

THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN EDUCATION TO A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF APPLIED ETHICS IN PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Ethics plays a central role in education in developing a positive learning environment characterized by integrity, fairness and mutual respect between students and educators. This paper explores the use of ethical principles in education through foundational theories in applied ethics in philosophy, namely deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and care ethics. The primary importance of education ethics is fostering good academic honesty and responsible behaviour inside the educational surroundings. It therefore creates a better favourable atmosphere where safety and value would be given and also the proper philosophical underpinning for their ethical decision makes them able enough to handle a challenge like school dishonesty; teacher-student relationships; how resources are delivered equitably amongst students. The integration of ethical principles, such as respect for autonomy, justice, beneficence, and integrity are essential for the creation of an environment conducive to the prosperity of both the students and educators. The paper highlights the need for ethics to shape educational practice that is founded on the ideals of fairness, inclusivity, and social justice, which may contribute to intellectual and moral growth. The study bridges the gap between theory and practice because it emphasizes that applied ethics as a real-world solution in educational settings, will ensure education serves as the transformative force toward societal well-being.

Keywords: Ethics Education, Positive Learning Environment, Empirical Study, Applied Ethics, Philosophy.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Ethics is the foundation department of philosophy and the underlying factor affecting the education environment concerning values for good morality, responsibility towards behavior, and integrity in study as well as life (E. M. Adaga, 2024). For the current research study, the goal was to explain how applied ethics can affect the teaching of supportive learning environment education.

Ethics in education would include moral values, responsible behaviour and integrity in the students' academic and personal activities. Ethical integration into the practice of education will help create a culture that encourages mutual respect, inclusiveness, and equity where students can feel safe and respected, thereby encouraging participation in their activities (M. Ali, 2021). An ethical framework further guides teacher on just decision making, such that fairness prevails in assessment, and it confronts questions of bias, discrimination and inequity within the classroom.

Applied ethics in philosophy gives a conceptual basis for how one answers some questions about some challenges in education like academic dishonesty, teacher-student relationships, and the position of education to society (K. Arar, 2022). It can give ways for educators who encounter complex issues about morality regarding what they may teach or be responsible for educating to keep balance between fairness with maintaining their integrity as teachers.

With ethics, there can be a culture of critical thinking and self-reflection in education, which makes students be able to find their own moral compass and contribute meaningfully to society. It is only through ethics that the issues of education can be dealt with as practical affairs rather than merely theoretical ones in providing positive learning environments (R. A. Buchanan, 2022). The study hopes to emphasize that ethics is not only a cornerstone in the pursuit of a healthy, just, and intellectually enriching learning environment but also speaks to the overall discussion on education's ethical scope and its capacity to transform generations.

2. THE CONCEPT OF ETHICS IN EDUCATION:

The phrase "ethics in education" simply means, or refers to, the practice of moral rules and values directing actions, choice-making and interactions within schooling contexts. Such principles ensure an education process governed by ethical codes for fairness, integrity, respect and responsibility in teaching-learning relationships (T. Cerratto Pargman, 2021).



Figure 1: Ethics in Education.

This involves ethics among the educators as well as their students, besides the policies and practices that have a bearing on educational institutions and their systems. This ranges from the individual ethics to the issue of social justice in the equality of access and opportunities for high-quality education (R. F. Clancy, 2021). Ethics in education are therefore crucial for establishing an environment where students and educators can blossom together, observing mutual respect and understanding around the impermeable integrity of the educational experience.

2.1. Definition and Scope of Ethics:

Ethics can be defined as the study of moral principles governing an individual's behaviour or a group. In the context of education, ethics would refer to the application of such principles to guide the behavior of teachers, students, administrators and other stakeholders. It deals with issues of right or wrong, justice or injustice, fair or unfair, and the effects that choices taken within educational settings have on people and society (S. Coghlan, 2021). The breadth of ethics in education is so broad that it involves not only what goes on between people within a school but also how these activities in education relate to the world outside the schools. This involves issues of how students are treated, distribution of educational resources, the integration of marginalized groups, academic honesty and the professional conduct of educators. Another important aspect is that the ethics involved in curriculum design, assessment and protection of students' rights.

2.2. Core Ethical Principles in Education:

There are various fundamental ethical principles, which become a basis for ethical conduct in education. These offer a premise through which judgments on choices and action in learning contexts can be measured against broader purposes of justice, equality and respect (M. Conroy, 2021).

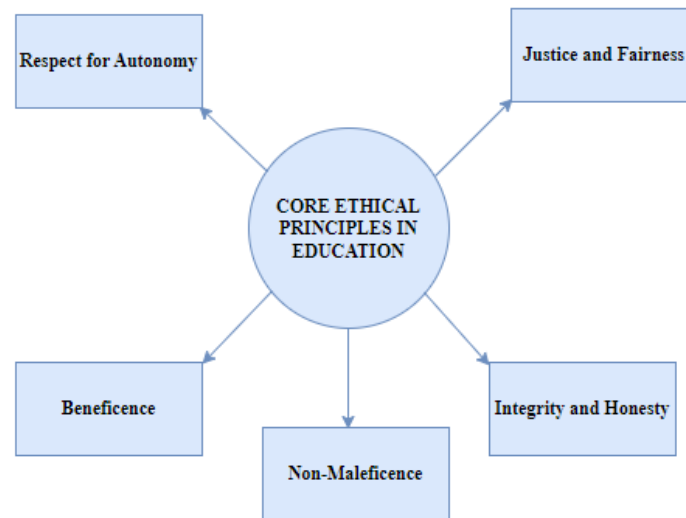


Figure 2: Core Ethical Principles in Education.

Key ethical principles in education include:

1. **Respect for Autonomy:** Teachers are supposed to respect the learners' rights towards making decisions, which will nurture independent thinking or self-directed learning.
2. **Justice and Fairness:** The education system needs to be all-inclusive and fair while making sure everyone involved enjoys similar opportunities and support (Harrison M. &., 2021).
3. **Beneficence:** Teachers should take care of the students' welfare, creating a conducive environment that enhances their intellectual, emotional and social growth.
4. **Non-Maleficence:** Teachers should have a safe, respectful environment that does not harm students in any physical, emotional or psychological way.
5. **Integrity and Honesty:** Academic honesty is very important in education. Students and teachers must be honest and not engage in dishonest practices such as cheating or plagiarism, which will create trust and credibility.

2.3. Ethical Challenges in Educational Settings:

The moral principles provide the best foundation; however, there are challenges presented in educational settings that make their application difficult. Among the most important ethical dilemmas that the teachers and learning institutions face include:

1. **Academic Integrity:** Maintaining honesty in academic work is difficult because of issues such as plagiarism, cheating and record falsification that undermine the credibility of education.
2. **Bias and Discrimination:** Teachers and administrators face challenges in dealing with bias and discrimination that can affect the opportunities of students and lead to unequal outcomes.
3. **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Educational institutions have to protect the privacy of students and staff while maintaining confidentiality with sensitive issues such as behavioural or academic concerns (O. Dziubaniuk & M. Nyholm, 2021).
4. **Teacher-Student Relationships:** Professional boundaries in teacher-student relationships must be maintained to avoid conflicts of interest, exploitation or inappropriate behaviour while fostering a supportive environment.
5. **Resource Allocation:** Ethical challenges are presented when there is a distribution of limited resources such as funding and time as some students may have greater needs than others.

- 6. Inclusion and Diversity:** Inclusive learning environment for all should be provided, as teachers would ensure equal opportunity access for everyone while providing scope for diversity and participation.

Ethics are the backbones of teaching and learning, therefore do affect interactions, policies, and practices in these educational settings. Barriers to ethics must be handled with strong commitment to core values such as fairness, respect and integrity in an ever-changing education needs and dynamics environment (A. Falcó-Pegueroles, 2021). An ethical educational environment provided by institutions will help to ensure that the students are educated and also given a moral basis for responsible citizenship and personal development.

3. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF APPLIED ETHICS:

Applied ethics, then, represents the thought that can apply theoretical ethical contentions to concrete practice issues. Thus, philosophical bases for applied ethics are to furnish or supply outlines of theory for questions raised concerning matters within a society (R. A. Feenstra, 2021). This will help to explain and possibly decide ethical perspectives over questions on subjects such as justice, equity, self-control and liability towards questions posed regarding a learning community. Major ethical theories are necessary to understand the complex ethical challenges that arise in education and other sectors.

Table 1: Summary of Research Studies on Education and Technology Ethics.

Author Name	Topic Covered	Research Study Title
(E. Gheysens, 2022)	Diversity in teachers' philosophies and practices of instruction	Differentiated Instruction: The Diversity of Teachers' Philosophy and Praxis to Adapt Teaching
(T. Greenhalgh, 2021)	Framework for remote consultation services	Planning and Evaluating Remote Consultation Services: A New Conceptual Framework Incorporating Complexity
(T Hagendorff, 2022)	Virtue-based framework for AI ethics	A Virtue-Based Framework to Support Putting AI Ethics into Practice
(T. Harrison, 2022)	Character education in online higher education	Where's the Character Education in Online Higher Education? Constructivism, Virtue Ethics, and Educator Roles
(W. Holmes, 2022)	Ethics of AI in education	Ethics of AI in Education: Towards a Community-Wide Framework

3.1. Overview of Major Ethical Theories:

• **Deontology:**

Deontological ethics is closely associated with Immanuel Kant as a philosopher; it is mostly about the duty, rules and principles to determine what's good or evil. In the theory, one's actions become morally obligatory because of their outcomes. It points out the respect for the right ethical rule or duty of honesty, respect toward others, or fairness (Honkavuo, 2021). Deontological ethics in school would recommend that rights and freedoms are well protected within the very place of education; of them are a secure study environment and fairness in treatment while being disrespect in the face of a child, for perhaps bringing forward unpopular and troublesome decisions. Doing it simply because it should be done rather than to cause a desired or undesired result.

• **Utilitarianism:**

Utilitarianism, a consequentialist theory often associated with philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, judges the merits of an action by the results of the action. The greatest happiness principle, a fundamental doctrine of utilitarianism, posits that the best action is that

which produces the greatest net benefit of happiness or well-being for the largest number of people (Keles, 2023). In educational settings, these principles of utility would help implement policies and practices about resources because the educators and administrators would want to ensure beneficial outcomes for the vast majority of students. For example, when deciding on school policy or curricula decisions, a utilitarian decision would ensure that the positive overall outcome for the students could go against just a few others.

- **Virtue Ethics:**

Virtue ethics, developed from the work of Aristotle, is concerned with the development of good character traits or virtues- being honest, courageous and compassionate, for instance-in order to flourish in life. Unlike deontology, which holds up rules and utilitarianism which concerns itself with consequences, virtue ethics focuses on the character of the person and on the development of moral virtues (B.Klimova, 2023). Virtue ethics, in education, emphasizes the modelling of virtuous behavior by educators, the development of virtues in students and the promotion of an environment that encourages personal growth and moral development. It emphasizes the idea that education should not only provide knowledge but also guide students toward becoming virtuous, morally responsible individuals.

- **Care Ethics:**

Care ethics, a branch of ethics which is closely linked to the names of feminist philosophers Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, underscores the moral value of care and relations. According to this theory, moral action comes from responsibilities that we have for others, particularly in situations of interdependence and vulnerability (Kristjánsson, 2022). It challenges the generally individualistic nature of many ethical theories by highlighting relational and emotional dimensions of moral choice. Care ethics, therefore, focuses on the care for students' emotional, psychological, and social well-being, understanding that the learning process depends upon the relationships with teachers, empathy and supportive along with compassionate care.

3.2. The Role of Philosophy in Shaping Ethical Thought in Education:

In addition, philosophy significantly contributes to educational thought in ethical matters by furnishing the concepts and frameworks with which to scrutinize and rectify moral dilemmas in schools (D. A. Martin, 2021). Philosophical questioning promotes reflection upon ultimate questions concerning education's purpose, the rights of students, teachers' responsibilities, and the consequences of educational action for society. From the philosophical point of view, educators and policymakers are capable of analyzing critically the ethical dimensions of educational policies, teaching methodologies, curriculum and testing.

Philosophy encourages dismantling existing standards and power distribution in education while challenging the existence of fairness, equality or justice. For example, the debate on social justice and equity in education is very much influenced by philosophical debates on distributive justice, rights, and fairness (R.Mühlhoff, 2021). This is precisely where the philosophy of education frames the principles with which one explores the possibility of transforming educational institutions into inclusive facilitators, incisive thinkers, and growth toward morally responsible individuals. Philosophy here provides both a theoretical grounding and a critical perspective through which engagement with even the most complex ethical concerns in educational practice becomes possible.

3.3. Applied Ethics: Bridging Theory and Practice in Educational Contexts:

Applied ethics bridges abstract, theoretical ethics with the world of real-life schools. Theoretical principles of deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics and care ethics become school practices and policies that decide how students will be treated in the school setting (S. Mystakidis, 2021). It is how to handle issues such as cheating, the nature of relationships between teachers and students, fairness in grading and assessment and distribution of resources.



Figure 3: An Inclusive Classroom Demonstrating Ethical Principles in Education.

Applied ethics refers to the effort of finding answers to the most complicated ethical questions arising in normal practice, including decisions in the ordinary educational arena such as reactions toward cheating and balance between discipline and an inclusive learning environment (P. O. Okougbo, 2021). It gives the teacher practical tools in negotiating those dilemmas with a frame of ethics.

Applied ethics is concerned with other more general societal issues, including education's role in social justice, equality, and the general well-being of a diverse population of students. It guides teachers and policymakers on policies that are morally right and socially just, in that education caters to all students, particularly those from underrepresented or marginalized groups.

4. ETHICS AND THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP:

The teacher-student relationship constitutes the core of the educational process and has ethical depth. Being built on the foundations of mutual trust, respect and mutual understanding, such a relationship modifies the learning context and affects both academic and personal growth of a student (Peters, 2024).



Figure 4: Ethics in Student's life.

Ethical issues in this relationship therefore play a critical role in building a productive, supportive and safe learning environment. Teachers are role models and authorities who carry big ethical responsibilities for the well-being, academic progress and morality of students under their care (Platz, 2021). The ethics of the teacher-student relationship entail

professionalism, fair dealing and integrity, and building an environment to facilitate the growth of students and promote positive interactions.

4.1. Ethical Responsibilities of Educators:

The educator has the responsibility of students in terms of their intellectual, emotional and social development; hence, safety and well-being are guaranteed. Educators have to be unbiased, fair and respectful; each student has to be treated with dignity while providing a facilitative learning environment (J.Shim, 2023).

The role of a teacher involves maintaining academic integrity, demonstration of ethical behaviour and ensuring the academic code of conduct of the students. Equal opportunities are required for the students, keeping confidential matters of students along with enhancing moral and ethical development of the students. They should impart not only knowledge but also equip students to meet complicated ethical dilemmas and roles within the community.

4.2. Fairness, Respect and Integrity in Teaching Practices:

Three primary ethical principles are the basis for teaching practice, namely fairness, respect and integrity. Fairness is to give equal opportunity to students; understanding individual needs and adapting one's teaching method to cater to them. In this regard, teachers must abstain from all kinds of discrimination and favouritism so that their expectations and grading practices not only be fair but consistent as well as transparent (M. Redín, 2023). It tells about issues regarding discrimination, harassment and inequity within the classroom as well.

In teaching, respect is very related to fairness to consider the self-esteem and dignity of all students. It is fundamental to teach the students with an empathetic ear and an open mind to diverse experiences and backgrounds. A teacher should be integrity-full, honest in terms of communication with the students, preserve truth in actions, be clear about grading assignments, give honest opinions and give open communication to the students as well as the parents. That is why model integrity teachers also become powerful exemplars for pupils.

4.3. Building Trust and Mutual Respect in the Classroom:

A student-teacher relationship is very critical because it must be based on mutual respect and trust. This can only be achieved in a relationship characterized by persistent dependable and fair conditions between the student and the teacher. Teachers acquire trust by allowing students to freely access them; listening to students' complaints as well as enlisting them into being actively involved in the educational process (Frick, 2021).

Mutual respect is fundamental in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment that can be nurtured through the setting of expectations, encouragement of kindness and modelling of respectful behavior. The teacher-student relationship should be one of partnership and an atmosphere of value, support and empowerment to reach one's full potential.

5. CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ETHICS

Learning to create a favourable learning environment forms the heart of student growth and engagement, ensuring overall success. A positive learning environment not only fosters achievement in academics but also contributes toward students' emotional and social well-being. Ethical principles are fundamental to such an environment, for they ensure the value, respect and support of students in the process of learning (D. Tzimas, 2021). Ethics guide how educators behave and conduct themselves, thus influencing the interactions between students and the learning environment. Ethics are significant because they attempt to give a student an environment conducive to a sense of comfort and being productive in their learning process.

5.1. Promoting Inclusivity and Equity in the Classroom:

Two key ethical considerations in classroom management and teaching relate to inclusivity and equity. Inclusiveness refers to treating all students such that they can feel welcomed,

valued and enabled to completely participate in learning. It affirms and has respect for variation along cultural lines, socio-economic class, gender and learning disabilities (G. N. Uunona, 2023). Teachers are, therefore required to strive and create a setting that will have the students present and contribute their inputs with a feeling of being respected.



Figure 5: Promoting Equity in Classroom.

Equity ensures every student has everything they need to succeed and therefore, focuses on the resources, support and opportunities available for every student. The teacher needs to understand that the students that come into the classroom come with different needs and the methods, materials and support systems have to be altered to ensure that they achieve what is needed. This would make education fairer for all the students without anyone falling behind because of systemic inequalities or barriers to learning (D.Yacek, 2021).

Teachers can become differentiated teachers, foster friendly relations among pupils and make resource materials in the classroom supportive of diversified perspectives while making possible inclusiveness and equity. They should challenge stereotypes, biases and prejudices which automatically come into the classroom. Commitment to inclusiveness and equity will give clear ethical messages to the students that all human beings deserve respect and equal opportunities for growth.

5.2. The Role of Ethical Guidelines in Enhancing Student Well-being:

The importance of ethics in education is realized in the development and well-being of the students- academic, emotional, mental health and more. Supportive teachers always ensure proper growth of children by strictly following ethics that favor such wholesome development in a student while providing an appropriately nurturing environment.

These codes emphasize confidentiality of a student's information and concerns to keep all students' private matters confidential unless the disclosure is considered valid (Z. Yu, 2023). Teachers are ethically obliged to be sensitive to the student's psychological and emotional needs. Teachers should console a student in need and direct the student to a counsellor or mental health provider when appropriate.

By creating an empathetic environment, teachers will promote emotional well-being and they can work through problems outside of the classroom as well as inside. Ethical considerations also provide an outline for when bullying, harassment or other forms of discrimination occur; that is, addressing such issues fairly, sensitively and swiftly. Through such ethical considerations, educators are able to create a trusted and safe learning environment in which students are less likely to experience fear or apprehension.

5.3. Fostering a Safe and Supportive Learning Atmosphere:

A safe and supportive learning environment is very important for students to learn successfully or experience deep learning. Student safety in the eyes of the teacher facilitates an emotionally safe and valued climate for students to experience deep learning and growth. In addition to maintaining a clean, organized and secure learning space, emotional and psychological safety contribute much in eliminating intimidation, bullying and harassment.

It fosters a climate in which students are encouraged to express themselves with confidence without the fear of judgment by being kind, respectful and inclusive (R. A. Zhanbayev,

2023). Ethical teachers should help the students overcome the challenges they face in reaching their full potential by providing support and guidance. They should be available, attentive and responsive to the needs of the students, provide constructive feedback, encourage struggling students and celebrate their achievements. It supports collaborative learning environment and brings about a class community feeling. The students will learn to support each other by cooperating and hence building good relations among them.

6. CONCLUSION:

Ethics integration into education plays a very crucial role in developing a favourable learning environment through respect, fairness and integrity. The application of ethical principles in educational institutions - autonomy, justice, beneficence and non-maleficence will ensure students and educators are able to function within such an environment, promote moral development, academic honesty and inclusiveness. Therefore, applied ethics undergirding educational thought is crucial for education in leading the way on issues of ethics, which inform practice in making choices that make education live up to the minimum expectations of equity and social responsiveness. The bottom line of ethical involvement in education should not just mean success within the academic sector but responsible all-rounded individuals able to contribute meaningfully to society.

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