

Domains of Learning and Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development

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Abstract: The aim of education is all round development of the child. There are three domains of learning i.e. cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Cognitive domain is related to mental abilities (knowing), affective domain is related to behavior (feeling) and psychomotor domain is related to skill (doing). Fig 1 shows the three domains of learning. Lawrence Kohlberg developed a model of moral development based on an individual’s responses to moral questions called moral dilemmas. Kohlberg’s theory attempts to explain how children develop a sense of right or wrong. Kohlberg was influenced by Piaget’s theory and therefore felt that moral development was determined by cognitive development. Kohlberg’s theory describes how individuals pass through a series of three levels of moral development. The paper focuses on Kohlberg’s theory of moral development.

Keywords: Lawrence Kohlberg, Moral Development

1. Introduction

The aim of education is the all round development of the child. There are three domains of learning i.e. cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Cognitive domain is related to mental abilities (knowing), affective domain is related to behavior (feeling) and psychomotor domain is related to skill (doing). Fig 1 shows the three domains of learning.

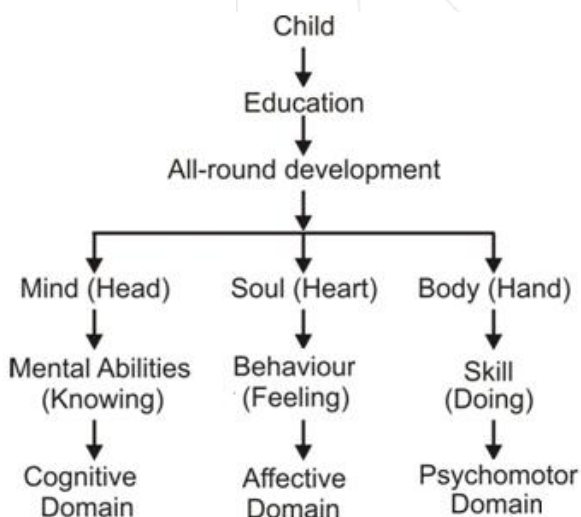


Figure 1: Three Domains of Learning

Lawrence Kohlberg developed a model of moral development based on an individual’s responses to moral questions called moral dilemmas. Kohlberg’s theory attempts to explain how children develop a sense of right or wrong. Kohlberg was influenced by Piaget’s theory and therefore felt that moral development was determined by cognitive development. Kohlberg’s theory describes how individuals pass through a series of three levels of moral development, each of which can be broken into two sublevels, resulting into total of six stages (Table 1 & Fig 2).

Table 1: Three Levels of Morality

Level I. Pre-Conventional Morality		
Stage 1	Punishment orientation	A person complies with rules during this stage in order to avoid punishment.
Stage 2	Reward orientation	An action is determined by one’s own needs.
Level II. Conventional Morality		
Stage 3	Good girl/Good boy orientation	Good behaviour is that which pleases others and gets their approval.
Stage 4	Authority orientation	Emphasis is on upholding the law, order and authority and doing one’s duty by following societal rules.
Level III. Post-Conventional Morality		
Stage 5	Social contract orientation	Flexible understanding that people obey rules because they are necessary for the social order but that rules can change if there are good reasons and better alternatives.
Stage 6	Morality of individual principles orientation	Behaviour is directed by self-chosen ethical principles. High value is placed on justice, dignity and equality.

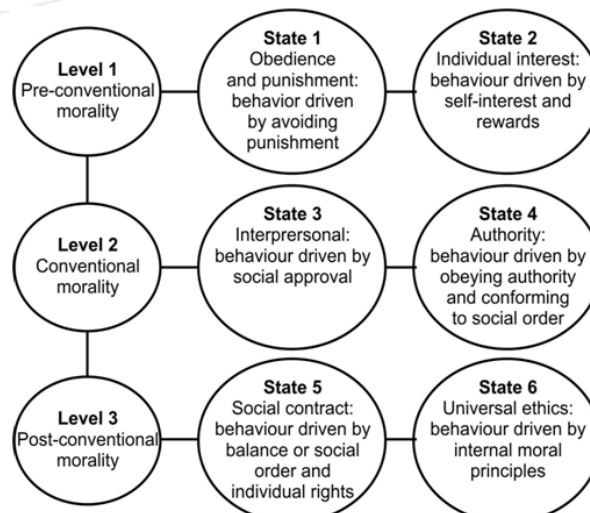


Figure 2: Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development

2. Criticism of Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Criticisms of Kohlberg's theory of moral development include that it may be better at describing the development may not be as orderly and uniform as his theory suggests. For instance, it is not unusual to find individuals, who are reasoning at several adjacent levels of moral reasoning at the same time. Also, Kohlberg's theory describes moral reasoning but does not predict moral behaviour.

Kohlberg's theory is concerned with moral thinking, but there is a big difference between knowing what we *ought* to do versus our actual actions. Critics have pointed out that Kohlberg's theory of moral development overemphasizes the concept as justice when making moral choices. Factors such as compassion, caring and other interpersonal feelings may play an important part in moral reasoning. Individualistic cultures emphasize personal rights while collectivist cultures stress the importance of society and community. Eastern cultures may have different moral outlooks that Kohlberg's theory does not account for.

References

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