Country Report: Germany (Baden-Württemberg) - Teaching Ethics Based on the New Curricula 2016

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Objective of teaching ethics[1]

The new curricula 2016 for teaching ethics in general education (not in vocational education) in Baden-Württemberg being valid from the school year 2017/18 onwards were designed by educational planning commissions on behalf of the state's ministry of education and arts.[2] In contrast to religious education that is offered from the first year on in primary school, ethics lessons start at the earliest in class 7 of secondary school (Ethikunterricht. Verwaltungsvorschrift 2001).[3] There is one specific curriculum for the eight year long grammar school for the classes 7 to 12 (Bildungsplan 2016). The other curriculum is valid for the lower secondary level for classes 7 to 10, addressing students who attend "Haupt-/Werkrealschule", "Realschule" or "Gemeinschaftsschule". In this document there are three different levels: "G" ("basic"), "M" ("intermediate") and "E" ("advanced"). The "E-level" of this curriculum is identical to the grammar school's curriculum, with the exception of class 10 (Bildungsplan SekI 2016).[4]

For every school type and every class level of the general educational system there is one objective of ethics education: All students are enabled "to make ethical and moral judgements considering practical perspectives" (Bildungsplan 2016: 3). Therefore students should be qualified to answer the two key questions of ethics. Firstly, how can I lead a good life? Ethics is meant here in a special sense according to the tradition of ancient philosophers like Aristotle's ethic conception of "good life". Secondly, how should I act in a morally correct way? Answering this classic question of moral philosophy affords the examination with the help of universal ethic principles with reference to the deontological ethics of Immanuel Kant (Bildungsplan 2016: 3).

Focusing on the objective "ethical and moral judgements considering practical perspectives", the new curriculum avoids two important didactical short circuits. First, teaching ethics does not end in educating students in knowledge of ethics and moral philosophy. Understanding the philosophers' positions and arguments should help students to deal with central questions of ethics, especially of practical ethics (Bildungsplan 2016: 3). Philosophers hereby function as "partners of dialogue" (Martens 1979: 140) for solving moral problems. Second, teaching ethics does also not intend to direct students to blindly internalize a special

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[1] I thank Rena Junginger and Hartmut Leuthold for their support in writing this article in English.

[2] The author has been an expert advisor for three years as a part of the planning commission for the ethics curriculum of the "Gymnasium".

[3] The following statistics show the percentage of students of each school type attending ethics classes in the school year 2013/14: 34.9 % of the "Werkreal-/Hauptschulen", 20.4 % of the "Realschulen", and 19.9 % of the "Gymnasien" (Goergen 2015: 49).

[4] The "Gemeinschaftsschule", which is specific for the Baden-Württemberg's educational system, offers graduations for all three school types. If needed this school type includes primary school and classes 11 to 13.

ready-made moral conviction and to instruct them in acting in the right way (Bildungsplan 2016: 3). Students should not be manipulated in their autonomous process of judgement.

The special objective of teaching ethics in the new curricula corresponds to the major goals of school education stressed in the ethics curriculum: "to enable students to live a self-determined and responsible life" (Bildungsplan 2016: 3). This refers to the humanistic goal of school education accentuated by the philosopher Julian Nida-Rümelin. (Nida-Rümelin 2016: 225). Therefore the curriculum of teaching ethics is necessarily based on a "humanistic anthropology" (Nida-Rümelin 2016: 246-262). The human being is seen as a person who is able to use his or her free will to work out universal rules for moral decision-making and acting (Bildungsplan 2016: 3-4). Since the 1990ies the concept of "making ethical judgements" has had a long tradition in ethics classes. To be able to make ethical judgements is demanded from graduates, having passed their "Abitur" (comparable to A-levels in Great Britain) according to the "Agreement on Uniform Examination Requirements of the School-Leaving Examination" (EPA Ethik 2006: 5).

Concept of competence
In the new curriculum, a specific concept of competence is used: "Competence refers to abilities and knowledge learnt by students that support them in solving problems. In this process students open up the world and are assisted on their way to maturity." (Bildungsplan 2016: 4). This pedagogical concept of competence differs fundamentally from the psychology of learning's concept of competence which is dominant in the German education system. Whereas the latter supports influencing the volitional readiness of individuals, the concept of the new ethics curriculum understands competence only as an instrument for maturity and respects the learners' free will (cf. Remme 2016).

"Given the scientific-technological, social, and cultural changes and the search for orientation resulting from them" (Bildungsplan 2016: 3-4), students trying to make ethical-moral judgements have to acquire the following:
  a)   Knowledge for ethical orientation ("content-related competence")
  b)   Special abilities to make ethical-moral judgements ("process-related competence").

Competence is classified into content-related and process-related competence in the new curriculum. Process-related competence is based on the methods of philosophy, moral psychology and teaching ethics. It is logically structured according to the process of making ethical and moral judgements. Process-related competence is acquired through dealing with various relevant ethical-moral topics. Four pairs of subject-specific abilities describe the process of ethical-moral decision-making at school: "perception and empathy", "analysing and interpreting", "arguing and reflecting", and "judging and making decisions" (Bildungsplan 2016: 5, 10-12). This model of process-related competence is based on a model in teaching ethics at grammar school developed by expert advisors (Kompetenzorientierter Ethikunterricht 2011). Analysing, interpreting, arguing, reflecting and judging are typical methods philosophers use to gain knowledge (cf. Pfister 2013). These philosophers' instruments are also relevant for teaching ethics (cf. Pfister [2]2014). "Perception and empathy" are significant for students in

order to identify a problem as a genuine ethical problem. In ethics lessons "decision making" is important due to the practical perspectives of ethic-moral decisions.

In the new curriculum process-related competence is taught through content-related competence, as e.g., the topic "Poverty and Wealth" for classes 7/8 of the "Gymnasium" shows:

> Students are able to
> - Realise and describe the forms and causes of poverty and wealth
> - Explain and distinguish different concepts of poverty and wealth (e.g., history, culture, religion)
> - Describe consequences of poverty and wealth regarding a self-determined life and assess these considering the different concepts of justice
> - Name fundamental human rights and explain their relevance for a humane life (e.g., child rights)
> - Present and discuss courses of action to secure humane and just living conditions in one's environment (e.g., consumption, social commitment, fair trade) (Bildungsplan 2016: 18).

Content-related competence depends on the age of students, is differentiated in the three students' levels, and is built around the relevant topics; these topics take the relations of human beings into account: to myself, fellow humans, nature, and the whole world. While selecting the specific topics for teaching, three central moral values play a major role: freedom/liberty, justice and responsibility (Bildungsplan 2016: 4). These values are prominent in ethical theories of philosophy (cf. Jonas 1979; Nussbaum 1998; Nida-Rümelin 2016). In a political perspective, these three moral values can be situated in the social democratic quartet of values: freedom/liberty, justice, solidarity, and responsibility for the next generation (cf. Gabriel & Nida-Rümelin 2012). Moreover, empirical studies in the field of moral psychology confirm the importance of these values for the moral development of students (cf. Kohlberg 1996).

For these reasons the three moral values are also inherent topics of the new curriculum, e.g., in the classes 7/8: "Freedom and Responsibility", "Justice" and "Responsibility for Animals" (Bildungsplan 2016: 14-16, 19). In the curriculum for the classes 9/10 you can find for example: "Labour and Self-determination", "Values and Rules in a Media-based World", "Ethical-moral Values and Principles of Faith" (Bildungsplan 2016: 24, 27, 29-30). At the higher secondary level students, deal with topics such as "Freedom and Naturalism" and "Justice and Law" (Bildungsplan 2016: 33, 35). Especially at that level students also work out positions of moral philosophy: Aristoteles' eudemonistic ethics, utilitarianism, Kant's deontological ethics and Hans Jonas' ethics of responsibility (Bildungsplan 2016: 36-40).

Didactics of teaching ethics

Three didactical principles of ethical-moral education are specified in the new curriculum: "ethical-moral arguing", "problem-based learning", and "inductive learning" (Bildungsplan 2016: 9). Inductive learning with reference to the students' environment, regarding especially the moral intuitions of the students, is particularly compatible to a didactic of philosophy which understands hermeneutics as a fundamental cultural philosophy (cf. Steenblock [7]2013). The

principle of problem-based learning is mainstream in the didactics of philosophy in Germany (cf. Sistermann 2016). According to that principle ethics lessons focus on moral problems which students elaborate on and find solutions for by referring to moral values and moral rules or positions and arguments of moral philosophy. Exchanging arguments is an essential element of every major concept of philosophical didactics (cf. Martens [4]2009; Steenblock [7]2013; Rohbeck [4]2015). Moreover, the principle of ethical-moral arguing has constantly been part of the concept for teaching ethics in Baden-Württemberg for several years (cf. Bildungsplan 2004: 61-73). Special methods of teaching ethics depend on the didactic principles of ethical-moral education, namely: analysis of concepts, analysis of arguments, using arguments, thought experiment, dilemma discussion, case analysis and writing philosophical essays (Bildungsplan 2016: 9). They support students in learning content- and process-related competence. Methods of strictly activity-oriented teaching play only a subordinate role in the new curricula (cf. Remme 2008).

Conclusion

Designing a new curriculum for good teaching ethics is a complex process. On the one hand, it cannot be deduced from a single philosophical position or one didactic concept for teaching philosophy. On the other hand, it is not wise to only refer to good teaching practices of certain teachers. In order to create a sophisticated curriculum it is necessary to avoid the practical circle and the problem of deductivism by considering various aspects: guidelines by the ministry of education and arts, didactic concepts for teaching philosophy, reflected positions established in teacher education, successful traditions of ethics teaching, today's (social and educational) conditions of students and teachers, and knowledge of moral psychology. In conclusion, this new ethics curriculum promises to improve the teaching of ethics, the development of moral judgement in students, and to contribute to a "renewed humanism" (Nida-Rümelin 2016: 351-442).

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