* 1. **Moral Development**

Students always ask themselves questions about the right and the wrong things to do while learning in class. They may wonder whether they should cheat or not during a test or if they should say or not when a peer has broken the school rules. Students’ moral way of thinking often impacts the way they behave in class, such as how they should address their teachers and peers in school, and how they respect the school regulations. Therefore, teachers and would-be teachers should have a clear understanding of the theory of moral development as this knowledge will help one to make the right decisions in classrooms.

**3.9.1 Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development**

Like Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development occurs in stages**.**

Kohlberg’s moral development theory was based on interviewing adolescents and adults. His method consisted of presenting a set of moral dilemmas to individuals and questioning them about the problem. A model of dilemma and related questions that he asked to individuals are shown in below:

***The classic moral dilemma and questions used in Kohlberg’s research****.(cited in Moreno2010)*

**MORAL DILEMMA**

***A woman is near death and is suffering from a special kind of cancer. There is only one drug that doctors think might save her. It was recently discovered by a druggist living in the same town as the woman. The drug was expensive to make and the druggist is charging 10 times what the drug cost him to make. The sick woman’s husband, Heinz, tries to borrow the money to buy the drug from every place he can think of but he can’t raise enough money. He tells the druggist that his wife is dying and asks him to sell it to him cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist says, “No, I discovered it and I deserve to make money from it.” Later, Heinz gets desperate, breaks into the druggist’s store, and steals the drug for his wife.***

**QUESTIONS**

• ***Was Heinz right to steal the drug?***

***• Is it the husband’s duty to steal the drug for his wife?***

***• Did the druggist have the right to charge as much for the drug?***

***Why or why not?***

This dilemma can be presented to students in class where the teacher asks them to answer the questions that Kohlberg asked his interviewees. Then later on after studying the moral development of Maslow, the teacher might ask his student to reflect on their answers and assess their own moral development according to Kohlberg’s theory.

After that Kohlberg collected and analysed the data from his informants, he concluded that moral development has three main levels: pre-conventional reasoning, conventional reasoning, and post conventional reasoning. He even described the process further by dividing the three levels into two sub-levels for each, which gave six levels for all **(see table below)**. Up to Kohlberg, the force that shapes moral development is moral internalisation, the process of gradually incorporating external moral codes as our internal moral codes (Kohlberg, cited in Moreno 2010).

**Table 8**: Moral stages according to Kohlberg (adopted from Moreno 2010)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Moral stage** | **Definition of what is “good”** |
| **Pre-conventional Level:** Stage 1: Obedience and punishment Stage 2: Market exchange | Action that is rewarded and not punished Action that is agreeable to the child and child's partner |
| **Conventional Level:** Stage 3: Peer opinion Stage 4: Law and order | Action that wins approval from friends or peers Action that conforms to community customs or laws |
| **Post conventional Level:** Stage 5: Social contract Stage 6: Universal principles | Action that follows social accepted ways of making decisions Action that is consistent with self-chosen, general principles |

* + - 1. **Kohlberg’s morality of justice**

As explained above Kohlberg developed a six stage theory of Moral development that governs the assumption of individuals to justice. These are going to be specified in what comes below.

* + - * 1. **Pre-conventional justice: obedience and mutual advantage**

People who think and take decisions in terms of pre-conventional morality usually give no consideration to the internalisation of moral values. Morality in Kohlberg’s first level is shaped by the results of an action rather than by the inherent goodness or badness of the action. This kind of moral reasoning usually concerns children between the age of 7 and 10.

This first stage is characterised by the concern of the individuals with *obedience and punishment*, while the second is characterised by ***individualism and exchange.***

This level of moral development comes at an age when little children first go to school. At this age the child is still centred on himself and careless about the world around him and also unaware about the effects of his actions on others. The rightness or the wrongness of actions at this stage, according to Kohlberg, is determined by ***reward or punishment*** from the side of the authorities who might be parents at home or teachers at school. If a child takes a candy and his caregiver gives him an affectionate smile, then this behaviour considered as morally ‘good’. If the caregiver blames the child, then the behaviour is considered to be morally ‘bad’.

At this level the child not only learns how to react to positive consequences, but also how to provide them by exchanging services with others. This new kind of behaviour, according to Kohlberg, generates stage 2, which he labelled the ***ethics of market exchange.***

At this stage of moral development, the rightness or wrongness of behaviour is determined by the consequences it brings on him and on the other. If exchanging the kind of candy the child has with another kind of candy another child owns is agreeable, then the exchange is morally good; otherwise it is not. At this stage of moral development children in school would also see it ‘good’ to receive money from a classmate to do a homework for them provided that both parties consider the agreement as being fair.

* + - * 1. **Conventional justice: conformity to peers and society**

The second level of moral development is characterised by people thinking in terms of conventional morality. This, according to Kohlberg, initially occurs at the age between 10 and 16 years of age. At this stage individuals seem to act in accordance to the rules that are believed to be internal, but in reality they are the rules set by the standards of others. Consequently, this stage is shaped by obeying the rules and conventions of society.

Thus, at this level of moral development, people value the relationships they hold with others as they consider their expectations of those who are important in their lives. At this level children start to value what is good for a group over what is good the individual. A child who avoids cheating so as not to upset his/her parents is reasoning at conventional stage.

Law and order is the name given by Kohlberg to the second stage in the conventional morality level. At this level individuals still value others, but tend more to follow laws and regulations for their own interest.

In the example cited above about the school learner who avoids cheating to gain his care givers’ consideration, avoids it now because the school regulations forbid it. Thus, his reasoning now goes under this stage of moral development. An additional characteristic of this stage is the value of order. Individuals are convinced that order has to be there to orient behaviour and regulations guide order and uniformity.

* + - * 1. **Post-conventional justice: *social contract* and *universal principles***

The third level of moral development is characterised by a kind of detachment from the individual and social levels and transcends to moral principles. People reasoning at this stage do care about rules but have a strong belief that rules very often need to be improved or even ignored so that to generate a fair outcome. At this highest stage, moral development is internalised in a way that an individual’s internal moral principles outweighs the regulations of the society. For instance, if someone were in Heinz’s situation, he may consider stealing the drug as a way to save the life of the lady, because a person’s life is priceless and outweighs the society’s rule that stealing from others is wrong. Up to Kohlberg, a small number of people above the age of 20 would reach this level. Thus, the first stage in this level is named ***social contract,*** because moral reasoning at stage relies on principles that are shared by the whole society.

The last stage in Kohlberg moral development theory is called ***universal principles*** stage. This may include concepts such as the rights of life, freedom, fairness and justice. Yet, as many people doubt about the existence of universal principles, this stage may be seen as an ideal stage of moral development than an actual stage. Now an action, belief, or practice is morally good if it has been elaborated through fair, democratic processes that respect the rights of the people affected. At Stage 6, the universal principles will guide a person’s beliefs even if the principles mean disagreeing occasionally with what is customary (Stage 4) or even with what is legal (Stage 5).

Now that you have studied the different stages of moral development and its different alternatives and how these are congruent with Kohlberg’s model, try to have a look at the table below and see where your reasoning about Heinz’s dilemma is positioned among the six stages. Keep in mind that it is not your answer to the questions asked by Kohlberg that matters, but the type of reasoning which is to be underlined. That is to say a *no* or *yes* answer is less important than the type of rationale undertaken for both options.

**Table 9:** Characteristics of Kohlberg’s stages of moral development and reasoning examples.

(Kohlberg, adopted from Moreno 2010)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **LEVEL/STAGE** | **CHARACTERISTICS** | **HEINZ DILEMMA**  **REASONING EXAMPLE** |
| Level I/stage 1  Obedience and punishment | Rules are followed because of the threat of punishment. | “Heinz should not steal the drug because he  might get caught and thrown in jail.” |
| Level I/stage 2  Individualism and exchange | Rules are followed if they are in the best interest of the individual. | “Heinz should steal the drug because the  druggist refused to make a deal that would  benefit both parties.” |
| Level II/stage 3  Interpersonal conformity | Rules are followed because individuals try to do what is expected of them. | “Heinz should steal the drug because a good  husband needs to take care of his wife.” |
| Level II/stage 4  Law and order | Rules are followed because they are necessary to keep society’s order. | “Heinz should not steal the drug because people need to obey laws against theft to keep society in order.” |
| Level III/stage 5  Social contract | Rules are followed because individuals are bound by a social contract. | “Heinz should not steal the drug because people have a social contract against threats to property rights.” |
| Level III/stage 6  Universal principles | Rules are followed when they are consistent with individuals’ own ethical principles. | “Heinz should steal the drug because the value of life outweighs the value of any other human right.” |

* + 1. **Gilligan’s Morality of Care**

Carol Gilligan, an American psychologist, assumes that to understand to understand the development of moral beliefs we need more than Kohlberg’s stages of moral justice. To clarify her claim, Seifert & Sutton ( 2009) exemplified through a classroom situation where a student asked his teacher for more days to give back his home assignment. Reasoning in Kohlberg morality of justice, would make the teacher wonder if that would be fair granting this student some extra- days to give back his assignment. Would he have more chances over his classmates to bring a better work because he was granted more time? In addition to these, the teacher would wonder if the student had a tangible reason( disease, family problems…etc) to grant him an extra time to hand back his assignment. This last question, according to Gilligan, needs more than morality of Justice considerations, it requires from the teacher to care and be responsible about his student’s case. This she called ***morality of care***, or a system of beliefs about people’s responsibilities, consideration and care for the other people. Gilligan proposed three moral positions of ***ethical care.*** The table below displays the three moral positions from Gilligan’s theory.

**Table 10:** Positions of moral development according to Gilligan (adopted from Seifert & Sutton,2009 )

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Moral position*** | ***Definition of what is morally good*** |
| *Position 1: Survival orientation* | *Action that considers one's personal needs only* |
| *Position 2: Conventional care* | Action that considers others' needs or preferences, but not one's own |
| *Position 3: Integrated care* | *Action that attempts to coordinate one's own personal needs with those of*  *others* |

* + - 1. ***Position 1: caring as survival***

In his book, educational psychology, Kelvin Seifert (2009), reports Gilligan’s conclusions that survival orientation is the most basic type of caring, within which a person’s first concern is his personal welfare. As an example, he states the case of a teenage girl who wonders whether to get an abortion or not (this case is in countries where abortion is permitted). Reasoning in this ethical position, the teenage will only care of the abortion consequences on her. The morally good choice is the one that harms her the least, and responsibilities to others (the baby, the father, her family) have no share in her reasoning.

* + - 1. **Position 2: conventional caring**

Conventional caring is another state of reasoning where the individual is concerned about the welfare and happiness of the people around him/her and taking into consideration their conflicting needs. In considering abortion, the teenage would consider the father’s opinion, and the doctor’s point of view about keeping or not the baby. Then, the morally good choice is what pleases the others the most. This position is ethically and intellectually more challenging than position 1 as it requires the individual to coordinate the considerations, needs and values of different individuals around her. But it is generally morally insufficient as it neglects one’s own needs: the self.

* + - 1. **Position 3: integrated caring**

The integrated caring, according to Gilligan’s theory, is when an individual coordinates his own needs with those of other people.AT this position the morally good choice involves everyone in addition to oneself, instead of everyone except oneself. A teenage at position 3, would take into consideration the consequences of abortion on herself and other people such as the father, the unborn child and family members. She would consider the extent to which the child would impact her social situation, professional career and her plans.

**3.10 Summary**

It is very important for teachers and would-be teachers to have an deep idea about the notion of development in learners, this knowledge will help them take the appropriate decision with their learners at school taking into consideration their physical development from kindergarten to high school.

The cognitive development of children will help think at different levels developing new abilities in relation to their stages of cognitive development. Jean Piaget has clarified in detail that kind of development and how it leads learners construct knowledge.

Socially speaking, students face and manage to teurn around many social issues from the very first moments of their lives with their care givers until they reach advanced ages after school is over.

Abraham Maslow has described through his theory of hierarchy of needs how the individual upgrades the basic or “lower level” needs to reach higher level needs to reach self-actualisation.

In terms of Moral Development, individuals develop both a sense of justice and of care for other people, and their reasoning in each of these states of the mind undergoes crucial changes as they grow up. Lawrence Kohlberg has explained the shifts that take place in children and youth’s beliefs about justice, and Carol Gilligan has tackled the part that shows the changes in their beliefs about care.