



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Resource sheet

Ethics applied to education

Section of the module / E

Finding :

Between knowing and acting, what place for ethics applied to education?

One of human being's characteristics is undoubtedly not to be satisfied with the state of his environment which he constantly tries to modify, with more or less success. This observation leads some philosophers (but not only philosophers) to question the foundations of this action. One can think here to the notion of motivation which is often evoked by many social actors. If one wonders not only about what pushes to act (From intention to action), but about what in consciousness justifies this action, we enter the field of ethics that can be summarized here by two questions: What do we have to do and what is necessary to know (in the scientific sense) to act. Philosopher Emmanuel Kant (1786) wondered how to guide himself in his own thought and Edgar Morin (2004) shows us the need to make a link between thinking well and acting well. We are here at the heart of what is called the philosophy of action.

The purpose we propose hereby in order to initiate a reflection will start from these two questions, to allow partakers to share a common language as regards the questions relating to the field of ethics, so as to make its legitimacy recognized and promoted in the field of education and disability.

We could work in two stages, that is first of all finding out what we are talking about when we talk about ethics, then thinking about what we could call applied ethics.

1 – What is ethics?

Given the current doubt, the ethical question must fulfil a lack (do we lack values or is it virtue that we are lacking?). Some questionings will lead us to clarify the field of ethics and its concepts. We will be able to approach the question under the angle proposed by Hippocrates (-410 BC) in a treatise on epidemics, which asks how to be useful and not to harm (*primum non nocere*). With J.J. Rousseau we will examine a crucial question: to understand what is, should we not ask what should be? E. Kant, with the categorical imperative, will propose us "to act always so that the maxim of your action can be erected as a universal rule". Max Weber will propose a double dimension to the ethical approach: an ethics of conviction and an ethics of responsibility Science cannot establish values, and the values judgment that bases action cannot therefore rely solely on the science. What planet will we leave to our children asks us Hans Jonas, while Jorge Semprun wonders about knowing which children will we leave the world to.

Finally, according to Luc Ferry (2013) in "A Brief History of Ethics", we will examine five major views of morals that have followed but not replaced one another in the course of history. This will also address the issue of "cultural relativism" which is today a matter of great and important interest.

This short course will allow us to define some terms (ethics, morality, value, deontology, axiology ...) as well as to grasp what can be an ethical approach conceived in a triple dimension:

- An ethics of conviction through our intentions.
- An ethics of responsibility through the consequences of our actions.
- An ethics of deliberation as regards decisions to be made to continue to live together.

2 – Towards an approach for an ethical action.

The first part of our reflection leads us to consider the question of our responsibility in our actions (My act, it's me, as Oreste will say in J.P. Sartre's play "The Flies"). In the second part, we will look at the question from a more collective angle, namely that of organization at work, and this in a very particular context because it aims at "Protecting and Saving" childhood, whatever its physical or mental conditions. The link with the first part is obvious here (see Hans Jonas and Jorge Semprun).

We will first ask the question of the Social and Moral Responsibility of institutions, in its links with ethics starting from what J. Orsoni proposes (1989) " Ethics is a benchmark for acting people which guarantees the primacy of general interest over particular interest; respecting ethics limits the emergence of deviant behaviors and increases the managers' level of morality and reflection ". It is especially here the internal dimension of this responsibility that we will examine in particular as regards the reflection of leaders and acting people.

This will lead us to examine how an institutional project can be considered as an approach integrating ethical questioning both in terms of its aims and objectives and its evaluation procedures. The link here with a quality approach takes all its meaning in a reflection on how values are considered as one of the referents of qualitative evaluation. Obviously, this questions also the aspects of the implemented actions and developed strategies. What place does the debate occupy in the life of the structure in question?

Finally, in the case of a reflection on an applied ethics approach, we will be able to address the question of the ethical foundations of child protection whatever its condition.

To conclude on the subject, but not on the question, we will be able to question this affirmation by philosopher Michel Foucault ": The ethical subject doesn't constituted itself by its relation to the law by which it abides, but from the elaboration of a form of relation to oneself that allows the individual to constitute himself as subject of a moral conduct. "