Moral Intelligence: A Conceptual Framework and School Implications

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Abstract
Human life has witnessed a huge transition from stone age to the post-modern age. This is due to the human tendency to develop and upgrade their life-style through research and development in various fields of human life. Language and thinking capability of humans has allowed individuals to prosper and live a life of comfort. Since time immemorial, Education is putting an effort to make individuals develop holistically i.e. cognitive, affective, psychomotor domains. This is to say that individuals have developed various kinds of intelligence like linguistic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, moral, emotional and the like. Moral intelligence refers to the cognitive ability of individuals to apply ethical principles to personal goals, values and actions.

The research paper focuses on the discussion of the theoretical premises of moral intelligence and the sub-components. Moreover, it provides a clear statement why moral intelligence should be made an integral part of school education and education in general.

Keywords: Moral, Intelligence, School Education, Moral Intelligence

Introduction

“The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.”
-Einstein (2021)

The surest thing about the change is that it is going to change. This reminds me of a story. It reads…

“Once a king called upon all of his wise men and asked them," Is there a mantra or suggestion which works in every situation, in every circumstance, in every place and in every time. In every joy, every sorrow, every defeat and every victory? One answer for all questions? Something which can help me when none of you is available to advise me? Tell me is there any mantra?". After a lengthy discussion, an old man suggested something which appealed to all of them. The message was “THIS TOO SHALL PASS”. Sardhar (2011)

Taking into account the story, because of the wisdom of the old man, all wise men were saved. It was because of his intelligence and thoughtfulness. In short, intelligence is an individual's cognitive ability to reason, think, understand and remember that draws upon the powers of learning, memory, perception and deciding. Considering the thought, intelligence plays an important role in the life of a student and of each and every individual sustaining in the social, political, regional and other aspects of life. It has been said and believed that humans have the faculty of language because of which s/he has been progressing since ages i.e. from stone age to the post-modern age. The thinking capacity of individuals has the unsatisfying thirst for advancement and upgradation. This attitude is developing by leaps and heaps day after day so as to add to the comfort zone of individuals.
Intelligence: Meaning and Definition

The term Intelligence has been derived from Latin word “intelligo” that can simply be translated into English as “Understand or choose between different options”. Intelligence refers to certain mental powers. A part of intelligence that allows people to solve complex problems of their routine life.

The concept of intelligence generally refers to the ability to think and learn, and has been predominately used to describe the learning and application of skills and facts. Ask twenty friends or twenty experts to define intelligence and you may come up with twenty different definitions, though most will agree that it is a general mental ability to reason, think, understand and remember that draws upon the powers of learning, memory, perception and deciding. People vary in their intelligence, which is generally attributed to a variable combination of innate, inherited and acquired characteristics.

Intelligence is a general capacity of an individual consciously to adjust his thinking to new requirements. It is a general mental adaptability to new problems and condition of life

-Stern (2018)

Intelligence is the power of perceiving, learning, understanding and knowing

-Oxford Dictionary

There are various types of intelligence as mentioned in the figure below:

| Social | Moral | Emotional | Cultural | Practical |

Moral Intelligence: Definition and Meaning

Moral intelligence is newer and less studied than the more established cognitive, emotional and social intelligences, but has great potential to improve our understanding of learning and behaviour. Moral intelligence refers to the ability to apply ethical principles to personal goals, values and actions. The construct of moral intelligence consists of four competencies related to integrity, three to responsibility, two to forgiveness, and one to compassion.

Moral intelligence is not one of Gardner's multiple intelligences, but it is related to two of his original seven – intrapersonal and interpersonal – as well as one of his possible candidates – spiritual intelligence. Clarken (2009)

Though moral intelligence contains aspects of Gardner’s interpersonal (ability to recognize the intentions, feelings and motivations of others) and intrapersonal (ability to understand oneself and use that information to regulate one's own life) intelligences and to the related constructs of social and emotional intelligence, it is different. A key difference is that emotional and social intelligence are value free, whereas moral intelligence is value centered.

Morality and moral intelligence are important in our society and schools. Moral intelligence is discussed in the context of Gardener’s theory of multiple intelligences. Moral intelligence helps apply ethical principles to personal goals, values and actions. It consists of four competencies related to integrity, three to responsibility, two to forgiveness, and one to compassion. Clarken (2009) Developing greater moral intelligence will result in individuals, schools and other social systems that are healthier and positive. Several conceptions of moral intelligence are considered along with ideas how education might look if it was to value and include morality more prominently.

“Moral intelligence is the capacity to understand right from wrong, to have strong ethical convictions and to act on them to behave in the right and honourable way”

-Borba (2001)

“Moral intelligence helps apply ethical principles to personal goals, values and actions. It consists of four competencies related to integrity, three to responsibility, two to forgiveness, and one to compassion.”

-Gardener's theory
“Moral Education defines a moral person as one who respects human dignity, cares about the welfare of others, integrates individual interests and social responsibilities, demonstrates integrity, reflects on moral choices and seeks peaceful resolution of conflict.”

- The Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Panel (1988)

To conclude, it can be said that moral intelligence is an essential element to individual and collective well-being and progress and a necessary part of a holistic education.

Moral Intelligence: Model

Taking into account moral intelligence, there are two general 'models' of moral intelligence that are recurrent in the literature.

Lennick and Keil’s Model of Moral Intelligence:

1. **Doug Lennick and Fred Kiel**: Both of them are Ph.D., authors of Moral Intelligence and the originators of the term. Their model for moral intelligence identified four competencies of moral intelligence:
   a. Integrity
   b. Responsibility
   c. Forgiveness
   d. Compassion

The following table will describe the meaning of each competence in short. (wikipedia.org, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lennick &amp; Kiel's competencies</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Creating harmony between what we believe and how we act, doing what we know is right, always telling the truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Taking personal responsibility, admitting mistakes and failures, embracing responsibility for serving others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Letting go of one's own mistakes, letting go of others' mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Actively caring about others</td>
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2. **Michele Borba**: Borba (wikipedia.org, 2020) is a doctorate in Education and in the book “Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids to Do the Right Thing”, Borba notes seven essential virtues of moral intelligence:
   a. Empathy
   b. Conscience
   c. Self-control
   d. Respect
   e. Kindness
   f. Tolerance
   g. Fairness
The book highlight and gives a step-by-step plan for parents to teach their children these virtues to enhance their moral intelligence. The description of each component is as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Borba's essential virtues</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Identifying with and feeling other people's concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscience</td>
<td>Knowing the right and decent way to act and acting in that way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>Regulating your thoughts and actions so that you stop any pressures from within or without and act the way you know and feel is right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Showing you value others by treating them in a courteous and considerate way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Demonstrating concern about the welfare and feelings of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Respecting the dignity and rights of all persons, even those beliefs and behaviours we may disagree with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Choosing to be open-minded and to act in a just and fair way.</td>
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The current research is going to focus on the components given by Borba. Taking into account each one of the above-mentioned components, the following discussion may detail the importance of each component in a learner's development for moral intelligence.

**Empathy:** There has been a constant confusion between empathy and sympathy. The word empathy refers to an individual’s capacity to get yourself in the place of others and consider the feelings of other individuals as to solve the challenges faced. According to Borba (2001) empathy is the capacity of an individual to identify with other people’s issues. The major difference between empathy and sympathy is that Empathy looks beyond pity, where other people’s problems become part of an individual who feels the need to intervene. It is important not to confuse empathy with sympathy as sympathy entails looking at people suffering with pity and feeling sorry for them instead of making efforts to help. Borba (2001) In teaching learning process, it is mandatory that learners get introduced to the concept of empathy through demonstration and develop sensitivity towards other people’s feelings. Through empathy, the learners raise the standard of morality and consider the feelings and attitudes of others.

**Conscience:** In this changing scenario of world and education, conscience has to be an integral part of education. Everywhere it is observed that in cut-throat competition of success, individuals tend to perform unethical and immoral activities with that of other competing individual. There is a constant need to raise individual’s standard of skills, knowledge and attitude rather than decrease that of others. Conscience, therefore, can be defined as identifying the right and correct way to do something and actually following through with the same. In short, conscience shall develop learner’s ability to embrace positive behaviour and distinguish between what is right and wrong in a given situation. This component will not only develop an ethical practice in the behaviour of the students but also facilitate the smooth transition towards collective success i.e. win-win situations in professional setting.

**Self-control:** Fluctuating mind shall distort the process of reaching smoothly at the outcome. On the other hand, Self-control is the practice of training the mind to stay in control, focused and regulate one from choosing pleasurable options at the moment that eventually may elicit dire consequences. Grounded on the fact that human beings are hedonistic by nature with the ability to weigh between pain and pleasure of an action. In school, the children are exhibited to focus on self-control especially when challenged with exciting options and encouraging logical and critical thinking when making both small and large choices. Borba (2001) This is achieved by training the child to know that every choice has a consequence, meaning they would weigh and re-weigh options as they know they are solely responsible.
Respect: What you give, you get back. Considering this thought, Respect is a very simple concept but at which humanity has had trouble hacking. It is a natural human tendency neglect the efforts put in by individuals to the results they have produced. Adding to the same point, in this competitive world where there is result oriented or output oriented approach, the stakeholder does not look into the process but the product and based upon which individuals are given respect. At the heart of character lies respect, which goes deeper than verbalization as it entails conduct. Teaching respect to the learners shall abide by respectful behaviour the different stages of teaching respect shall include the following

- Making the child understand the concept of respect
- Upholding the child’s respect for authority and standing against freedom
- By establishing the boundaries and succeeds in positive character development

Kindness: Kindness revolves around being people centred. In this competitive world, people are being more self-centric. This way people do not demonstrate concern for other people. Therefore, there is a need for kindness in individual’s behaviour in social setting. A kind person naturally demonstrates genuine interest in the welfare and well-being of other people. Borba (2001) Schools, being the prime phase of individual’s character building, they should be exposed to be kind to other people which can be achieves through the application of reward mechanisms, where children are rewarded for demonstrating respect and nurturing positive behaviours. In doing so, the learners will embrace the concept of kindness i.e. the learners will learn to accept and acknowledging that despite people’s diverse origins and backgrounds, we are all the same.

Tolerance: Tolerance is an individual’s ability to accept with an open mind thought of people and adjust with the ideas of people in a social and professional situation. It requires and individual to remain objective and uphold the dignity and rights of everyone despite differing beliefs on the same. This is to say that despite diversities in individual’s choice for political opinions, race and origin, religious beliefs showcasing high-level of moral intelligence whereby individuals attach the concept of “live and let live.” In school learners, teachers should employ non-participant observation to assess the level of tolerance of the learners. Borba (2001) Tolerance may help students nurture moral intelligence for better retention of their place, status and dignity in the social and professional life.

Fairness: Fairness here refers to the ability of individual to do justice and treat other people with equality. Borba, in his theory, designates fairness to be a virtue. Fairness is individual’s open-mindedness that originates from acting fairly and impartially. Borba (2001) A teacher, in the classroom, is an ideal person in front of the learner. This is to say that as an educator, the teacher should set a good example before the learners as they learn things from their teacher and parents by observing them. It is important that the teacher is fair in their approach with the children and is having a good character because learners will learn through observation and if these observations are observed by learners for a longer period of time, they naturally get reflected in the behaviour and character of the learners.

Conclusion
To conclude, one can say that moral intelligence is an individual’s capacity to decide right and wrong, being ethical situations and behave in accordance to the need of adverse or daily situation. Morals simply does not mean to believe in ideals rather it is an application of unbiased behaviour in social and professional spheres of an individual. It is rightly said mind controls the body and thoughts control the mind. Therefore, an individual’s ethical principles, goals, values, beliefs and actions gets reflected in his/her behaviour. In classrooms, teacher is the harbinger of various resources for the learners where the teacher must exhibit a strong moral example, self-awareness (beliefs), expect moral behaviour from the learners and give priority to the morals in problem solving and critical thinking.
References


