeton, NJ, United States of America, pp. 190-196.

3 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Moral Values and Human Values: Support for Sustainable Societal Development", In Chivu, L., Ioan-Franc, V., Georgescu, G., De Los Ríos Carmnado, I., Andrei, J.V. (eds.) *Europe in the New World Economy: Opportunities and Challenges*. ESPERA 2023. *Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics*, Springer, Cham. 2024, pp. 301-318. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-71329-3_17;

ters generosity, cooperation and helping others. Prevent aggression: Empathetic children are less likely to engage in violent or aggressive behavior.

Cultivating social responsibility

Social responsibility is about understanding that each individual has a role to play in the well-being of society. Moral education encourages children to become active citizens, aware of the impact of their actions. Social responsibility cultivates values such as fairness, integrity and respect. Children learn to contribute to the collective well-being through positive actions. By learning to prioritize the common good, children develop an altruistic mindset. Peaceful conflict resolution Conflicts are inevitable in human interactions, but dealing with them peacefully is essential for maintaining healthy relationships. Moral education emphasizes learning conflict resolution strategies in a non-violent and constructive way.

Promotes cooperation: Children learn to work together to find acceptable solutions.⁴ Reduces social tensions: By learning to manage conflict, children contribute to a more harmonious social climate. Develops communication skills: Active listening, clarifying misunderstandings and negotiation are fundamental skills.

An integrated approach is needed to promote empathy, social responsibility and peaceful conflict resolution. Promoting these values contributes to a generation capable of creating and maintaining positive relationships, acting responsibly in the community and managing conflict constructively. These skills not only support children's development, but also build a better society.

The importance of diversity in understanding morality

Diversity plays a crucial role in understanding morality because values and ethical norms are influenced by culture, religion, traditions and personal experiences. In a globalized world in which people from diverse backgrounds increasingly interact, integrating multiple perspectives into moral education becomes essential for the formation of citizens who are empathetic, tolerant and able to navigate social complexity.

4 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Current Values of Education and Culture", In *Proceedings of the 23th International RAIS Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*, August 15-16, 2021, Princeton, NJ, United States of America, pp. 87-92.

Cultural diversity and morality

Each culture has its own system of values and moral norms that reflect the history, beliefs and social priorities of that community. Understanding cultural diversity helps form a more nuanced moral perspective. Different cultures may have different views of what is, 'right' or, 'wrong'. The concept of hospitality is a core value in many Eastern cultures, while individualism is central to Western cultures. Cultural practices can offer moral lessons, even if they may seem unusual to people from other backgrounds.

Religious diversity and morality

Religion is one of the main sources of morality in many societies. Religious diversity offers different perspectives on ethical behavior and universal values. Most religions promote values such as compassion, justice and respect for life.⁵

The importance of education about religious diversity:

Promoting respect and tolerance: Knowledge of other religions helps to reduce discrimination and religious intolerance. Teaching universal values: Pupils can discover that, despite their differences, religions share many similar moral principles.

Diversity of perspectives and personal morality

In a diverse society, morality cannot be understood only from a singular perspective. Personal perspective is shaped by factors such as gender, social class, education and life experiences.

Diversity in moral education

Moral education must reflect the realities of society. Promoting diversity in education helps develop individuals capable of navigating the complexities of global interactions.

Ways of integrating diversity into moral education

Case studies from different backgrounds: Examples from different cultures, religions and social backgrounds can illustrate complex moral dilemmas. Intercultural dialogue: Organizing debates and discussions between pupils from different backgrounds promotes the exchange of ideas and mutual understanding. International educational programs: Collab-

⁵ Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, *Om-Demnitare-Libertate*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2019, pp. 201-215.

orations with schools in other countries or communities can give pupils direct experience of diversity.

The benefits of understanding diversity for morality

Developing a robust moral character: Exposure to diversity helps children learn to cope with moral uncertainty and make informed ethical decisions. Creating a more inclusive society: Recognizing diversity helps reduce inequality and social tensions. Promoting global cooperation: In an interconnected world, understanding diversity facilitates international cooperation and intercultural dialog.

Shaping ethical behavior in the digital environment

In the digital age, ethical online behavior is essential to navigate responsibly and safely in cyberspace. This includes respect for others, the correct use of information and content, and awareness of the consequences of online actions.

The importance of ethical behavior in the digital environment

The digital environment has changed the way people interact, communicate and access information, and these changes require new moral norms⁶ and standards.

The risks of unethical behavior in the digital environment.

- Cyberbullying:

Online bullying can have devastating emotional and mental health consequences. - *Fake news and disinformation:*

The intentional spread of false information can destabilize communities and societies.

- Breach of privacy

Unauthorized distribution of personal information can lead to abuses and violations of rights. - *Elements of ethical behavior in the digital environment*

To shape ethical behavior online, it is necessary to promote certain values and practices, such as:

6 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Natura și scopul Legii Morale a celor sfinte Zece Porunci" ("The Nature and Purpose of the Moral Law of the Holy Ten Commandments"), In *Păstorul ortodox*, edited by Daniel Gligore, Curtea de Argeș, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Argeșului și Muscelului, 2015, pp. 318-322.

Respect for others:

Avoiding offensive language, harassment and verbal violence in on-line communication. Practicing empathy in virtual interactions, understanding that the people behind the screens are real.

Information Integrity:

Check sources before distributing information.

Personal responsibility:

Awareness of the impact that posts, comments and other actions can have on one's own reputation and that of others. Recognizing responsibility for complying with intellectual property and data protection laws.

Online security and privacy:

Using secure passwords and avoiding sharing sensitive personal information. Protect the privacy of others by avoiding publishing images or personal data without consent.

Digital ethics and online empathy:

An empathetic attitude in the digital environment involves understanding other users' emotions and perspectives. Exercises such as „How would you feel if...” can help children reflect on the impact of their actions online. Active participation in groups that promote respect, inclusion and mutual support. Excluding discriminatory practices or hate speech from digital conversations.

Benefits of ethical behavior in the digital environment

Ethical behavior contributes to a safe and trustworthy online environment. Respectful interactions reduce the risk of online tensions and disputes. A positive digital space supports users' mental health. Ethical behavior contributes to a favorable personal image online.

Practical application of moral education in child development

Role of the family - The family is the first context in which the child learns moral values. Parents should: Model ethical behavior by their own example. Discuss morality in a way accessible to the child's age.⁷

7 Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, „Familia – loc hărăzit de Dumnezeu pentru formarea caracterului” („The family - a place given by God for the formation of character”), *Argeșul ortodox* X, 514, 2011, p. 5.

Role of school - School is a key environment for moral education, where strategies such as: Moral debates - discussing ethical dilemmas stimulates both thinking and empathy. Social-emotional programs - activities that develop empathy, collaboration and peaceful conflict resolution.

Conclusions

Moral education plays an essential role in child development, contributing to the formation of character, values and social skills. It not only influences children's behavior but also supports cognitive and emotional development. Through moral education, children learn to distinguish right from wrong, manage emotions and develop harmonious relationships with others. This approach not only enriches their understanding of morality, but also contributes to a more just and tolerant society. Moral education is essential for children's cognitive and emotional development.⁸ By promoting empathy, critical thinking and managing emotions, it supports the formation of strong character and ethical behavior. In an increasingly complex global context, moral education remains a fundamental pillar in shaping responsible and empathetic citizens. Shaping ethical behavior in the digital environment is a shared responsibility of individuals, family, schools and society.

Through education, positive role models and the promotion of values such as respect, responsibility and empathy, users can navigate the online environment in a way that contributes to their well-being and that of the digital community. In an increasingly digitized world, this ethical behavior is essential to building a safer and more inclusive environment for all.

Bibliography:

- ♦ ILUȚ, P., *Valori, atitudini și comportamente sociale (Social values, attitudes and behaviors)*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2004.
- ♦ IONESCU, M., *Demersuri creative în predare și învățare (Creative approaches to teaching and learning)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000.

⁸ Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Education and Religion in Jerusalem and Babylon, Viewed through the Prism of the Book of Daniel", In *Proceedings of the 17th International RAIS Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*, June 1-2, 2020, edited by Julia M. Puschunder, Johns Hopkins University, Montgomery, United States of America, 2020, pp. 154-160.

- IONESCU, M.; CHIȘ, V., *Mijloace de învățământ și integrarea acestora în activitățile de instruire și autoinstruire (Learning media and their integration in training and self-learning activities)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001.
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, "Current Values of Education and Culture", In *Proceedings of the 23th International RAIS Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*, August 15-16, 2021, Princeton, NJ, United States of America, pp. 87-92.
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, "Valences of Education", In *Proceedings of the 23th International RAIS Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*, August 15-16, 2021, Princeton, NJ, United States of America, pp. 190-196.
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, "Plea for Human Dignity", In *Scientia Morali-tas. Human Dignity - A Contemporary Perspectives*, The Scientia Morali-tas Research Institute, Beltsville, MD, United States of America, 2016, Vol-ume 1, pp. 29-43.
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, *Om-Demnitare-Libertate (Man-Dignity-Free-dom)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Risoprint, 2019.
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, "Natura și scopul Legii Morale a celor sfinte Zece Porunci" ("The Nature and Purpose of the Moral Law of the Holy Ten Commandments"), In *Păstorul ortodox*, edited by Daniel Gligore, Cur-tea de Argeș, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Argeșului și Muscelului, 2015, pp. 318-322.
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, "Familia – loc hărăzit de Dumnezeu pentru formarea caracterului" („The family - a place given by God for the forma-tion of character”), *Argeșul ortodox X*, 514, 2011, p. 5.
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, "Moral Values and Human Values: Support for Sustainable Societal Development", In *Europe in the New World Econ-omy: Opportunities and Challenges. ESPERA 2023. Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics*, edited by Chivu, L., Ioan-Franc, V., Georgescu, G., De Los Ríos Carmenado, I., Andrei, J.V., 2024, 301-318. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-71329-3_17
- ROTARU, Ioan-Gheorghe, "Education and Religion in Jerusalem and Babylon, Viewed through the Prism of the Book of Daniel", In *Proceedings of the 17th International RAIS Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*, June 1-2, 2020, edited by Julia M. Ptaschunder, pp. 154-160, Johns Hop-kins University, Montgomery, United States of America, 2020.