

MORAL AND CITIZENSHIP

CHAPTER ONE

1. Understanding Civics and Ethics

1.1. Defining Civics, Ethics, Morality

- ✓ **What does civic education mean?**
- Since human being is a social animal and couldn't live alone, he/she has to respect certain fundamental principles and values to live together.
- As Johan Stuart Mill (1972) described it, 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 (1955) also added that citizens of a State should always be educated to suit the constitution of a State.
- Accordingly, creating a good citizen has been the prior concern of many States, including Ethiopia. This is because good citizens are made not born.
- The subject Civics assumed different names and purposes depending on countries' ideologies.
- Thus the definition of the discipline vary across States. For instance,
- Terms such as Right Education (in South Africa),

- Citizenship Education (in United States of America and Germany),
- Citizenship and Character Education (in Singapore),
- Civics and Ethical Education (in Ethiopia)

- *Though the most cited definition of civic education is an education that studies about the **rights** and **responsibilities** of citizens of a politically organized group of people.*
- But different writers define it in many ways. For instance,
- Patrick (1986) defines civic education as the knowledge of the constitutions, the principles, values, history and application to contemporary life.

- Citizenship education can be understood as the knowledge, means, and activities designed to encourage students to participate actively in democratic life, accepting and exercising their rights and responsibilities.
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2004) defines civic education as **a way of learning for effective participation in a democratic and development process**.
- Aggarwal (1982) linked civic education to the development of ideas, habits, behaviors and useful attitudes in the individual which enables him to be a useful member of the society.
- Still the subject matter can be also defined as the process of helping young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives.

- These different concepts and meanings were used to differentiate between a maximal and a minimal civic education.
- The minimal concept of civic education is content-led, teacher-based, whole-class teaching and examination-based assessment.
- However, the maximal concept of civic education is comprised of knowledge, values and skills, and aims to prepare students for active, responsible participation.
- Generally, it highly dependent on interactive teaching, which requires discussion, debate and the creation of many opportunities for students to participate effectively.

The Definition and Nature of Ethics and Morality

What Ethics is?

- Ethics is a branch of philosophy that attempts to understand people's moral beliefs and actions (these modules use the terms, 'ethics' and 'morality'; 'ethical' and 'moral' interchangeably, although traditionally 'ethics' described the process of thinking about people's morality).
- Ethics, or moral philosophy, considers theories about what human beings are capable of doing, alongside accounts of what they ought to do if they are to live an ethically good life.
- Ethics also explores the meaning and the ranking of different ethical values, such as honesty, autonomy, equality and justice, and it considers ethical quandaries that human beings face in the course of living their own independent but, also, socially interdepend.

- Ethics may share common ground with the law, religious belief, popular opinion, professional codes and the dictates of authority figures.
- Invariably all ethical questions involve a decision about what one ***should do/ought*** *to do* in a specific instance.

Generally, Ethics is:

- The critical **examination** and **evaluation** of what is good, evil, right and wrong in human conduct (Guy, 2001).
- A specific set of principles, values and guidelines for a particular group or organization (Guy, 2001).

- Ethics is the study of goodness, right action and moral responsibility, it asks what choices and ends we ought to pursue and what moral principles should govern our pursuits and choices (Madden, 2000).
  - **What is Morality?**
- Morality can be viewed from different perspectives and let us start with the simple definition of the word itself.
- The term Morality is derived from the Latin *moralitas to mean "manner, character, proper behavior".*
- Refers to the concept of human action which pertains to matters of right and wrong – also referred to as "good and evil".

- It can be used to mean the generally accepted **code of conduct** in a society, or within a subgroup of society.
- It relates to values expressed as: a matter of individual choice, those values to which we ought to aspire and those values shared within a culture, religious, secular, or philosophical community.
- This definition is clear when morality is spelt out and agreed upon by others.
- However, it becomes ambiguous when defined by different ethnic groups, especially in the multicultural society, like Ethiopians.

Terms such as morality and ethics are often used interchangeably in everyday speech as referring to justified or proper conduct. But ethics is usually associated with a certain conduct within a profession, for example, the code of ethics for the teaching profession. Morality is a more general term referring to the character of individuals and community.

1. Those principles and values that actually guide, for better or worse, an individual's personal conduct (Guy, 2001)
2. Morality is the informal system of rational beings by which they govern their behavior in order to lesson harm or evil and do good, this system, although informal, enjoys amazing agreement across time and cultures concerning moral rules, moral ideas and moral virtues (Madden, 2000)

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Ethics and Law

- Contrary to morals and ethics**, laws** are norms, formally approved by state, power or national or international political bodies.
- Many laws are instituted in order to promote well-being, resolve conflicts of interest, and promote social harmony. However, there are several reasons why **ethics is not law**.
- First, **some actions that are illegal may not be unethical.** Speeding is illegal, but one might have an ethical obligation to break the speed limit in order to transport someone to a hospital in an emergency.
- Second, **some actions that are unethical may not be illegal**. Most people would agree that lying is unethical but lying is only illegal under certain conditions, e.g. lying on an income tax return, lying when giving sworn testimony, etc.

- Third, laws can be **unethical** or **immoral.** The United States had laws permitting slavery in the 1800s but most people today would say that those laws were unethical or immoral.
- Although we have moral and ethical obligations to obey the law, civil disobedience can be justified when immoral or unethical laws exist.
- Fourth, we use different kinds of mechanisms to express, teach, inculcate, and enforce laws and ethics. Laws are expressed publicly in statutes, penal codes, court rulings, government regulations, and so forth

- Although ethics and morals are sometimes made explicit in religious texts, professional codes of conduct, or philosophical writings, many ethical and moral standards are implicit.
- Finally, we use the coercive power of government to enforce laws. People who break certain laws can be fined, imprisoned, or executed.
- People who violate ethical or moral standards do not face these kinds of punishments unless their actions also violate laws.
- Often we “punish” people who disobey moral or ethical obligations by simply expressing our disapproval or by condemning the behavior.

Goal of Moral and Civic Education

- ***1) The need to instill citizens about their rights and duties*:** The two phrases rights and duties co-exist with each other (*they are termed as the two sides of the same coin*) that regulate the values and behavioral patterns of an individual.
- For instance, the State has the obligation to provide health care services because citizens have the right to access that service.
- However, the State will be unable to ensure that citizens led a healthy life unless citizens themselves act responsibly with respect to their own health, in terms of a healthy diet, exercise, and the consumption of alcohol and tobacco.

2.) ***The Need for Participant Political Culture***: According to the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1961) political culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system.

Taylor (1999) describes political culture as the norms of conduct both of and between the various political actors operating in society, together with the concomitant expectations and understandings of the rights and responsibilities of citizens, representatives, public servants and so on.

- Political culture shapes what people expect of their political system, what they see as possibilities for their own action, and what rights and responsibilities the various actors are perceived to have.
- Generally, political culture defines the roles which an individual may play in the political process.
- Almond and Verba (1963) construct three political cultures:

  1, ***parochial cultures,***

  2, subject cultures, and

  3, participant cultures.

- In **parochial cultures** citizens have **low** **cognitive, affective, and evaluative** orientation regarding the political systems, government powers and functions and even their privileges and duties.
- In such political culture, the role of citizens in the political sphere of their countries is **insignificant** since individuals thinks of their families advantage as the only goal to pursue.

- ✓ **In subject cultures**, there is **high** cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientation towards the political system and policy outputs, but orientations towards input objects (like political parties) and the self as active participants are minimal.
- ✓ Thus, orientation towards the system and its outputs is channeled via a relatively detached, passive relationship on the part of the citizen.
- ✓ Subject cultures are most compatible with centralized, authoritarian political structures.
- ✓ **In participant cultures**, members of society **have 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.

Largely, participant cultures are most compatible with democratic political structures because the qualities and attitudes of citizens determine the health and stability of a country's democracy.

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.
- However, knowledge would remain inert knowledge unless it is functional or put into practice to achieve a certain goal.
- Still knowledge would remain infirm if the person is not equipped with right attitudes and requisite skills which are basic to enable him/her perform his/her role as a credible member of a society.

4) The issue of fostering intercultural societies:

The recognition of cultural diversity is certainly meritorious, but civics and ethics education could move a step forward by appealing to the notion of inter-culturalism, which explicitly asserts the need for relationship, dialogue, reciprocity and interdependence.

Beyond differences of semantics, civics and ethics education is a useful instrument not only towards tolerating or celebrating each other, but also about nurturing dynamic exchanges based on interaction, openness and effective solidarity.

The issue of inclusiveness:

By framing a universal concept of citizenship constructed on the attributes/identities and practices of male subjects, gendered relations and the private sphere have been neglected.

Civics and ethics as a subject is thought to nurture new and inclusive relations and practices in both public and private spaces that recognize gender differences while ensuring inclusiveness and equity.

It should also go beyond the idea of quotas for women in formal politics, or strategies to empower women to play male politics.

5) The issue of peace-building:

- In an environment characterized by increasing militarization, terrorism, civil wars and genocidal acts, it is urgent for citizenship education to advance pedagogical strategies to promote cooperation, dialogue, and a sustainable peace that is based on justice.
- This includes the development of competencies for peacemaking, conflict resolution, healing, reconciliation and reconstruction. It also includes an understanding of nonviolent civil disobedience philosophies, strategies and skills.
- The aim of moral/ethical and civic education is **to provide people to make decisions by their free wills.**

- 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

Generally, teaching civics and ethics to produce competent, high moral standard society and responsible citizens who can ask and use their rights and fulfill their obligations in accordance with the laws of their respective country.