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Chapter One: Understanding Civics and Ethics

Defining Civics, Ethics, Morality

Civic Education

- human beings have to respect certain fundamental **principles** and **values** to live together
- **Johan Stuart Mill**: progressive and peaceful setting subsists in a given society as far as that society develops the **qualities** of its members and generates **good citizens**
- **Aristotle**: citizens of a State should always be **educated** to **suit** the **constitution** of a State
- different **terms used** to describe the educational experiences that deal with the task of developing democratic minded citizens
 - **Right Education** - in **South Africa**
 - **Citizenship Education** - in **USA and Germany**
 - **Citizenship and Character Education** - in **Singapore**
 - **Civics and Ethical Education** - in **Ethiopia**
- most cited **definition** of civic education
 - ✓ an education that studies about the **rights and responsibilities of citizens** of a politically organized group of people
 - ✓ the **knowledge, means, and activities** designed to encourage students to participate actively in democratic

life, accepting and exercising their rights and responsibilities.

- maximal and a minimal civic education

- 1) minimal concept of civic education

- ✓ content-led
- ✓ teacher-based
- ✓ whole-class teaching
- ✓ examination-based assessment

- 2) maximal concept of civic education

- ✓ comprised of knowledge, values and skills
- ✓ prepare students for active, responsible participation
- ✓ extends learning beyond the curriculum and classroom
- ✓ highly dependent on interactive teaching, which requires discussion, debate

Definition and Nature of Ethics and Morality

- ethics is used interchangeably with morals precise usage would apply
 - term's morals and moral - to the conduct itself
 - terms ethics and ethical - refer to the study of moral conduct
- morality is related to praxis, but ethics is related to theory

➤ Ethics:

- branch of philosophy
- explores the meaning and the ranking of different ethical values: honesty, autonomy
- establish the standards, norms, or codes to be followed by human beings
- set of normative rules of conduct

- may share common ground with: law, religious belief, popular opinion, professional codes BUT broader than all of these and offers a set of tools and values against which their appropriateness can be evaluated
- Ethical questions are not concerned with what one would do (an essentially psychological concern) but what one ought to do
- specific set of principles, values and guidelines for a particular group or organization
- usually associated with a certain conduct within a profession
- critical examination and evaluation of what is good, evil, right and wrong in human conduct
- Judgments about such decisions are generally expressed with words like
 - ✓ right and wrong
 - ✓ should and ought
 - ✓ obligation and duty
- ethics as divided into two fields; normative ethics and non-normative ethics

➤ morality:

- dictionary definition: Latin “moralitas” - manner, character, proper behavior
- the degree to which an action conforms to a standard or norm of human conduct
- code of conduct one follows accepted in a society, or within a subgroup of society
- more general term: character of individuals and community

- it becomes **ambiguous** when defined by different ethnic groups, especially in the **multicultural society**
- **Morality** is, **at the very least**, the **effort to guide one's conduct by reason** to do what there are the **best reasons for doing** while giving equal weight to the **interest of each individual who will be affected by one's conduct**

Ethics and Law

➤ Laws

- norms, formally **approved** by **state**, power or national or international political bodies
- **to promote well-being, resolve conflicts** of interest, and promote social harmony
- **reasons why ethics is not law:**
 - 1) **some actions that are illegal may not be unethical.**
 - ✓ E.g ethical obligation to break the speed limit in order to transport someone to a hospital
 - 2) **some actions that are unethical may not be illegal**
 - ✓ E.g lying is unethical but lying is only illegal under certain conditions
 - 3) **laws can be unethical or immoral**
 - ✓ E.g United States had laws permitting slavery in the 1800s
 - 4) **we use the coercive power of government to enforce laws** like imprisoned, BUT not for who violate ethical or moral standards

Importance/Goal of Moral and Civic Education

- make **individuals responsible** and **efficient** member of their community
- teaches the values and sense of commitment that define an **active and principled citizen**
- producing **self-confident citizens** who decides on issues based on reason
- creating a generation who has the **capability to shoulder family and national responsibility**
- Generally, the **necessity of delivering the course emanates from:**

1) The need to instill citizens about their rights and duties

- ✓ **rights and duties co-exist**
- ✓ what the ideal society needs and wants to be cannot be secured by coercion, but only through its members (citizens) who have a **balanced understanding of rights and duties**
- ✓ **four issues to look into the interplay between rights and duties:**
 - I. **one's right implies the other's duty**
 - II. **one's right implies one's duty to recognize similar rights of others**
 - every exercise of right is subject to restrictions. E.g one has the freedom of speech and expression, but in no way affects the rights of others.
 - III. **one should exercise his rights for the promotion of social good**
 - IV. **the State being a nucleus organ needs to take care of the social and legal interests of all its individuals.**

- State has the obligation to discharge duties towards its citizens
- As the State guarantees and protects the rights of everybody, one has a duty to support the State in its legal endeavors
- there must be a balance between citizenship rights and obligations

2) The Need for Participant Political Culture

- ✓ Generally, political culture defines the roles which an individual may play in the political process
- ✓ three political cultures:
 - I. parochial cultures
 - citizens have low cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientation regarding the political systems
 - role of citizens in the political sphere of their countries is insignificant
 - II. subject cultures
 - high cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientation towards the political system and policy output
 - BUT orientations towards input objects (like political parties) and the self as active participants are minimal
 - relatively detached, passive relationship on the part of the citizen
 - most compatible with centralized, authoritarian political structures
 - III. participant cultures

- high cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientation to the political system, the input objects, the policy outputs, and
- recognize the self as an active participant in the polity
- compatible with democratic political structures
- ✓ qualities and attitudes of citizens determine the health and stability of a country's democracy
- ✓ challenges the democracy and democratization process of countries including Ethiopia
 - many citizens lack the competences and knowledge to deal with the tensions between individually and socially centered norms and obligations
 - small parts of the population support the norm that a citizen should be politically active
 - most citizens still rely on voting only
- ✓ people in a democratic country are supposed to have
 - in-depth understanding on democratic behavior and able to behave democratically
 - ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves
 - desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable

3) The Need for Relevant Knowledge, Skills and Positive Attitudes

- ✓ Relevant knowledge is a type of knowledge which is useful in dealing with a particular problem at a period of time
- ✓ knowledge would remain inert unless:

- it is functional or put into practice
- the person equipped with right attitudes and requisite skills
- ✓ skillful manpower is a pre-requisite for every nation that wishes to develop but a **skillful manpower without positive attitudes to work is likely to result in counter production like; corruption, bribery**
- ✓ civics and ethics can be a useful cure for the “**social ills**” often associated with young people: that is, **tendencies for anti-social behavior and political apathy** among young people, or, what describe “**youth deficit**”

4) The issue of fostering intercultural societies

- ✓ subject helps **overcome discrimination** and to **nurture genuine, inclusive dialogue among cultural groups.**
- ✓ **tolerating** or celebrating each other
- ✓ nurturing dynamic exchanges based on interaction, **openness** and **effective solidarity.**
- The issue of inclusiveness
 - ✓ Civics and ethics as a subject nurture new and inclusive relations and practices in both public and private spaces that recognize gender differences while ensuring inclusiveness and equity

5) The issue of peace-building

- ✓ it can make a valuable contribution to create the **subjective conditions for more peaceful situations**
- ✓ includes the **development of competencies** for **peacemaking, conflict resolution, healing, reconciliation** and **reconstruction**
- ✓ understanding of **nonviolent civil disobedience philosophies, strategies and skills**

- Moral and Civics Education is based on and seeks to promote in students core moral, ethical, democratic, and educational **values**, such as:
 - Respect for life
 - Respect for reasoning
 - **Fairness**
 - Concern for the **welfare** of others
 - Respect for **diversity**
 - **Peaceful** resolution of conflict
- citizens need to have a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values at their disposal enabling them to become an active citizen
- In sum the **goals of teaching civics** and ethics at any level of educational institutions is to **produce competent, high moral standard society** and **responsible citizens**