Teachers' Beliefs on Moral Development in Hungary - with Reference to Children with Mild Intellectual Disability

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Abstract

The aim of our research was to find out teachers', lower primary school teachers', and special education teachers' beliefs of moral development with a special focus on children with mild intellectual disabilities. We also look at the perceptions of candidates studying on the same subjects. Numerous research studies show that teachers' educational beliefs having significant impact on the educational process. This paper presents the qualitative part of a mixed method research. Semi-structured interviews (N=13) and one focus group discussion (N=1) were used. Interview respondents reported that they found it difficult to define moral behavior because it is situational. We found that among the factors influencing moral development, family background plays the strongest role, but they also feel their own responsibility is paramount. Opinions on the moral development of children with mild intellectual disabilities are varied. The main tendencies are that some say that they cannot reach the same level of development as a typically developing children, and some say that IQ should not be a barrier. And, according to some, moral development may be also atypical. We found interesting correlations between the views of teachers in the field and those of candidates.

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INTRODUCTION

"No one is good by accident. Virtue must be learned" (Seneca, 1975, p. 89). Although a long time has passed since Seneca's words, in the 20th century researchers (Piaget, 1965; Kohlberg, 1976; Gilligan, 1982; Rest et al., 1978, Lind, 2016) have taken a similar view of morality: moral behavior is not innate but learned. Without moral conduct, human communities cannot develop, and if it is lacking, it causes disruption in the functioning of the community. Therefore, if an individual's behaviour is not characterised by moral forms of conduct and action, it is usually sanctioned by society (Bábosik, 2004). So by supporting the development of moral sense, we are ultimately supporting the well-being of the individual within the community. In 2021, children with mild intellectual disabilities represented the second largest disability group in the public education system in Hungary. Their number in this school year was 14323, and 35.55% of them were studying in integration with typically developing peers (Hegedűs, 2023). Children with mild intellectual disabilities are therefore also appearing in large numbers in the education system. It would be worthwhile to place greater emphasis on sensitisation in teacher training. It is important to examine the role of institutional education in the development of moral sense, the impact of teachers' views and beliefs on this area. How do they see their own role in the process of promoting moral development? How do they see the development of this area being guided in a positive direction? Before we look for answers to these questions, we need to ask one more: why do we think these are relevant questions? We will try to answer in the theoretical framework below.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Teachers' beliefs

Beliefs are assumptions about the world that we believe to be true, but are not based on scientifically proven knowledge. Views can be seen as cognitive constructs that influence our judgements and decisions (Richardson, 1996). Educators have a set of views that influence their everyday practice. These beliefs also influence further knowledge acquisition and teaching practice (Falus, 2003). Pajares (1992) argues that teachers' beliefs should be a focus of pedagogical research. In a Finnish qualitative case study (Rissanen et al., 2018), the authors investigated the impact of implicit theories in the moral science teaching practice of four teachers. Implicit theories do not stand alone, but are networked with other dominant beliefs. These networks of beliefs form a structured system of meanings that guide the way people understand themselves and others and make sense of their social experiences. Implicit theories influence how teachers make sense of social phenomena in the classroom, as well as their pedagogical decisions. The authors hypothesized that teachers' implicit theories, and the subtle cues they continually convey, influence their efforts to develop moral sense. Their results show that teachers' implicit beliefs are communicated to students in a variety of ways and influence teachers' interpretations and efforts to develop students' ethical sense. The study suggests that implicit theories represent an important construct in moral education research that has been missing from the related literature.

Teachers' educational beliefs are internal structures having significant impact on the educational process (Nahalka, 2003). Their quality is influenced by the patterns they are based on and the pedagogical knowledge that underlies them (Kojanitz, 2019). Research by Whitley et al. (2019) shows that there is a direct link between teachers' beliefs and the process of effective teaching-learning. Lénárd and Szivák (2001) investigated pedagogical beliefs and their impact on the overall educational process, in hungarian context. It was researched the characteristics and content of views on education. Teachers felt that the most important aspect in defining education was the transmission of moral norms. According to the interviewees, the most educational effect they can achieve is through their own personality and setting a personal example. However, interviews in Lénárd's (2003) related research showed that a significant proportion of the teachers interviewed delegated the responsibility for education. In their view, school is responsible for the conscious acquisition of the knowledge necessary for future independent living, but the family, as the primary socialisation arena, is responsible for educational tasks such as the acquisition of social norms and the development of

general human values. According to Durmus's article (2019), based on a small qualitative study in Turkey, highlights the dilemma, especially for beginning teachers, of whether to focus on academic achievement or moral education. The research revealed that the teachers involved were particularly concerned that parents were deliberately raising their children to be selfish in the hope for future success, and that they saw the values of tolerance, kindness, justice and honesty being taken out.

Students with intellectual disability – and teachers' attitudes towards them

Attitudes towards people with disabilities are complex and multifaceted, but there is a tendency for non-disabled people to have negative attitudes towards people with disabilities (Dunn, 2015; Castillo & Larson, 2020). The average person is more accepting of physical disabilities than mental disabilities (Dunn, 2015), the latter category including intellectual disability. In the DSM–V (2014), intellectual disability is included in the major group of neurodevelopmental disorders. Three criteria must be met for a diagnosis. The first criterion is impairment in intellectual functioning (reasoning, problem solving, planning, abstract thinking, judgment, school learning and learning from experience), as confirmed by clinical assessment and individually recorded intelligence test. The second criterion is impaired adaptive functioning, which impairs personal independence and social responsibility. The third point is that both intellectual and adaptive disorders begin during the developmental period. These individuals are characterised by significant impairments in intellectual-cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior, which are compared to the peer group. Even the most severe manifestations of intellectual disability do not call into question the status of the individuals concerned. Persons with intellectual disability represent a possible variant of human existence and can be divided into four categories: mild, moderate, severe, and very severe (Lányiné, 2009; 2017). According to the consensus view of educational science and special education, the possibility of educability is given for children with intellectual disability (Mesterházi & Szekeres, 2021).

Teachers' views of person with disabilities can determine students' attitudes toward people with disabilities and how they will behave toward them in the future (Allan, 1999). In classrooms where teachers are prejudiced against people with disabilities, the integration of students with special needs is less successful. Educators who believe that abilities are difficult to influence through learning and practice, and who prefer to view them as stable, fixed characteristics of children, are less likely taking responsibility for working with students living with disabilities (Glenn, 2018).

The attitudes of Hungarian teachers towards students with disabilities often contain negative elements, which further reinforces prejudiced attitudes and behavior (Jászi, 2013). The majority of teachers are skeptical about integration efforts and their attitude towards integration is ambivalent (Pénzes, 2008). A recent Hungarian study explored teachers' views on persons with disabilities and their social situation, using metaphor analysis. In the data collection and analysis, different disability groups were not treated separately, which is a limitation of the research. The majority of the teachers participating in the research view the disabled person as a person in need of care and for whom they feel responsible. However, their perception of their social situation is characterised by exclusion, vulnerability and marginality. In their view, inclusion of people with disabilities is not achieved at the societal level (Gulya, Vajnai & Szabó, 2023).

What do we know about moral development since Piaget and Kohlberg, and what do we know about the moral sense of people with intellectual disability?

According to Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, moral development is a process of relativisation, so the higher one is in moral development, the more one is able to take intention and circumstances into account when making judgements. Both theorists agree that morality can be taught. The difference is that Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 2004) believed that we are close to the peak of moral development by the age of 10, whereas Kohlberg (1976) believed that this development lasts until around 16–17 years of age. Since the pioneering work of Piaget and Kohlberg, there have been many new developments. We cannot explain this in detail in this paper, but we will briefly summarise.

One of the best-known critics of Kohlberg's theory, the feminist Carol Gilligan (1982), argues for a qualitative difference between male and female morality. According to her, women's moral judgements are typically motivated by a desire for care and empathy, while men's decisions are generally rule-following. Gibbs (1992) described a model very similar to the Kohlberg approach, but with only four stages. Nucci and Turiel (1978) and Turiel and Banas (2020) draw attention to the importance of the social context that influences a given moral decision. Bloom (2010) developed a method (based on eye movement tracking) to assess the moral sense of children as young as 1 year old. His studies show that there is a spark of ethical sense as early as the first year of life. Damon (1977), Rest (1978), Lind (1978, 2016) and Khanam (2018) are researchers who use Kohlberg's staging of moral development as a basis and their new assessment instruments, similar to Kohlberg's procedure, map the respondent's moral judgement through the judgement of moral dilemmas.

To our knowledge, there is no studies have been conducted on the moral development of children with intellectual disabilities, but there is also very little research with adult participants. These are difficult to assess, as there are several in which the assessment was carried out using individually developed, non-standardised measures (Langdon et al., 2010). Langdon et al (2010) tested adults with and without intellectual disability using two measures. The average intelligence level of the 32 individuals with intellectual disability included in the study was IQ=59. The Socio-Moral Reflection Measure - Short Form (SMRM-SF) and the Moral Theme Inventory (MTI) were used in a test-retest situation, two weeks apart. The Moral Theme Inventory (MTI) was developed primarily for children, but there is also experience with adult subjects. The reliability of the MTI was low for subjects with intellectual disability, but the reliability of the SMRM-SF was found to be adequate for both the test and control groups. In the case of the MTI, it was described that individuals with intellectual disability had difficulty interpreting what they heard. The results measured by the SMRM-SF instrument showed that the test group was at one level lower of development of moral judgement compared to the control group. This is the second level according to Gibbs (1992). This level is characterised by instrumental morality and the exchange principle, similar to Kohlberg's (1976) second level. The exchange principle is to give as much as you get (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth), while instrumental morality is to accept the exploitation of others for one's own ends. At the third level, our moral judgements are governed by the golden rule of "treat others as you would like to be treated". The authors conclude that the differences between the two groups can be explained by intellectual differences (Langdon et al., 2010).

In another Dutch study (Van Vugt et al., 2011), the SMRM-SF measure was also used to assess the level of moral judgement in juveniles (under 16 years) who had committed a sexual offence. The test group included 32 offenders who had borderline intelligence levels, IQ between 57 and 84. The control group consisted of 45 juvenile offenders who were not affected by intellectual disability. The participants with intellectual disability were at the second level of moral development, similar to the results of Langdon et al. (2010). Those in the control group were in the transition zone between the second and third levels, i.e. slightly higher than the participants with intellectual disability.

Otrebski and Czusz-Sudoł (2022) investigated the moral sensitivity of people with intellectual disability and how this is related to the severity of intellectual disability and gender. The instrument they developed is the Moral Sensitivity Inventory (MSI), an instrument designed for people aged 16-30 years with mild to moderate intellectual disability, which measures moral sensitivity. It is administered in a face to face situation in which the test person does not have to read. The MSI consists of 10 stories with pictures that present typical moral dilemmas. The subject's task is to answer the question, "Who in this story did something right or wrong, and what was it?" Their study involved 267 Polish people aged 16-30 years with mild (58.42%) or moderate intellectual disability (41.58%). Men and women were almost equally represented. Women with mild intellectual disability were more sensitive to moral right and wrong in situations where they had to behave according to principles and norms. A greater number of people with mild intellectual disability in the study were able to recognise manifestations of moral right and wrong than participants with moderate intellectual disability. The difference between the mean scores of the two groups was statistically significant ($p \leq 0.001$), suggesting a correlation between the level of moral sensitivity and the severity of the intellectual

disability. The authors therefore suggest that cognitive development is one of the factors influencing moral sensitivity.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of our research is to investigate teachers', lower primary school teachers', and special education teachers' beliefs of moral development with a special focus on children with mild intellectual disabilities. We also look at the perceptions of candidates studying on the same subjects. This paper presents the qualitative part of a mixed method research.

In Hungarian educational system lower primary school teachers have different competences from teachers. They teach specifically in the first four classes of primary school. A special education teacher is a professional with higher education qualifications who works with children and adults with disabilities. Their competence covers the care of the population group corresponding to their specialisation (Mesterházi, 1997), for example pedagogy of mild intellectual disability. Exploring the views of this target group, especially special education teachers and special education teacher candidates, specifically on moral education is a less researched area, so it is their views that add novelty to our approach. We also investigate their views on the moral development of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities. The inclusion of this aspect will, as far as we are aware, be a further innovation in both educational science and disability studies.

Research Questions

In this paper we aim to answer the following research questions:

Q1: What does moral behavior mean for groups of participants?
Q2: What are they beliefs on the factors that might develop moral sense?
Q3: What methods are considered appropriate for developing moral sense?
Q4: What do they think about the moral development of students with mild intellectual disabilitiy?

METHOD

We chose the semi-structured interview and focus group discussion, because these methods offer an opportunity to explore opinions and views in more depth and to present aspects that we had not previously thought of. The framework of the semi-structured interview was the most appropriate for our research. We have the interview plan of what questions we intend to ask, but during the interview we have the possibility to deviate from it, or to ask clarifying questions as needed (Rácz, 2023). This type of interview generates extensive and rich data from participants in the study (Howitt, 2016). The interview questions can be found in the Annex 1 and 2.

A focus group is a research method that uses data generated by participants communicating with each other about a particular topic. Focus refers to the fact that the discussion is organised around a central theme (Vicsek, 2006). The main characteristics of a focus group are: organised discussion, joint activity, social event, interaction (Gibbs, 1997, cited in Howitt, 2016). The interaction between participants can help to recall forgotten details. Listening to other members of the group may help them to recall content that they might have forgotten to mention in other circumstances (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990). It may also allow participants to articulate aspects that they had not previously thought about in detail (Morgan, 1997). The focus group topics can be found in the Annex 3.

Sample

Participants were recruited by convenience sampling. The target groups and sample size are illustrated in Table 1 below. In total, 13 teachers and candidates were interviewed. In addition, one

focus group interview was made with 3 teachers. There are few men working as teachers in educational system in Hungary, so our sample is not representative of this aspect.

Table 1. Target Groups and Sample Size

The group of participants	Interview		Focus group	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Lower primary school teachers	-	2	-	1
Teachers	3	-	-	1
Special education teachers	-	2	-	1
Lower primary school teacher candidates	-	2	-	-
Teacher candidates	1	1	-	-
Special education teacher candidates	-	2	-	-

Introduction of the Participants

Of the seven teachers interviewed who are already in the practice, three are men and four are women. Their ages range from 34 to 58, with an average age of 44. All of them are highly qualified teachers, with several degrees. The youngest teacher has been in the profession for 7 years and the oldest for 33 years. One teacher has a university degree in Ethics and one special education teacher has a 30-hour accredited course qualification, which, according to the regulations at the time, qualified her to teach Ethics. The others have no related qualifications, but it was found that two of them taught Ethics. In candidates' group, we interviewed five women and one man. Their ages range from 20 to 24 years, all of them are full-time students in Budapest.

The focus group interviews were made with a lower primary school teacher, a special education teacher and a leader of a temporary/crisis home. The teacher participant works in a lower primary school, and the special education teacher participant is in leader position. The head of the temporary/crisis home has several qualifications (including teaching) and also works as a child psychodrama teacher, which makes her a really valuable addition to this research.

Procedure

Data collection took place between October 2022 and February 2023. The planned sample size was 12 interviews and 1 focus group interview. The cyber space made it possible to interview people with whom it would otherwise not have been possible to meet in person due to lack of time, distance or location. Interviews were organised either online or face to face, depending on the arrangements made. The focus group interview was conducted in personal form. In all cases, audio recordings were made with the participants' knowledge and consent. The audio recordings of the interviews and the focus group discussions amount to almost 12 hours in total. The experience was that interviews with candidates lasted about 30 minutes, while with teachers they took much longer, sometimes up to one and a half to two hours. The audio recordings were transcribed using the Alrite software, which was checked by listening back to the recordings.

For content analysis of the texts, we used the ATLAS.ti software. For networking purposes, the 13 interview and focus group discussion responses were treated as one corpus of data. The content analysis methodology was hybrid. It was deductive in the sense that there were codes and categories derived from the literature, but it also required inductively formulated codes that were associated with each segment while reading the text. In the "open coding" section, a total of 404 codes were inserted in the text. In the next stage, "axial coding", these codes were grouped into 11 categories. Logical relationships were defined between the codes in each category, which were finally assembled into conceptual networks. In each case, the networks have a core, a key concept around which the codes are organised.

RESULTS

It is not possible to present all the results in detail in this paper, but the following networks have been created by content analysis: moral development, moral behavior, who is responsible for developing, methods, question of measurement, Ethics education, the morality of our times, the morals of today's generation, views on the morality of children with mild intellectual disability, the challenge in education, and supporting factors. The last two networks was not anticipated but we present these in the discussion of the results, because they colour the picture of Hungarian educational system. Now, progress along our research questions.

Q1: What does moral behavior mean for groups of participants?

Interview respondents reported that they found it difficult to define moral behavior. Many concluded that moral behavior is situational, situation-dependent. Because moral behavior is *"I don't steal, but I would steal for my child."* One teacher argued that, in his view, it is not possible to describe someone by a stage of moral development (in the Kohlbergian sense) because *"we are all of us at the same time"* and it depends on the situation to which one's reaction corresponds. The link with conscience has been highlighted several times. Alongside or independently of this, respondents tried to define what moral behavior means to them. One of the answers that appeared most frequently was the ability to change your point of view and to help others, and to treat others as you would like to be treated.

Q2: What are they beliefs on the factors that might develop moral sense?

The following are the influences that teachers and candidates perceive as affecting children's moral development, either positively or negatively. From the interviews, it emerged that innate foundations are assumed, but a much more prominent role was attributed to learning, example-setting and nurture. The fact that the importance of institutional education was mentioned several times shows that, as educators or future educators, they also see it as their task to shape moral sense, but the role of the family as the primary socialisation arena was slightly more prominent. The important role of peers was mentioned almost as often as that of the family.

Q3: What methods are considered appropriate for developing moral sense?

During the interviews, the most frequently mentioned methods were role-playing and games, with a special focus on situational games. In addition, conflict management and the mediation role of teachers in this context were mentioned several times. Talking and related feedback on behavior, showing consequences were also a common response. Watching a film or listening to a story was also brought in by several respondents. Respondents affirm that the development of moral sense can be fostered through personal relationships and that this is optimally continuous and embedded in everyday life. There is also a place for structured sessions, specifically in group settings.

Q4: What do they think about the moral development of students with mild intellectual disabilitiy?

All the teachers interviewed, who are already in the field, have had contact with children with intellectual disabilities in the course of their work. Of course, the candidates of special needs education interviewed also have knowledge of this population. In contrast all the participant candidates indicated that they were not familiar with this group of children.

Overall, there are very different views on whether a child with mild intellectual disability can reach the same level of moral development as a typically developing child. Some believe that the development of moral sense is related to the level of intelligence, so that a child with mild intellectual disability remains at a lower level of moral development than his or her typically developing peers of the same age. In Kohlberg's terminology, the pre-conventional level is referred to, where external

control plays a role in guiding behavior. The other part of their argument was that moral development is not related to intelligence, that there is no difference between the morality of a child with mild intellectual disability and a typically developing child. Two other trends emerged. The first is that the development of moral sense depends on the individual (and personality is much more complex than being judged by a single factor such as intelligence level). The second is that in their case the path of moral development will be atypical.

Challenge in education and supporting factors

In the content analysis of the interviews, the categorisation of the codes resulted in two networks that were not expected. These were the difficulties and challenges that teachers face in their work and what supports their work. By their very nature, these were overwhelmingly provided by teachers already in the profession, but not exclusively.

In the context of the difficulties, the issue of career drop-outs and the resulting shortage of teachers was raised several times. A major difficulty is that *"there is no choice of teachers",* with heads of institutions having to take on anyone who applies. There are many older colleagues on the teaching staff with whom it is more difficult to find common ground. There are also concerns about the current education system. Of those interviewed, one career leaver decided to switch because of a lack of success, a feeling of inertia and ultimately burnout. As she put it, *"I didn't feel I could do anything meaningful for these children. Or, rather, that I was not providing them with what they needed."* And another interviewee is currently in the field but has worked in other fields before and may decide to do so again soon. One of the reasons he is considering a change is the lack of managerial and peer support. *"I treat children as individuals and measure them against themselves. But in this school, that's not what the others understand"* she says. Overwork and lack of financial and social esteem were other risk factors for burnout, as they also emerged in other interviews. In the interview with one teacher, this was compounded by unrealistic expectations of himself. *"...I could call it overwork, although I don't like that word, because I hope that I can't be overworked."*

The challenges at work are not positive. In the background, there is little sense of achievement, a feeling of helplessness, a lack of resources (*"I am not enough"*), inexperience. They feel that the negative impact of the media is significant, in particular the pornographic content freely available to children, and the lack of awareness of internet use and parental control. The lack of contact between school and parents and difficulties in communicating with parents were repeatedly raised. Problems at home and in the family are reflected at school, manifesting themselves in children's challenging behavior. There was talk of abuse and neglect. One teacher spoke of a frightening phenomenon he had been confronted with over the last few years. He called the children involved *"Euro orphans".* Their parents are in fact living abroad for work, but the children stay at home with elderly relatives or in hostel of the secondary school. Several of the interviewees reported that either their student had become a mother, or they were teaching a student whose mother had given birth as child, or had become a prostitute. They talked about poverty, parents who had become homeless, families living in maternity homes, and how they were able to work with and support children from such difficult backgrounds. The challenges faced by disadvantaged and Roma children were mentioned several times. Several said that there are great difficulties when there are differences between the expectations of the home as the primary socialisation arena and the school as the secondary arena. On the one hand, this creates frustration in children and on the other hand, they feel that school cannot modify existing patterns of challenging behavior. According to the teachers interviewed, teachers are hampered by a lack of balance, time, energy and opportunity in their work.

Among the factors that support their work, the fact that these teachers are at home in their workplace and enjoy working with children was repeatedly mentioned. They said: *"I'm very happy to go to work on Mondays, and every week I tried to organise some kind of programme that would make the children happy to go to school." "I'm so at home everywhere"* (he works multiple jobs). *"It's nice to be around the students where I am."*

For most of the interviewees, it is their own professional development arc that supports their work. Gaining qualifications, completing new schools, being able to cope with a wide variety of tasks, positive challenges, practical experience gained, previous, formative work experience, volunteering; are they draw on meeting the challenges of everyday life.

Another supportive factor is a stable working environment, the presence of a good leader in the institution who supports teachers' freedom of choice in methodological matters. A significant factor is good relations with colleagues, who exchange experiences and share knowledge. It helps to have access to a school psychologist or to involve external supporters in the life of the school, who can offer something to the children, either by getting them involved in external programmes or by involving them in the life of the institution. Sport has also emerged as a tool to put children's development on a positive path. The relationship with parents appears as a supporting factor when it works well. Examples of positive use of media opportunities were also mentioned, although only in one case. Rather, they see it as a disadvantage and perceive it as a positive effect if there is the possibility to limit telephone use within an institutional framework.

They told us how they see a good teacher: a positive personality *("always focusing on the good")*. They focus on their strengths and do not spend their energy compensating for their weaknesses. She is flexible in her approach, strives for individual attention, tries to find a voice with children and takes responsibility for the children she works with. The positive feedback from children and the respect they show for teachers has also been supportive.

CONCLUSION

According to participants it is difficult to define moral behavior because it is situational. In terms of supporting the development of moral sense, although the primary role of the family is undeniable, both teachers and candidates interviewed show a high level of responsibility. Opinions on the moral development of children with mild intellectual disabilities are varied. Some believe that the development of moral sense is related to the level of intelligence, so that a child with mild intellectual disability remains at a lower level of moral development than his or her typically developing peers of the same age. The other part of their argument was that moral development is not related to intelligence, that there is no difference between the morality of a child with a mild intellectual disability and a typically developing child. In the content analysis of the interviews, the categorisation of the codes resulted in two networks that were not expected. These were the difficulties and challenges that teachers face in their work and what supports their work. These results are presented because they give a good picture of the Hungarian education system.

DISCUSSION

In relation to perceptions of moral behavior, it should be highlighted from the results that it is a difficult construct to define according to the participants. They believe that is considered moral behavior is highly situational and setting dependent. This result is consistent with the research of Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1976). According to both of them, moral development tends towards relativisation, i.e. the higher one's level of moral development, the more one is able to take intention and circumstances into account when making judgements.

Among the factors influencing moral development, the role of the family and parents stands out. This finding is in line with previous research by Lénárd (2003). They consider the role of role modeling, learning and education to be crucial, alongside which the expressed and implicit expectations of the contemporary group become more prominent over time. In terms of supporting the development of moral sense, although the primary role of the family is undeniable, both teachers and candidates interviewed show a high level of responsibility. Their activity is not linked to the Ethics

classroom, as illustrated in the interviews by the fact that moral education is *"in every time"* and that they do it during *"in their sleep"*.

It was mentioned several times that they feel that the patterns brought from their family (and considered inappropriate) are difficult or impossible for the school to modify. We know from the literature about the difficulties caused by the discrepancy between the family and the institutional socialisation arena. Children take the patterns and values they bring from home for granted and these are part of their identity. When they are confronted with (sometimes extremely different) routines and expectations during institutional socialisation, defence mechanisms are triggered. The greater the difference between the two environments, the less bridging support, the greater the resistance. If the family world is devalued, it is traumatic for children. School socialisation can only be truly effective if it could build on primary socialisation and recognise its values. The key to effective pedagogical practice is that the institution makes an effort to learn about and understand children's world at home and tries to reduce the distance between them (N. Kollár & Szabó, 2017).

The most frequently mentioned methods to support the development of moral sense were talking, reading and storytelling, drama and role-play. It was reported that during discussion, the conclusion and the lesson is drawn by the children, which is in line with the recommendation: the teacher helps the pupils to conflict their views and does not want the participants to formulate a binding value system (Mihály, 2001; Szekszárdi & Tusa, 2006). The teacher tries to ensure that the pupils do not want to conform to his/her opinion, but can be discussed with him/her. The teacher tries to constantly make them aware that there is no wrong answer (Fenyődi, 2015).

In relation to the perceptions of the group of children with mild intellectual disability, it should be pointed out that during the interviews, teacher candidaetes (except for special needs teacher candidates of course) indicated that they were not familiar with the characteristics of this population. All those already in the field had experience with them, regardless of their educational background. We therefore think it would be useful to include this content in the courses. Opinions on the moral development of children with intellectual disabilities are varied. The main tendencies are that some say that they cannot reach the same level of development as a typically developing children, and some say that IQ should not be a barrier, so it is not a matter of IQ.

The content analysis of the interviews produced two networks that we did not expect. These are challenge in education and supporting factors. We thought it important to present them, because they represent the state of the Hungarian education system.

Limitations

The sampling was access-based, with small patterns, so we cannot draw general conclusions. In this phase, we wanted to explore what we could expect from the target groups' responses. Next step, we will be able to compile a questionnaire based on the responses, which could provide a more nuanced picture on a larger sample. The participants in the interviews and focus group discussion influenced by motivational bias, because they are all interested in the subject. In this context, the possibility that some elements of the picture that emerges may be unrealistically positive must be taken into account.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Interview Questions for Teachers, Lower Primary School Teachers, and Special Edcation Teachers

1. What year were you born?

2. In which municipality do you work?

3. How many years have you been working?

4. What is your highest level of education or professional qualification in the field of education?

5. What is your profession and in which field of education do you work?

6. Please tell about your current job.

7. In your current job, how challenging do you find working with children? What are the reasons for this?

8. Are you currently, or have you been in the last 5 years, a class teacher? If so, what has been your experience?

9. Are you currently, or have you been in the last 5 years, involved in teaching Ethics?

10. Do you have any qualifications specifically related to the teaching of Ethics?

11. If yes, why did you decide to obtain this qualification? What has it enriched you?

12. Are you a member of any informal groups (e.g. Facebook) related to ethics education? What kind of group is this? Why do you find it useful?

13. Do you think that moral sense is learned or innate, or both?

14. How can we make moral sense measurable, how can we get to know this characteristic of other person?

15. What factors do you think influence the development of children's moral sense?

16. Who do you think is responsible for developing children's moral sense?

17. What methods can be used to develop children's moral sense?

18. What methods do you use? What are your reasons for choosing them?

19. What do you think about the level of moral development of the children you work with? Please give reasons for your answer.

20. In the course of your work, do you come into contact with pupils with a mild intellectual disability? (Also known as: chlidren with learning disability; IQ between 50-69.)

21. What do you think about whether a child with a mild intellectual disability can achieve the same level of moral development as a child with typical development? Please give reasons for your answer.

22. What do you think about Ethics education in schools?

23. What does moral behavior mean to you?

24. How would you describe morality today?

25. What do you think morality means for today's generation?

Annex 2. Interview Questions for Teacher Candidates, Lower Primary School Teacher Candidates, and Special Edcation Teacher Candidates

1. What year were you born?
2. In which municipality do you live?
3. What are you studying?
5. Do you have any qualifications on the field of education?
6. Do you already have experience in a pedagogical field? If yes, how many years?
7. Do you plan to obtain any qualifications specifically related to Ethics education? If so, what?
8. Are you a member of, or do you plan to join, any informally organised groups (e.g. on Facebook) related to Ethics education? What kind of group is this? Why do you or would you find it useful?
9. Do you think that moral sense is learned or innate, or both?
10. How can we make moral sense measurable, how can we get to know this characteristic of the other person?
11. What factors do you think influence the development of children's moral sense?
12. Who do you think is responsible for developing children's moral sense?
13. What methods do you know of that are suitable for developing children's moral sense? Where have you come across them?
14. What do you think about whether a child with a mild intellectual disability (also known as children with learning disability; IQ between 50-69) can achieve the same level of moral development as a child with typical development? Please give reasons for your answer.
15. What do you think about Ethics education in schools?
16. What does moral behavior mean to you?
17. How would you describe morality today?
18. What do you think morality means for today's generation?

Annex 3. Focus Group Discussion – Topics

1. Please introduce yourself in a few words (using your first name, as you may call each other). What do you do, what field of education do you work in?
2. Are you currently involved, or have you been involved in the last 5 years, in teaching Ethics?
3. What do you think about the qualifications involved in teaching Ethics?
4. Do you think that moral sense is learned or innate?
5. How can we measure moral sense, how can we get to know this characteristic of the other person?
6. What factors influence the development of children's moral sense?
7. Who do you think is responsible for developing children's moral sense?
8. What methods can be used to develop children's moral sense?
9. Can a child with mild intellectual disability achieve the same level of moral development as a child with typical development?
10. What do you think about Ethics education in schools?
11. What does moral behavior mean to you?
12. How would you describe morality today?
13. What do you think morality means for today's generation?