

Understanding the Morality of Teaching Profession With Reference To Immanuel Kant's Conceptualization of Good Will versus Duty

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Abstract

This paper seeks an articulation of the morality of actions and attitudes relating to the teaching profession. Its essence is a contribution to the understanding of motivations and principles guiding the choice of teaching as a profession and the consequent engagement of its duty.

Key Words: Teaching, Teachers, Profession, Good Will, Duty

Introduction

European Network of Education Councils (2009) presents that there are different tendencies in education policy that urges to put the teaching profession as a priority on the policy agenda. In the first place, a lot of societal demands and educational reforms redefine the role of the teacher (dealing with diversity and social exclusion, focusing on learning outcomes, responsiveness to societal and economic changes, inclusion of special needs in mainstream education, participation of learners and active learning) in a new way. Therefore a debate on needed competences of teachers is certainly necessary. Ashraf *et al* (2013) noted that teaching is central to education without which we cannot have education, and therefore, requires authority.

Teachers have tremendous power to influence the thinking, motivation and knowledge of their students such that the teacher's role is very important in character building of their students. Students follow their teacher as a role model. According to the European Network of Education Councils (2009), the concern for good qualified and competent teachers is a main issue in many education councils.

In many countries there is the urge to replace a huge amount of teachers retiring in the years to come. In some countries there is a problem on the attractiveness of the teaching profession and there is also a very turbulent policy environment for teacher training and professionalisation. A central idea is definitely the need for all member states to develop provisions for lifelong learning for teachers so as to have a seamless continuum of provision embracing initial teacher education, induction into the profession, and career-long continuing professional development. It is against the above background that this paper explores how Immanuel Kant's conceptualization of Good Will and Duty could make contributions towards the development of the teaching profession.

The paper is divided into three main sections. Section one makes an overview of the teaching profession, section two presents Kant's conceptualization of Good Will and Duty while section three discusses teaching profession as Good Will and Duty.

The Teaching Profession

Woldab (2013) discusses that teaching is a scientific and goal directed activity and it is the most fundamental responsibility of teachers irrespective of their time and stage of education. Teaching is an intricate and complicated process involving diverse pedagogical skills and sensibility as well as scientific principles and modern approaches. Mahmood (2013) explains that teachers are the heart and soul of any education system and quality of that education system would be based on many factors but most crucial is quality of teachers. Teacher's abilities play a vital role in student's achievements and performance at all levels of education.

Teachers' performance can be assessed through student's achievement. In this regard, Ackerman et al, (2006) concluded that the greatest determinant of student achievement is the teachers' characteristic. Mahmood (2013) observes that teacher's performance consists of teacher's academic qualification, quality of teacher training, teaching experiences, pedagogical practices, professional development, structuring the material, ask higher order questions, use student ideas, and probe student comments, empathy, mentoring, coaching, subject knowledge, dedication, commitment, ability to communicate, and class management ability etc.

According to Ubben & Hughes (1992), effective teachers are those that provide pupil with maximum opportunities to learn.

If a teacher's role is to help others to develop their learning capacities, it follows that management activities, organizational structures, systems and processes need to intersect to maximized teaching and learning opportunities (Ubben & Hughes, 1992 quoted in Mahmood, 2013). According to Harden and Crosby (2000), implicit in the widely accepted and far-reaching changes in education is a changing role for the teacher. Twelve roles of the teacher have been identified in this regard and these can be grouped in six areas in the model presented: The information provider; the role model on-the-job, and in more formal teaching settings; the facilitator as a mentor and learning facilitator, the student assessor and curriculum evaluator, the curriculum and course planner, and the resource material creator, and study guide producer.

The increasing emphasis on student autonomy in education has moved the centre of gravity away from the teacher and closer to the student. Indeed it has become fashionable to talk about learning and learners rather than teaching and the teacher. This increased attention to the learner may be seen by teachers as a loss of control and power which can lead to feelings of uncertainty, inadequacy and anxiety. The shift may even be seen as, in some way, a devaluing of the role of the teacher. It has to be recognised, however, that this is not true, that teaching and learning are closely related and that the purpose of teaching is to enhance learning. It is important to ensure that the changing role of the teacher is not neglected in discussions about new educational strategies and approaches to curriculum development.

James Stronge (n.d) discusses that the teacher is the representative of the content and the school. How a teacher presents himself makes an impression on administrators, colleagues, parents, and students. Often a student links the preference to a particular subject to a teacher and the way the subject was taught.

A teacher who exudes enthusiasm and competence for a content area may transfer those feelings to the students. In addition, how the teacher relates to the pupils has an impact on the students' experience in the class. The teacher's personality is one of the first sets of characteristics to look for in an effective teacher. Teachers have been portrayed in a variety of ways in the media, ranging from detrimental images to beloved masters of their craft who inspire students to excel.

Effective teachers can be seen, heard, and sensed. The effective teacher engages in dialogue with students, colleagues, parents, and administrators and consistently demonstrates respect, accessibility, and expertise. Effective teachers are easily identified through their adept use of questioning and instruction given in the classroom. Finally, an observer who knows from all sources that this person truly makes a difference in the classroom can sense the presence of an effective teacher. The true teacher is a master of teaching.

Immanuel Kant's Conceptualization of Good Will versus Duty

Immanuel Kant (2002) teaches that there is nothing it is possible to think of anywhere in the world, or indeed anything at all outside it that can be held to be good without limitation, excepting only a good will. Understanding, wit, the power of judgment, and like talents of the mind, whatever they might be called, or courage, resoluteness, persistence in an intention, as qualities of temperament, are without doubt in some respects good and to be wished for; but they can also become extremely evil and harmful, if the will that is to make use of these gifts of nature, and whose peculiar constitution is therefore called character, is not good. Kant puts it that: Power, wealth, honor, even health and that entire well-being and contentment with one's condition, under the name of happiness, make for courage and thereby often also for arrogance,

where there is not a good will to correct their influence on the mind, and thereby on the entire principle of action, and make them universally purposive; not to mention that a rational impartial spectator can never take satisfaction even in the sight of the uninterrupted welfare of being, if it is adorned with no trait of a pure and good will; and so the good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition even of the worthiness to be happy.

According to Kant (2002), the good will is good not through what it effects or accomplishes, not through its efficacy for attaining any intended end, but only through its willing, i.e., good in itself, and considered for itself, without comparison, it is to be estimated far higher than anything that could be brought about by it in favor of any inclination, or indeed, if you prefer, of the sum of all inclinations. Even if through the peculiar disfavor of fate, or through the meager endowment of a step-motherly nature, this will were entirely lacking in the resources to carry out its aim, if with its greatest effort nothing of it were accomplished, and only the good will were left: then it would shine like a jewel for itself, as something that has its full worth in itself. Kant cautions that:

There is, however, something so strange in this idea of the absolute worth of the mere will, without making any allowance for utility in its estimation, that despite all the agreement with it even of common reason, there must nevertheless arise a suspicion that perhaps it is covertly grounded merely on a high-flown fantasy, and that nature might have been falsely understood in the aim it had in assigning reason to govern our will. Kant (2002) explains that in the natural predispositions of an organized being, i.e., a being arranged purposively for life, we assume as a principle that no instrument is to be encountered in it for any end except that which is the most suitable to and appropriate for it.

Now if, in a being that has reason and a will, its preservation, its welfare-in a word, its happiness-were the real end of nature, then nature would have hit on a very bad arrangement in appointing reason in this creature to accomplish the aim. For all the actions it has to execute toward this aim, and the entire rule of its conduct, would be prescribed to it much more precisely through instinct, and that end could be obtained far more safely through it than could ever happen through reason; and if, over and above this, reason were imparted to the favored creature.

It would have served it only to make it consider the happy predisposition of its nature, to admire it, to rejoice in it, and to make it grateful to the beneficent cause of it, but not to subject its faculty of desire to that weak and deceptive guidance, and meddle in the aim of nature; in a word, nature would have prevented reason from breaking out into practical use and from having the presumption, with its weak insight, to think out for itself the project of happiness and the means of attaining it; nature would have taken over the choice not only of the ends but also of the means, and with wise provision would have entrusted both solely to instinct.

Kant (2002) maintained that since reason is not sufficiently effective in guiding the will safely in regard to its objects and the satisfaction of all our needs, and an implanted natural instinct would have guided us much more certainly to this end, yet since reason nevertheless has been imparted to us as a practical faculty, i.e., as one that ought to have influence on the will, its true vocation must therefore be not to produce volition as a means to some other aim, but rather to produce a will good in itself, for which reason was absolutely necessary, since everywhere else nature goes to work purposively in distributing its predispositions.

This will may therefore not be the single and entire good, but it must be the highest good, and the condition for all the rest, even for every demand for happiness, in which case it can be united with the wisdom of nature, when one perceives that the culture of reason, which is required for the former, limits in many ways the attainment of the second aim, which is always conditioned, namely of happiness, at least in this life, and can even diminish it to less than nothing without nature's proceeding unpurposively in this; for reason, which recognizes its highest practical vocation in the grounding of a good will, is capable in attaining this aim only of a contentment after its own kind, namely from the fulfillment of an end that again only reason determines, even if this should also be bound up with some infringement of the ends of inclination.

Kant (2002) argues that: (...) But now in order to develop the concept of a good will, to be esteemed in itself and without any further aim, just as it dwells already in the naturally healthy understanding, which does not need to be taught but rather only to be enlightened, this concept always standing over the estimation of the entire worth of our actions and constituting the condition for everything else: we will put before ourselves the concept of duty, which contains that of a good will, though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances, which, however, far from concealing it and making it unrecognizable, rather elevate it by contrast and let it shine forth all the more brightly.

According to Kant (2002) to be beneficent where one can is a duty, and besides this there are some souls so sympathetically attuned that, even without any other motive of vanity or utility to self, take an inner gratification in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the contentment of others insofar as it is their own work.

However, Kant (2002) asserts that in such a case the action, however it may conform to duty and however amiable it is, nevertheless has no true moral worth, but is on the same footing as other inclinations, e.g., the inclination to honor, which, when it fortunately encounters something that in fact serves the common good and is in conformity with duty, and is thus worthy of honor, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem; for the maxim lacks moral content, namely of doing such actions not from inclination but from duty.

To secure one's own happiness, according to Kant (2002) is a duty, for the lack of contentment with one's condition, in a crowd of many sorrows and amid unsatisfied needs, can easily become a great temptation to the violation of duties. But even without looking at duty, all human beings always have of themselves the most powerful and inward inclination to happiness, because precisely in this idea all inclinations are united in a sum. Yet the precept of happiness is for the most part so constituted that it greatly infringes on some inclinations and yet the human being cannot make any determinate and secure concept of the sum of satisfaction of them all, under the name of happiness. Kant holds that:

(...) it is not to be wondered at that a single inclination, which is determinate in regard to what it promises and the time in which its satisfaction can be obtained, can outweigh a wavering idea; and the human being, e.g., a person with gout, could choose to enjoy what tastes good and to suffer what he must, because in accordance with his reckoning, here at least he has not sacrificed the enjoyment of the present moment through expectations, perhaps groundless, of a happiness that is supposed to lie in health.

But also in this case, if the general inclination to happiness does not determine his will, if for him, at least, health does not count as so necessary in his reckoning, then here, as in all other cases, there still remains a law, namely to promote his happiness not from inclination but from duty, and then his conduct has for the first time its authentic moral worth.

According to Kant (2002) an action from duty has its moral worth not in the aim that is supposed to be attained by it, but rather in the maxim in accordance with which it is resolved upon; thus that worth depends not on the actuality of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of the volition, in accordance with which the action is done, without regard to any object of the faculty of desire. The aims we may have in actions, and their effects, as ends and incentives of the will, can impart to the actions no unconditioned and moral worth.

The relation of the actions to the effect hoped for lies nowhere else than in the principle of the will, without regard to the ends that can be effected through such action; for the will is at a crossroads, as it were, between its principle a priori, which is formal, and its incentive a posteriori, which is material, and since it must somehow be determined by something, it must be determined through the formal principle in general of the volition if it does an action from duty, since every material principle has been withdrawn from it.

Kant (2002) discusses that duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law. For the object, as an effect of a proposed action, one can of course have an inclination, but never respect, just because it is merely an effect and not the activity of a will. Just as little a person can have respect for inclination in general, whether his/her own or another's; a person can at most approve it in the first case, in the second a person can sometimes even love it, i.e., regard it as favorable to his/her own advantage.

Only that which is connected with his/her will merely as a ground, never as an effect, only what does not serve the inclination but outweighs it, or at least wholly excludes it from the reckoning in a choice, hence only the mere law for itself, can be an object of respect and hence a command. Kant (2002) says that:

Now an action from duty is supposed entirely to abstract from the influence of inclination, and with it every object of the will, so nothing is left over for the will that can determine it except the law as what is objective and subjectively pure respect for this practical law, hence the maxim of complying with such a law, even when it infringes all my inclinations.

The moral worth of the action thus lies not in the effect to be expected from it; thus also not in any principle of action which needs to get its motive from this expected effect. For all these effects could be brought about through other causes, and for them the will of a rational being is therefore not needed; but in it alone the highest and unconditioned good can nevertheless be encountered. Nothing other than the representation of the law in itself, which obviously occurs only in the rational being insofar as it, and not the hoped-for effect, is the determining ground of the will, therefore constitutes that so pre-eminent good which we call 'moral', which is already present in the person himself who acts in accordance with it, but must not first of all be expected from the effect. In this regard, Kant explains that:

Since I have robbed the will of every impulse that could have arisen from the obedience to any law, there is nothing left over except the universal lawfulness of the action in general which alone is to serve the will as its principle, i.e., I ought never to conduct myself except so that I could also will that my maxim become a universal law.

Here it is mere lawfulness in general (without grounding it on any law determining certain actions) that serves the will as its principle, and also must so serve it, if duty is not to be everywhere an empty delusion and a chimerical concept; common human reason, indeed, agrees perfectly with this in its practical judgment, and has the principle just cited always before its eyes.

The Teaching Profession as a Duty and Good Will

If we entertain Kant's view that there is nothing it is possible to think of anywhere in the world, or indeed anything at all outside it that can be held to be good without limitation, excepting only a good will, then we uphold the teaching profession on the fact that it is founded on good will. As Ashraf *et al* (2013) pointed out we find that teaching is central to education without which we cannot have education, and therefore, requires authority. It means that for education to succeed, teachers must seek the highest good without limitation in their profession, and this must be the good will. Teachers need to have the good will to do their work and their authority is drawn on the grounds of good will.

We learn from Ashraf *et al* (2013) that teachers have tremendous power to influence the thinking, motivation and knowledge of their students such that the teacher's role is very important in character building of their students. Students follow their teacher as a role model. Mahmood (2013) explains that teachers are the heart and soul of any education system and quality of that education system would be based on many factors but most crucial is quality of teachers.

Teacher's abilities play a vital role in student's achievements and performance at all levels of education.

Teacher's performance consists of teacher's academic qualification, quality of teacher training, teaching experiences, pedagogical practices, professional development, structuring the material, ask higher order questions, use student ideas, and probe student comments, empathy, mentoring, coaching, subject knowledge, dedication, commitment, ability to communicate, and class management ability etc.

However, as Kant teaches, without good will, these qualities would not obtain the goals of teaching. Kant cautions that understanding, wit, the power of judgment, and like talents of the mind, whatever they might be called, or courage, resoluteness, persistence in an intention, as qualities of temperament, are without doubt in some respects good and to be wished for; but they can also become extremely evil and harmful, if the will that is to make use of these gifts of nature, and whose peculiar constitution is therefore called character, is not good.

This paper argues that professional training is not sufficient to make good teachers. Some people could have resorted to teaching after missing out on careers of their passion. People who take to teaching as the last resort may/do not have the good will to engage in the teaching profession. They may obtain high qualifications from their training, but this may not be from their passion or good will for teaching as such could have been motivated by the need to gain employment. Those who take to teaching must perceive the profession and the entire teaching as good.

As we learn from Kant (2002), the good will is good not through what it effects or accomplishes, not through its efficacy for attaining any intended end, but only through its willing, i.e., good in itself, and considered for itself, without comparison, it is to be estimated far higher than anything that could be brought about by it in favor of any inclination.

From Kant's conceptualization of good will and duty, we learn that in order to realize good will, there is need for duty.

Kant (2002) explains that in order to develop the concept of a good will, to be esteemed in itself and without any further aim, just as it dwells already in the naturally healthy understanding, which does not need to be taught but rather only to be enlightened, this concept always standing over the estimation of the entire worth of our actions and constituting the condition for everything else: we will put before ourselves the concept of duty, which contains that of a good will, though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances, which, however, far from concealing it and making it unrecognizable, rather elevate it by contrast and let it shine forth all the more brightly.

It becomes evident that in order for teachers to realize good will in their profession, they must underscore their work as duty. According to Kant (2002) there are some souls so sympathetically attuned that, even without any other motive of vanity or utility to self, take an inner gratification in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the contentment of others insofar as it is their own work. However, in such a case the action, however it may conform to duty and however amiable it is, nevertheless has no true moral worth, but is on the same footing as other inclinations, e.g.,

The inclination to honor, which, when it fortunately encounters something that in fact serves the common good and is in conformity with duty, and is thus worthy of honor, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem; for the maxim lacks moral content, namely of doing such actions not from inclination but from duty. This implies that having passion and inclination for teaching lacks moral basis without emphasis on duty.

James Stronge (n.d) discusses that teachers have been portrayed in a variety of ways in the media, ranging from detrimental images to beloved masters of their craft who inspire students to excel. Effective teachers can be seen, heard, and sensed. The effective teacher engages in dialogue with students, colleagues, parents, and administrators and consistently demonstrates respect, accessibility, and expertise. Effective teachers are easily identified through their adept use of questioning and instruction given in the classroom.

Finally, an observer who knows from all sources that this person truly makes a difference in the classroom can sense the presence of an effective teacher. The true teacher is a master of teaching. However, as we learn from Kant's teachings, the morality of these qualities of an effective teacher could be realized when the tasks are performed with regard to duty. According to Kant (2002) an action from duty has its moral worth not in the aim that is supposed to be attained by it, but rather in the maxim in accordance with which it is resolved upon; thus that worth depends not on the actuality of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of the volition, in accordance with which the action is done, without regard to any object of the faculty of desire.

The aims we may have in actions, and their effects, as ends and incentives of the will, can impart to the actions no unconditioned and moral worth. The moral worth of the action thus lies not in the effect to be expected from it; thus also not in any principle of action which needs to get its motive from this expected effect. For all these effects could be brought about through other causes and for them the will of a rational being is therefore not needed; but in it alone the highest and unconditioned good can nevertheless be encountered.

Duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law. Nothing other than the representation of the law in itself, which obviously occurs only in the rational being insofar as it, and not the hoped-for effect, is the determining ground of the will, therefore constitutes that so pre-eminent good which we call 'moral', which is already present in the person himself who acts in accordance with it, but must not first of all be expected from the effect. Here it is mere lawfulness in general (without grounding it on any law determining certain actions) that serves the will as its principle, and also must so serve it, if duty is not to be everywhere an empty delusion and a chimerical concept; common human reason, indeed, agrees perfectly with this in its practical judgment, and has the principle just cited always before its eyes.

Kant's teachings on the place of duty and the law in defining the morality of an action implies that the teaching profession must underscore the law as provided. Teachers must obey the laws as well as principles governing their duty, which is to teach. It is only when their actions, emanating from good will as guided by duty and the law that the teaching exercise could be perceived as moral. Once teaching is perceived as moral, it becomes acceptable and such exercise has higher chances of achieving its goals. Given that teaching is central to education without which we cannot have education, and therefore, requires authority (Ashraf *et al*, 2013), a moral practice of teaching as discussed makes the profession the engine of education.

Conclusion

From its discussions, this paper concludes that the teaching profession is key in any educational practice. In pursuance of effective teaching, efforts should underscore teaching as both good will and duty.

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