MORAL DEVELOPMENT:
A CASE FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper makes a case for character education as a model for moral development. It essentially gives the state of art of the literature on character education by incorporating recent findings, for example, in the area of when does moral education begin. It summarizes criticisms against the dominant and influential moral education models – values clarification and Kohlberg's cognitive stage theory of moral development, and argues for an Aristotelian virtue-ethics approach to moral development and education. The role of religion is also discussed in the context. Some remarks on implementing a workable and effective character education program is given in the conclusion.

Key Words

Character Education, Virtue Ethics, Moral Education, Moral Development
1. Introduction

Today there is widespread and increasing concern for the decline of moral values in all sectors: education, politics, business, and the professions. This phenomena can be captured by a number of phrases: the moral tone of society is low, a toxic moral environment, a moral blindness of alarming proportions, a virus in the moral software, we have lost our moral compass or have become moral illiterates; others have termed it "a generation of moral stutterers" (Alasdair Maclntyre), and "a hole in the moral ozone" (Michael Josephson). For example, a study from the University of Vermont concluded that today's kids are more disobedient (along with lack of guilt for bad behavior) than children of the 1970s (Weiner, 1995) The recognition of declining moral values has prompted a renewed support for character education. Lickona (1993) attributes three causes for the renewal of interest in character education: the decline of the family (schools have to teach values kids aren't learning at home and schools must become caring moral communities that help children from unhappy homes); troubling trends in youth character (rising youth violence, increasing dishonesty, growing disrespect for authority, peer cruelty, a resurgence of bigotry on school campuses, a decline in the work ethic, sexual precocity, a growing self-centeredness and declining civic responsibility, an increase in self-destructive behavior, and ethical illiteracy); and a recovery of shared, objectively important ethical values (moral decline in society has gotten bad enough to join us out of the privatism and relativism dominant in recent decades). Cifuentes (1997) remarks that contemporary education has within it a great crevice: an artificial break between the imparting of information and the building of character, and, as a result, the prodigious power of present-day technology is in the hands of character-deficient individuals. Both Georgia and Alabama in the United States have made character education programs mandatory, and Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and New Jersey have adopted some form of character education and more states are debating legislation (Fergusson, 1999). A study of individual school boards found 182 of 399 responding to a survey were pursuing character education programs (Ankeney, 1997) and about one in five public school districts offers formal programs in character education (Weiner, 1995).

It seems many students hold the view that there is no such thing as right or wrong¹ The current educational climate has contributed to this moral relativism in which many do not subscribe to or understand the notion of objective moral standards and has removed such words as right and wrong, truth and reality, from school vocabulary (Campbell, 1997). Indeed, as Krstjansson (1998) puts it, one of the questions which will doubtless continue to occupy the minds of philosophers in the 21st century is what kind of person we should be aiming at in moral education, in other words, what moral values, attitudes and personal qualities are perceived as valuable for individuals and in relation to the society in which they live (Taylor, 1996). The basic logic is if we know what moral development is, then we will know what moral education ought to be; we can then proceed to devise programs that stimulate moral sensibility among children (Hunter, 2000).
Today in particular, one of the major causes of misery and vice is the prevalence of several deluded philosophies or doctrines. Lickona (1993) situates this scenario in a historicist view of several of the twentieth century most powerful philosophical forces:

Darwinism introduced a new metaphor—evolution—that led people to see all things, including morality, as being in flux. The philosophy of logical positivism, arriving at American universities from Europe, asserted a radical distinction between facts (which could be scientifically proven) and values (which positivism held were more expressions of feelings, not objective truth). As a result of positivism, morality was relativized and privatized—made to seem a matter of personal “value judgement,” not a subject for public debate and transmission through the schools. In the 1960s, a worldwide rise in personalism celebrated the worth, autonomy, and subjectivity of the person, emphasizing individual rights and freedom over responsibility. Personalism rightly protested societal oppression and injustice, but it also delegitimized moral authority, eroded belief in objective moral norms, turned people inward toward self-fulfillment, weakened social commitments (for example, to marriage and parenting), and fueled the socially destabilizing sexual revolution. Finally, the rapidly intensifying pluralism of American society (whose values should be teach?) and the increasing secularization of the public arena (won’t moral education violate the separation of Church and State?), became two more barriers to achieving the moral consensus indispensable for character education in the public schools.

Lickona (1993)

In the last half of the twentieth century, there has been a shift in education from teaching children how to apply ideas that are in line with objective reality to applying whatever theories students find attractive. Out of them we are already witnessing the disease that threatens to end or crush the human race. First of all it must be recognized that modern educational approaches such as “values clarification” and “cognitive-stage theory”, although clearly inspired by psychological research are rooted in philosophical account of moral life and conduct. Values clarification and cognitive-stage theory are enshrined in a relativistic moral epistemology and liberal ethical theory respectively (Steutel and Carr, 1999). During the last 20 years there has been an important shift in emphasis from these earlier recommendations for moral education to the current concern for character education in which strategies appear more sensitive to the pattern of habits and rituals fostered by the moral culture and climate (Zigler, 1999). The virtue approach, which is at the heart of character education, is also derived from a philosophical foundation, namely, Aristotelian virtue-ethics.

There is a tendency to confuse the virtue approach to moral education with such quite different accounts as character education, cognitive development theory, ethics of care, Kantian ethics, and even utilitarianism since they all, to a greater or less degree, involve aspects of virtue. Kohlberg (1981), for example, regarded the promotion of one virtue, the universal virtue of justice as the ultimate aim of moral education. Virtue, however, cannot be considered as having mastered the right moral software (Kupperman 1991). Steutel and Carr (1999) give an excellent discussion on the distinctions among the different educational perspectives. Advocates of character education define moral education in terms of cultivating virtues and their constituents. Kupperman (1999) notes that character includes the intelligence and sensitivity to make difficult moral decisions;
it is an array of dispositions and abilities. Essentially, character is what a person is like and character education can be said to make (or shape) souls. Kupperman (1999, p. 17) arrives at a working definition of character as a person’s normal pattern of thought and action, especially with respect to concerns and commitments in matters affecting the happiness of others or of that person, especially in relation to moral choices. Therefore, sensitivity, judgment, inhibitions, virtues and vices, and characteristic patterns of response all fit under the heading of character. Virtues are however important in the assessment of character, as a good character will include a number of virtues. A wicked person could also have a “strong” character but he or she would have a number of vices. Character then cannot be thought of as straightforwardly the sum of the various virtues or vices, or of a mixed bag of both. Kupperman (1999) also proposes that we can get a more balanced and complex view of someone through the use of the concept of character than through examination of a series of virtues and vices. Lickona (1993) gives a comprehensive definition of what good character is:

Character must be broadly conceived to encompass the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality. Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. The cognitive side to character includes at least six specific moral qualities: awareness of the moral dimensions of the situation at hand, knowing moral values and what they require of us in concrete cases, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, thoughtful decision-making, and moral self-knowledge. People can be very smart about matters of right and wrong, however, and still choose the wrong. Moral education that is merely intellectual misses the crucial emotional side of character, which serves as the bridge between judgment and action. The emotional side includes at least the following qualities: conscience, self-respect, empathy, loving the good, self-control, and humility. At times, we know what we should do, feel strongly that we should do it, yet still fail to translate moral judgment and feeling into effective moral behavior. Moral action, the third part of character, draws upon three additional moral qualities: competence (skills such as listening, communicating, and cooperating), will (which mobilizes our judgment and energy), and moral habit (a reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a morally good way).

Lickona (1993)

Character then can be considered a broader concept than virtues, which in turn help to build and to develop a good character. Character education would seek not only to foster virtue, but would also include the subject matter of the curriculum activities, the rigor of the academic standards, the conduct of sports and other extracurricular activities, the handling of rules and discipline, and the school’s intellectual and moral climate (Lickona, 1999). Of course, much of the focus of character education has been the fostering and development of virtues. Virtues then provide a standard for defining good character.

Louis Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney Simon developed the highly influential first statement of values clarification in 1966 and this theory dominated the field of moral education for the next twenty years (Lemming, 1993). During this period, it was argued that there was no moral heritage and consequently no rights to impose values on the young, in other words, schools became value-free zones (Ryan and Kilpatrick, 1996). This model maintains the principle that the educator should never directly tell students
about right and wrong but they should be left to discover values on their own. Christina Hoff Sommers (1993) relates an anecdote which concerned a teacher in Massachusetts who had applied many values clarification techniques to primary school children. The result is that children said that they valued cheating and wanted to be free to cheat on their test! The “moral” of the story was the teacher was telling them that cheating is not wrong if you can get away with it. The teacher thought that she had no right to intrude by giving the students moral direction least she interfered with their freedom to work out their own value systems. Values clarification denies a structured way to develop values and maintain that values are neutral. Values clarification is in fact grounded in moral relativism where moral authority is based on the individual’s sentiments and feelings. In this case, although the teacher may value honesty as a fundamental moral principle, values clarification as a moral educational value tool denies objective moral principles. Teaching children to discover their own values is a recipe for personal and social degeneration. Values clarification is now mostly deceased and little lamented (Kent, 1999). Ryan (1994) advises that instead of values clarification games such as the famed Lifeboat Exercise (who among these fifteen survivors should you throw overboard in order to keep the boat aloft?) and struggles with vexing moral dilemmas, children must come to a solid understanding of what is behind the words and phrases: honesty, human kindness, courage, and self-discipline. Children must understand that honesty is the best policy and be helped to weave it into the fabric of their lives.

Elder (1999) comments that social practices that violate ethical principles ought to be rejected by ethically sensitive persons no matter how many people support those practices. For example, some laws are made by politicians whose primary motivation was power and expediency. Students should be taught to determine whether any belief system, practice, rule, or law is in fact ethical. They should develop true integrity, a conscience that is subservient neither to immoral laws nor to fluctuating social conventions or dogmatic systems of belief, but rather to some objective moral standards. Indeed according to many experts, the need for character education is a result of the value neutral stance of schools during the 1960s and 1970s and the antidote for value neutrality, they claim, is value advocacy. In imparting moral education, we must recognize that an objective standard of morality does exist: right and wrong, do exist. The values dimension to education is certainly unavoidable and an educator’s practices and behavior have an inevitably strong influence on the moral lessons students directly or indirectly acquire. One must appreciate that moral education also refers to the educators as well as children (Campbell, 1997).

Lawrence Kohlberg’s research program in moral psychology emerged rapidly into prominence in the 1960’s and, along with values clarification, were established as the dominant theories in the moral education field by the early 1970’s. Kohlberg’s cognitive stage theory of moral development, perhaps arguably the most influential model of moral education in the twentieth century, was heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant and John Dewey. Crittenden (1999) and Kent (1999) give a critical review of Kohlberg’s account of moral development, which was based on the identification of graded forms of moral reasoning, specifically in relation to the questions of justice. Given the idea that reasoning in the moral sphere should be correlated with the more general patterns of
cognitive development, then the prospect of an account of moral development could be tested empirically and would be universal. Kohlberg’s central thesis is that there are six stages of moral development marked by the distinct and developing ways of thinking about questions of right and wrong. The fundamental ethical assumption is that morality can be defined in terms of the formal character of moral judgements, independently of content; consequently, the primary characteristics of moral judgement are impersonality, impartiality, universaliability, and pre-emptiveness. Crittenden (1999) notes that Kohlberg overlooked the considerable role which Aristotle attributes to intellectual aspects of moral development, fails to take into account of or simply assumes the broader context of human relationships, and erroneously concludes that except for justice, there are no such things as virtues or vices, which Kohlberg describes as labels by which people award, praise or blame others. McClellan (1976) claims that a psychological theory is not whatever philosophers and psychologists may have thought—a scientific summary of brute facts (as in Kohlberg’s)—it should rather be regarded as a practical moral theory of how we ought to raise children (as in the Aristotelian virtue-ethics approach). Although values clarification and Lawrence Kohlberg’s cognitive-developmental theory of moral reasoning are different in many ways, they both emphasized that teachers were not to moralize. In the former, values clarification sought to have students clarify their values with the teacher facilitating the valuing process and respecting whatever values the students arrived at, while withholding his or her personal opinions for fear of influencing students; in the latter approach, the teacher facilitated student reasoning, assisted students in resolving moral conflicts, and ensured that the discussion took place in an environment that contained the conditions essential for stage and growth in moral reasoning (Lemming, 1993). Both approaches made contributions, but each had problems: values clarification failed to distinguish between personal preferences and moral values, and Kohlberg underestimated the school’s role as a moral socializer (Lickona, 1993).

Ryan (1994) asserts one of the reasons why teacher education faculty has drifted away from engaging teachers in the work of moral education is that it may be linked to the general erosion of the philosophical and historical foundations of education which has occurred over the last three decades. The following sums it up succinctly:

Somewhere in the ‘60s, this mainstay of teacher education disappeared, replaced in teacher education courses by a dollop of values clarification and a pinch of Kohlberg’s cognitive developmental stage bumping theory. In varying degrees, both were ineffective, if not contributors to the current problem. Both approaches discredit the direct teaching of the core values upon which social life, particularly life in a democracy, depends and strongly suggest to teachers that the seeds of moral wisdom and ethical values lie within the child, and the teacher is to be a morally neutral facilitator. In other words, teachers, as representatives of the adult community, should have nothing to say about ethical issues nor can they provide any help to students’ efforts to acquire the enduring habits of good character. Youths must discover these on their own. While empirical evidence has been extremely disappointing to proponents of these approaches, they still command the field in teacher education and in schools. Words such as indoctrinate and inculcate cause some teachers to break out in a sweat. Yet, in the history of our species, all enduring communities and nations have vigorously and purposefully worked to indoctrinate and inculcate their moral code, their ethical principle, and their most cherished values to their young. The failure vigorously to pass on these values is social suicide.

Ryan, 1994
Fagan and Loconte (2000) corroborate these sentiments in concluding that the social experiment that began in the 1960s has failed to eradicate poverty, crime, drug abuse, delinquency, or to improve educational attainment, has contributed to the breakdown of the family, instead, as the tragedy at Columbine High teaches, there is no haven from violence, social dysfunction or despair.

Ethical theories can be considered to fall into two categories: deontic (duties) and aretaic (virtue or excellence). One should be cautious however, in attempting to distinguish sharply between the independence of these two important aspects of moral development. Keefer (1996) argues about the inseparability of the duty/virtue debate which contrasts an ethics of duty that provides us with the moral knowledge to know what is right because it is right, to an ethics of virtue that enables us to choose what is right only because if we want to, and not because we know that we must. Acquiring practical knowledge of our own valuable pursuits instructs us in the duties that we owe to others, just as being able to identify the duties we owe to others requires knowing what is necessary for living a meaningful and fulfilling life. Steutel and Carr (1999) further argue that aretaic judgements and predicates are treated as basic or primary in relation to deontic ones since the latter are at least derivative or reducible to aretaic, in other words aretaic evaluations has ethical primacy over the deontic. This approach is known as the reductionist version of aretaic ethics, which is to be contrasted with the replacement view version of aretaic ethics which claims that deontic judgements are inappropriate or redundant and should be suspended in favor of aretaic ones (see for example Anscombe, 1958). Steutel and Carr (1999) further observes that the majority of ethicists incline to the reductionist position and further point out a difference between aretaic agent- ethics, in which judgements about agents and their traits are taken as basic, as opposed to aretaic act-ethics, in which judgements about actions are assumed basic. Aristotle ethics of virtue centers on the former since he characterizes the virtuous agent as someone who sees or perceives what is good or right to do in any situation. For the framework of moral education developed in this paper, an Aristotelian virtue-ethics approach, as advocated in Steutal and Carr (1999), is adopted, that is, a teleological (the purpose of a human being is a good life, and human activities are evaluated according to whether they lead to or manifest this end or purpose), aretaic agent-based, eudaimonistic (human flourishing or happiness is the ultimate justification of morality) ethics.

Sommer (1993) also makes the distinction between the notions of basic ethics (uncontroversial truths) and dilemma ethics. Examples of the former are vices (it is wrong to mistreat a child, to humiliate someone, to torment an animal, to think only of yourself, to steal, to break promises, etc.), and virtues (to be considerate and respectful of others, to be charitable and generous, etc.). Basic ethics then. is the essence of character education. Examples of dilemma ethics are quite common in social issues (abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, etc.): should public schools teach about abortion and other means of population control, premarital sex, homosexuality, gender issues, employment at will, human cloning, ecological concerns, etc. Ryan (1994) disagrees with the view that public schools should teach particular stands toward or
points of view about these and other controversial matters. Firstly, parents are the primary moral educators of their children; the idea of the State compelling parents to have their children attend school, and, then teaching them moral concepts which may be sharply different from those of the parents seems like an extraordinary intrusion into the rights of parents. Secondly, teachers at odds with the values of the community in which they teach can move to a community more receptive to their views. Ryan (1994) concludes that in the teaching of ethical values, parents call the shots. Educators must engage students in the study and practice of the virtues and when students have grown in understanding and experience, they will be ready for the moral hard cases/dilemma ethics approach. Sommer (1993) also notes that in such dilemmas, the characters lack moral personality, exist in a vacuum outside of the traditional and social arrangements that shape their conduct in the problematic situations confronting them, and that there is no obvious right and wrong, or no clear vice and virtues.

2. When Does Moral Education Begin?

Before we examine in greater detail the virtue-ethics approach to moral education, we first deal with the issue of when does moral education begin. Table 1 shows the different school of thoughts that are associated with corresponding concepts of moral development/education.

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<tr>
<th>School of Thought</th>
<th>Concept of Moral Development/Education</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Affectivistic</td>
<td>Moral Impulse</td>
<td>0-2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Behavior Analytic/</td>
<td>Moral Behavior</td>
<td>2-7 Years</td>
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<td>Empiricist</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Rationalistic</td>
<td>Moral Reasoning</td>
<td>≥ 7 years</td>
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adulthood rather than physical development, genetic inheritance, cognitive skills or emotional attachments. For example, Lipari (2000) surveys and discusses recent research insights that are changing the way infant development is perceived and finds that the most important of the emerging revelations is that the key to stimulating emotional and intellectual growth in children is parental behavior. The building blocks of emotional success is the need to create a relationship and environment that allows children to grow up with an openness to learning and the ability to process, understand and experience emotion with compassion, intelligence and resilience; failure to provide this enrichment during the first two years can lead to a lifetime of emotional disability. Some of the research experimental findings of this survey are: the emotional quality of the relationship that parents have with their babies will stimulate their brain for optimum emotional and intellectual growth; newborns consistently demonstrate that they actively seek sensory stimulation, have distinct preferences and, from birth, tend to form hypotheses about what is occurring in the world around them (their preferences are emotional ones); at approximately eight weeks, when a baby's vision improves – the mother's emotionally expressive face is by far the most potent visual stimulus in the infant's environment and an "emotional synchronization" is developed between mother and child which is defined as the mother's ability to tune into the baby's internal states and respond accordingly. From these new research findings, Lipari (2000) concludes that future cognitive development of newborns depends not on the cognitive stimulation of flashcards and videos, but on the attuned, dynamic and emotional interactions between parent and child; newborns come into this world as social beings and as whole persons – as thinking, feeling creatures who can and should participate in their own emotional and cognitive development and parents can maximize the nurturing and stimulating potential of their relationship with a newborn baby.

Speicker (1988) and Oakley (1992) note that many theories of moral development and education appear to enshrine unexamined assumptions regarding the true nature of newborns or infants, in that these theories pay little or no attention to the affective dimensions of upbringing and development. Speicker (1999) points out that the first relationship (mother/child) does appear to indicate that even the earliest of interactions are two-way affairs in which there is mutual interpersonal adjustment and newborn infants are well equipped or genetically programmed to deal with the most important attribute in their immediate environment. Speicker (1999) also concludes that the maternal behavior patterns seem especially attuned unsurprisingly to infant needs and that these early interactions may be considered pseudo-dialogues, initiated and sustained by the mother as she replies to infant reactions, and in so doing, reacts as if such actions already have communicative meaning. The first relation then make the very first of infant social encounters quite special and significant.

Zigler (1999) also corroborates these conclusions in his paper that examines the contributions of recent research on the brain to our understanding of moral development. Zigler concludes that these insights suggest that we must begin to think more seriously about the formation of moral impulse as the basis for moral development and education rather than simply moral reasoning. The current research from neuroscience portray moral development in terms of the interaction of the social
environment with our innate biological aptitudes which apparently shapes moral character by establishing the internal physiological patterns for the emergence and display of the feelings and emotions which accompany moral impulse. Zigler (1999) concludes that educators need to be concerned with those processes which transform moral impulse.

3. Can Virtues Be Taught?

A debatable question is whether or not virtues can be taught, and if so, how? This question resounds throughout Plato's accounts of several of Socrates dialogues. For instance, in the Protagous (Sichel, 1991), Socrates questions whether virtues can be taught – Meno also asks of Socrates, “Can virtue be taught? It is teachable or is it the result of practice, or is it neither of these, or men possess it in nature by some other way (Roochnik, 1997).” It is also claimed that students come with moral baggage that has been environmentally conditioned in them during their early childhood and schooling, and that their character has already been determined (especially by age 20) so that attempts to change a person's ethics are doomed to failure (Ames, 1989). Some traditionalists maintain the view that virtue is having mastered the right moral software, but what about those who have no clear motivation to behave accordingly. Kupperman (1999) comments that even the ability to provide acceptable answers plus some motivation is not enough to qualify as virtue: true virtue requires a high degree of moral reliability, even in situations that are disorienting or in which there are unusual temptations.

Virtue is not a standard or typical subject (like mathematics or geography) in that it cannot be taught in a technical manner. It is rather “caught”, (and once caught, must be practiced), that is, we teach virtues by example, and by the very act of teaching in so far as we display and enact those virtues. Educators possessing highly developed virtues are best fulfilling values education that helps develop children's moral character. The educator's role, therefore, as moral agents and exemplars has a significant effect on the moral development of children (Luckowski, 1997) and should be reflected in their professional practice. Educators are models of moral lives and have been traditionally moral heroes of children. Educators therefore need to consider how their moral lives and the moral language they speak affect the moral education of their students (Sichel, 1991). Strike (1999) also argues to teach intellectual practices in such a way so as to transmit their associated goods and virtues. The teacher should play roles of exemplar and elder, in which trust, which has both personal and communal aspects, is a requirement for these roles. Etzioni (1998) also notes that courses or programs in ethics of teaching should highlight the educators’ role as a moral one, not simply a technical one, and raise their moral awareness so that they can develop a reflective appreciation of the values underlying their actions.

A good place to start teaching primary and secondary level students to develop virtues, are stories that emphasize the role of heroes whose characteristics brings out different virtues in different circumstances. This will help teach children the groundwork for negotiating the subtleties of daily life in concrete and practical situations since stories
are a wonderful introduction to virtues which can stimulate moral dialogue with educators, the intricacies of personal relationships, and is a means of integrating with and understanding their role in society (Apostolou and Apostolou, 1997). The current social woes result from the need in people of real heroes to serve as guides since heroes have a tremendous influence on both individuals and societies (Cohen, 1993; French and Pena, 1991). For instance, Wilson (1994) suggests that the two most important examples of appeals to justice are in William Bennett's "The Book of Virtues." Richey and Hurley (1996), and Hughes (1998), provide a list of books for children, some of which emphasize the development of virtues and character education. Ryan (1994) suggests Robert Coles' "The Call of Stories" which argues for the use of more adult stories with more nuanced ethical issues for more advanced moral education. Ankeney (1997) recommends Alexis de Tocqueville's "Democracy in America" and Robert Bellah's "Habits of the Heart" for educators. Sommers (1993) suggests the following time-honored and simple recommendations: schools should have behavior codes that emphasize civility, kindness, self-discipline, and honesty; teachers should not be accused of brainwashing children when they insist on basic decency, honesty, and fairness; at primary level, children should be told stories that reinforce goodness, at secondary level and higher levels, students should be reading studying and discussing the moral classics to drive home "the moral of the story."

Noddings (1994) observes that the quality of ordinary conversation is central to moral education and emphasizes three important characteristics: that the adults are people who try to be good, even if they do not always bring it about; that the adults have loving regard and respect for their child-partners; and that for both parties, in the conversation under consideration, the partner is more important than the topic, the conclusion or the argument. Putman (1995) notes that if adults frequently have ulterior motives during a conversation (for example, what will the neighbors think), children may come to think that self-centered ulterior motives are the point of the conversation. Adults should demonstrate truthfulness, self-discipline, and empathy for the child's situation since genuine conversations have their own rewards and are training grounds for how children should converse, as they grow older. Emphasis on external goods or underlying motives tends to corrupt a practice.

Kupperman (1999) suggests a case for the teachability of virtue based on the work of Aristotle and Confucius by making a distinction between what is appropriate in the early stage of ethical education and what is needed in the advanced stages. Habit is at the heart of early education of character and significant development later is unlikely if a good foundation of habits has not been laid. The child who does not tend to follow passions and is ready to reflect and think seriously about good and bad is a result of such a foundation. In order to train children in human virtues and to decide which virtues are most important at any particular time, Isaacs (1993) considered various factors which include: the key features of the age level in question, that nature of each virtue, the actual characteristics and the potential of the young persons whom we are training, the characteristics and needs of the family and of the society in which the young person is living, and the parents' personal preferences and capabilities. He recommends obedience, sincerity, and order (up to seven years old); fortitude, perseverance,
industriousness, patience, responsibility, justice, and generosity (from eight to twelve years); modesty, moderation, simplicity, sociability, friendship, respect for patriotism (from thirteen to fifteen years old); prudence, flexibility, understanding, loyalty, audacity, humility, and optimism (from sixteen to eighteen years old). A poll on public attitudes toward public schools reports that over ninety percent of those polled believe that schools should teach each of the following virtues: respect to others, industry or hard work, persistence or the ability to follow through, fairness in dealing with others, compassion for others, and civility or politeness (Ryan, 1994). Isaacs’ (1993) model in fact incorporates these virtues or values.

Advanced training in character formation requires judgment and experience, a sophisticated awareness of how the world actually works that goes well beyond rules so that the virtuous person is guided by empirical knowledge and not swept away by his or her passions. Kupperman (1999) also argues that advanced education of character needs to strengthen the moral imagination: imaginative works of fiction properly taught and exercises in working out the consequences of actions that might seemingly be limited in their impact and in trying to grasp the likely experiences of those affected by them can aid in this process. He concludes that teachers out of a misplaced kindness try to make success easy and immediate for their students is a recipe for developing weakness of character students should be offered the likelihood of ultimate success of some sort, without a sense that it is to be easy and immediate or that it is absolutely guaranteed.

As more schools teach values, some in deluded ways, another issue is where are the parents? Children today have less contact with parents and more exposure to other influences such as television and the Internet. Children are adopting the values of the aggressively materialistic, consumerist culture portrayed on television and are no longer acquiring an identity at home, as much as they are attempting to buy one in the marketplace (Elmer-Dewitt and Brown, 1990). Cifuentes (1997) also notes especially the lack of concern about promoting civic values in television programs which are the real wellsprings of children’s lives: there they drink, and there they are poisoned. The Economist (1998) reports that the number of Americans providing home-schooling for children has more than tripled since the beginning of the decade and puts the number of students learning at home at about one and a quarter million. This is as a result of parents’ dissatisfaction with public schools; home-schooled students outperform their public school peers by more than thirty percentage points in all subjects, and that the longer a child is schooled at home the larger the test gap grows. Etzioni (1995) notes that an estimated half of families in the US no longer humanize and civilize their children in a satisfactory manner and the task of socializing them fall, by default, to educators. With weakened and distracted families, and churches dealing with new problems like the exploding elderly population and the homeless, schools are being asked to fill the void (Ryan and Kilpatrick, 1996) and are assuming more and more responsibilities traditionally handled at home. Elmer-Dewitt and Brown (1990) observe that the changing roles of parents brought about by the trend from the traditional nuclear family (working father, stay-at-home wife) to a myriad of customized arrangements has prompted a number of provoking questions: what kind of bonding takes place when a
child has passed from one-paid caretaker to another; what are the risks of growing up without a stable nuclear family or any real community support; how do values get passed from one generation to the next within the dominant cultural influences (television, music, internet, Nintendo/playstation); should a mother stay at home providing the values, discipline and security her children need or should she pursue a life that brings more personal satisfaction and economic advantages; how will these marginalized kids turn out.

Etzioni (1995) also raises some tough questions: will public schools distribute condoms; will they teach that Heather has two mommies; will they condemn abortion. One resulting pitfall described by a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics is that children from single-parent homes face an array of risks, ranging from mild cognitive delays in preschoolers to withdrawal and depression in older kids (Elmer-Dewitt and Brown, 1990). Also, although parents want their children to be good, either they don’t have an agenda for instilling values or they may wait too long before beginning to instill a moral framework. The family ought to be the first school of virtues and so character education is a signal that we should be also worried about the quality of the parents. Edward Zigler, Ph.D., and Sterling Professor of Psychology at Yale University concludes that a secure attachment between parent and child is absolutely critical for the development of morality as a great deal of evidence demonstrates that, without this early bond, children will be more aggressive, have more trouble with peers, and generally have more socialization problems later in life (Behan, 1999). This attachment helps a baby to learn to perform one of its first cooperative acts, that of obeying its parents simple commands which introduce a child to the notion of limits.

Lasley II (1997) however, warns that the character education movement will lose its luster, not because it is fundamentally wrong, but because adults and the cultural environment are fundamentally flawed. Children learn just as much, if not more, from what they observe as from what they hear. Children see violence every hour (even during children’s programs), and the values stressed by commercials extolled selfish and self-serving values and rarely stress being helpful, obedient over altruistic. Character education programs espouse responsibility, while the culture sends a strong countervailing message, “if it feels good, do it!” Lasley II (1997) also points out that television is not the most dangerous culprit: when children are not at home watching television, they are at school observing teachers – and learning values. Ryan and Kilpatrick (1996) note that the biggest problem is that teacher – overwhelmingly people of good will – are educated without moral and character education in elementary and secondary schools, and trained in universities that ignore the moral arena. The issue, then, is not whether schools should engage in character education, but whether character education in public schools is possible. Ryan and Kilpatrick (1996) conclude that although character education may require some changes in or additions to the curriculum, more importantly, it would require fundamental changes in the school environment: schools would need to set and to enforce high standards of conduct, create an atmosphere of civility, and involve service to the school. The real challenge is changing the behavior of all those who influence children. It should also be noted that most theorists agree that the teaching of formal ethic codes is neither a central
component of teacher education nor is it an adequate means of preparing moral professionals.

4. Virtue Theory and Moral Development

The early character education movement of the first three decades of the twentieth century utilized elaborate codes of conduct and group activities; by the 1950s, character education curriculums had all but disappeared from schools (Lemming, 1993). The revival of the character education movement in the 1990s has been fuelled in part by the greater acceptance of the belief that regardless of our diversity, we share a basic morality that include such moral virtues as responsibility, mutual respect, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, civics, tolerance, justice, courage, empathy, open-mindedness, etc. Character education is in fact the oldest mission of education in that children who are exposed to educational systems that enforces these values (moral and intellectual virtues) have blossomed into productive and happy people, and produced generations of fair, honest, tolerant citizens, a necessary foundation and requirement for any civil society that shows genuine concern for others and give others more than they are due. Schaeffer (1998) points out that a strong functioning civil society demands strong moral values and behaviors. Children are growing up in an environment that more than ever holds countervailing (countervaluing) forces to the development and nurturing of these values. Lori Wiley, Ph.D., a development psychologist of Manchester, New Hampshire, who facilitates character education workshops for teachers have identified about 400 universal values through a study of literature and history (Behan, 1999). These values transcend culture and religious orientation and they have stood the test of time from the ancient Greeks. The general focus of moral education is to enable the person to develop into a well rounded character, that is, in effect, to acquire abilities to make evaluative discriminations, to have and to control feelings important for life, and so on: in short to become virtuous (Haldone, 1999). Developmental psychologists for example, agree that the development of justice as a character trait goes a long way toward making human beings happy and that the development of social virtues such as empathy allows a person to function smoothly with other people and help create a society in which members can live in an atmosphere of trust (Damon, 1988).

It is intuitively reasonable to suggest that the first concern of parents is that their children grow into friendly, caring, just, and trustworthy persons (that is, virtuous persons), in other words, it is plausible to claim that parents are (or ought to be) mostly concerned with the promotion of virtues (Spieker, 1999). Virtue as related to ethics (from the Greek “ethos”/habit or character) meant a well-oriented human being in whom skills and character traits function toward the physical and mental welfare of the individual (Putman, 1995). Moral or character education revolves around the concept of arete or excellence. Virtues are good for the individual in that they are required to lead a fulfilling life. As virtues make a person good and happy, it also makes him or her a good citizen; virtues are good for the human community in that they enable us to live together harmoniously and productively (Lickona, 1999). In its original form, the term virtue has its roots in the Latin word “virtus”, which means strength, capacity, or excellence (Payne, 1996). A virtue is therefore nothing in and of itself. It is always related to the
task at hand. It is a well-formed capacity, developed through repetition and practice, to accomplish some things that are necessary and desirable. Virtues are then the good habits that help people to follow the right course; they are grounded in human nature and experience, and they provide a standard for defining good character (Lickona, 1999). Sher (1992) offers a reasonably uncontroversial general characterization of virtue as a character trait that is for some important reason desirable or worth having. "According to this description, Carr and Steutel (1999) point out that although such qualities as linguistic faculty, mathematical acumen, vitality, intelligence, wit, charm, joie de vivre, and so on, are of great human value, they cannot be counted as virtues since they are not traits of character. Also, they point out that character traits (or vices) such as cowardice, insincerity, partiality, impoliteness, maliciousness, narrow-mindedness, and so on, cannot be regarded as virtues because we do not see them as worthwhile or desirable. Virtue ethics asks the question 'what ought I to do,' or in effect, asks the question about the kind of person one should be.

Haldane (1999) gives three reasons why virtue ethics is appealing and makes moral education a real and rationally defensible possibility. Firstly, the primary focus of the virtue approach to moral education is neither action or outcome, but on understanding character and the virtues that go to making up a good character. The other aspects are not entirely set aside but are interpreted in light of this distinctive feature, in other words, the best guide to what should be done in specific circumstances with all their human complexities would be the thoughts and deed of a virtuous person. Someone who possesses very good moral software will also need a good character (Kupperman, 1999). A second and related reason is instead of partitioning certain behavior as "moral"; virtue ethics takes a broader view, arguing that we should be concerned with the goodness of our overall life. In other words, rather than aim to be specialists in moral mathematics (as in consequentialism) or experts in moral taxonomy (as in deontology), we should aim to acquire settled habits of feeling and choice, the exercise of which will give our whole existence meaning and value. Luckowski (1997) also advocates the virtue centered approach to ethical judgments as it can help the educators strengthen their approach since virtues sustain them when they encounter difficulty in promoting students' development and it identifies the virtues associated with the commitment to good professional behavior. Kupperman (1999) makes a similar point when he comments that if we want to understand what ethics is about, we need to turn some of our attention away from specific decisions and look instead at what gives value and moral reliability to our entire lives. Finally, the third reason for the appeal to virtue ethics is that it provides a different way of thinking about the objectivity of value and practical reasoning. Deontology and consequentialism are theories of evaluation and deliberation and as such, they do not address the question of the metaphysical status of value and requirement.

The concept of the moral development and maturity in children focuses on character formation through emphasis on reinforcement and imitation or practice (Putman, 1995). Wilson (1994) points out that living according to certain rules acquire a certain biological endowment developed through the same experiences with which we learn to field a ground ball or play the violin – practice, practice, practice. Practice is one of the key
practice. Practice is one of the key concepts in virtue theory which emphasizes the role of character in moral decisions and the theory is instrumental in pointing out the ethical implications of much of the current work with children; without the development of stable character traits over time, all other moral appeals will fall on deaf ears (Putman, 1995). For example, Sommers (1993) points out that there is an overemphasis on social policy questions and noted that children taking college ethics courses are debating abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, DNA research, and the ethics of transplant surgery, while they learn nothing about virtues (decency, honesty, responsibility, honor, etc.), and vices (hypocrisy, self-deception, cruelty selfishness, etc.), gives students the wrong idea about ethics. Sommers (1993) relates the following anecdote. A colleague did not agree with her views and continued to focus on issues of social justice arguing that you are not going to have moral people until you have moral institutions. She made it clear that the author (Sommers) was wasting time and even doing harm by promoting virtues instead of awakening the social consciousness of the students. As it turned out, at the end of the semester, the colleague came into the author's office very upset because her students had cheated (plagiarized) in her social justice take home finals.

Using two examples, Putman (1995) draws a distinction between the act characteristics of a skill and those of a virtue. The example of the former is learning how to drive a car. Experienced drivers have learnt the skill and are motivated to perform it at the appropriate time. The act, is not only the right one but is done through the agent's proficiency and the agent's own motivation to do it properly. The example of the act characteristics of a virtue is that a toddler may bring his or her own mother over to another toddler who is crying. Such acts of characteristics of caring and show signs of a motivation that if developed can provide the foundation for a whole class of virtues. A conscientious parent or teacher will fine tune and reinforce this behavior so that it becomes a habit in the child's life. Central or common to both skill and virtue acts of characteristic are that they both involve motivation and both habit forming.

Understanding the soul to be the source and cause of growth and movement, Aristotle identifies the rational element and the desiring part of the irrational element as the parts of the soul that contribute to action (Curren, 1999). Here, Aristotle makes the distinction between moral virtues (states of the desiring part of the soul — for example, courage and discipline) and the intellectual virtues (states of the rational part of the soul — for example, wisdom and understanding). Moral virtues are defined as disposition to feel and be moved by our various desires or emotions neither too weakly or too strongly, but in a way that moves us to choose and to act as reason would dictate, and allows us to take pleasure in doing so; intellectual virtues are defined as capacities or powers of understanding, judgment, reasoning which enable the rational parts of the soul to attain truth [see Curren (1999) for further details]. The object of the intellectual virtues is truth and the object of the moral virtues is goodness (de Torre, 1977, pg. xi). Educate comes from the Latin word educere meaning to draw forth from someone the best that that person has to give; instruct comes from words meaning to put into someone the maximum that they are capable of receiving (Mazzinghi, 1997). Pereira (1997) argues that development is a moral phenomenon whose foundation is an education of human
that development is a moral phenomenon whose foundation is an education of human beings – an education which must, in turn, be moral in order to qualify as true education. However, there is an intimate link between intellectual and moral virtues.

Education therefore acts on the will which is strengthened by the moral virtues whose object is the good, while instruction acts on the intellect, which is strengthened by the intellectual virtues whose object is the truth [see, also, Garrigon-Lagrange (1947, chp. 3)]. Although in the hierarchy of values, the intellectual virtues rank higher than those of the moral, the latter in fact drives the former, which belongs to the sphere of education. Effective moral education however, appeals to both. Teaching inspires students by making them keenly aware that their own character is at stake. Hutchins (1995) concluded that the economics and social injustice of our time does not result from the lack of information technology (all of which are in abundant supply), but the principal issue of our day is a moral and intellectual one. In other words, economic and social injustice of our time results from the weakness or the absence of the moral and intellectual virtues.

For example, Aristotle defined virtue as "a purposive disposition or a state concerned with choice, lying in mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the person of phronesis or practical wisdom (in Greek orthos logos and in Latin recta ratio) – an intellectual virtue – would determine it (Sherman, 1999). A virtuous action is therefore the action that the person of practical wisdom would choose. Practical wisdom, itself a virtue, constitutes a relationship with the other moral virtues. Aristotle tells us that virtuous action is the action that the person of practical wisdom would choose and that person is one and the same as that person of good character, who in turn is the person who has a full complement of virtues or excellent states of character (Sherman, 1999). It is a practically wise person who will know how to exercise the full complement of virtues, as the circumstances require. According to Aristotle, nobody can have any moral virtue without practical wisdom, nor can somebody have practical wisdom without all of the moral values (Kent, 1999; Curren, 1999). Practical wisdom therefore both presupposes and completes moral virtues. Sherman (1999) further explains that in the case of courage, it is a matter of knowing what the demands of courage are in particular circumstances, when to be fearful, when to be confident, what counts as having the right mix of each, what ends are worth sacrificing one’s life for. For the practically wise person, it is a matter of seeing the morally relevant occasions for action, and then knowing, sometimes only after explicit deliberation, what to do. Dunne (1999) adds that a person endowed with fear-subduing qualities but lacking the capacity for sound judgment in actual situations of danger, cannot be said to possess the virtue of courage; it is practical wisdom that supplies the necessary component of judgment.

A virtuous person is one who hits the mean with regard to both action and emotion. In the great majority of instances, however, virtues are rooted in emotions or passion, which disclose our concern with something we feel to be good, important or significant to us (Dent, 1999). Sherman (1999) outlines a number of pervasive functions of emotions in moral life: emotions are sensitivities that help us to attend to and record
what we care about (modes of recording values); they assist us in signaling those values both to ourselves and to others (modes of conveying values); they help establish what we value or detest (modes of establishing values); they can be valued for their own sake (intrinsically valued); and they motivate action. Therefore, virtue education can be substantively considered as education of the emotions.

Maclntyre (1984, Ch. 14) distinguishes between internal goods, which are uniquely satisfying and available in unlimited supply, and external goods which when received, are always some individual's property. Virtue allows an individual to experience the internal goods of practices (Maclntyre, 1989, Ch. 14), which are more satisfying than external rewards. Since children enjoy gaining competence in a task (Lepper and Green, 1973) the presence of external rewards may in fact deflect children from internal ones. For example, Putman (1995) points out that young people with poor or mediocre athletic ability may never win external rewards but the joy of the game can potentially be theirs if they play the game virtuously. Arjoon (2000) argues that internal goods are the driving force for achieving external goods. As a general policy measure, instead of pursuing external goods directly, one should direct one's effort to the driving force (internal goods) in order to "maximize" attainment of external goods. An example of this phenomenon is given in the Economist (1994): Children from South Korea and a number of Western countries, among them America and Britain, were given a series of tests to assess their skills in mathematics. All the children were aged thirteen and the tests were the same for each group. The South Koreans came out best, according to the World Bank, which organized the experiment. Children in other Asian countries would do equally well in such tests, in view of many educationalists, who point to self-discipline and drive (internal goods of practice), as major reason for the superior performance (external goods) of Asian children.

5. The Role of Religion

Whether or not schools should invoke religion to inspire morality has been a contemptuous issue. Some argue that increasing cultural pluralism may strain the effectiveness of moral education. Lickona (1991) points that there is a fair amount of empirical evidence that points to the contribution that religion makes to healthy human development (especially in the development of the young). For example, research suggests that one of the important ways in which religion can deter drug use among adolescents is by influencing their choice of friends who do not use drugs. Sewall (1999), notes that our secular society diminishes religion's motivating role in defining a moral life as the religious impulse of appreciation and respect for human and earthly life, built on the foundation that we are divine creatures since we are agents of God, is no longer venerated in public schools. In addition, religion does nothing less than construct the metaphysical and moral foundations of civilizations, provide guidance to the "good" life by providing the moral compass, and dispensing satisfying wisdom to young and old people alike. There is increasing evidence that regular worship of God has measurable salutary effects on health, marriage, education, economic well-being, self-control, empathy, and it also helps to inoculate the younger generations against the insidious influence of the many societal problems creeping into every community by reducing the
incidence of social pathologies such as out-of-wedlock births, crime, delinquency, drug and alcohol addiction, health problems, anxieties, and prejudices [Fagan and Loconte (2000), Fagan (1996)].

Lickona (1991) further notes that there is an emerging consensus that the exclusion of religion from the public school curriculum is neither intellectually honest nor in the public interest and that a significant number of young people are “spiritually adrift,” as they lack an ennobling vision of human dignity, human destiny, and the ultimate meaning of life. The Council in Civil Society (1998) in their research report on why democracy needs moral truths, identified twelve seedbeds of civic virtues that are society’s foundational sources of competence, character, and citizenship; one of these seedbeds is “faith communities and religious institutions.” The report also emphasizes the role of religion:

“If a central task of every generation is moral transmission, religion historically has probably been the primary force that transmits from one generation to another the moral understanding that are essential to liberal democratic institutions. Religion is especially suited to this task because it focuses on our minds and our hearts on obligations to each other that arise out of our shared createdness. By elevating our sights toward others and toward ultimate concerns, religious institutions help turn us away from self-centeredness, or what Tocqueville terms "egotism," democracy’s most dangerous temptation.”


de Torre (1990, p124/125) also recognises the role of the religion since the framers of the 1787 Constitution assumed and explicitly stated that the inalienable rights of man are God-given, and that the republic is under God and Divine Providence. This emphasis in religion provided the moral balance to counteract the selfish tendencies of people and gave a sense of community and cooperation, counter-balancing the undesirable consequences of an unbridled capitalism. The role of religion therefore attempted to blend unity and plurality. He also points:

“... It is this religious element that was missing in the French Revolution, of 1789. The liberalism of the French Revolution, unlike that of the American, found religion on the side of royal absolutism, and so secularized it and remove its transcendence as a supra-political authority. Thus religion could not, in Europe, act as effectively as in America, as a counter-balence to human selfishness. Hence both the rampant social injustices during the industrial revolution in Europe, and the backlash of socialism also in Europe. The prevalence of religion in America, however, did not only restrain selfish tendencies, but actually gave rise to the discovery of the moral roots of a really effective capitalism, namely one which creates wealth and eliminates poverty.*

de Torre (1990, p125)

Lickona (1999) suggests several ways how religion might be incorporated into moral or character education: schools can help students understand the role religion has played in history, in major social reform movements, in the lives of individuals, in selecting or constructing specific curricula so as to include religion, by encouraging students to make use of all their intellectual and cultural resources (including their faith traditions) when they consider social issues and make personal moral decisions), by engaging students in considering whether or not there is moral truth, and by challenging students to develop a vision of life that addresses ultimate questions.10
6. Conclusion

One critical aspect of character education is the education for civics and community. Building community, however, goes against the contemporary social and political climate. Although social critics have warned against malignant consequences, many countries, the United States in particular, operate largely within the context of a social Darwinism – self-interested consumers manipulate the market in order to maximize profit (O'Keefe, 1997). The consequences are nicely captured by Purpel (1989).

These reforms, however, evaded or neglected the larger, more critical topics and put stress on technical rather than social, political and moral issues. The technical approach to education is particularly impoverished in an era of spiritual and moral crisis – a time when words like “anxiety,” “despair,” and “absurdity,” are part of everyday vocabulary, a time when suicide rates rises and when self-help books and organizations proliferate. The most popular response seems to be one of a highly intensified personal hedonism; an orgy of individual gratification in the form of consumerism, heavy reliance on sex, drugs, and music for release and distraction; a never-ending pursuit of still greater heights on pleasure.

(Purpel, 1989, p3) [emphasis added]

Community service projects are a way to stimulate learning and social development; a means of reforming society and preserving a democracy; an antidote for the separation of youth from the wider community; a means to demonstrate higher level of problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, of moral development, and of social awareness and responsibility; fosters more positive attitudes towards adults, provides a crucial link for children between life in school and life in the community; addresses students’ need for autonomy; helps make a difference in community settings; helps in the need for students to experience emotional commitment and control of impulses during a state of rapid growth and mercurial emotions; assists students in their search for social identity; provides opportunity to take risks within a context of protection and affirmation, and fosters emergence of strong peer-group affiliation with an emphasis on cooperation rather than competition; develops intrinsic academic motivation, concern for others, democratic values, skill and inclination to resolve conflicts equitably, altruistic behavior, intrinsic prosocial motivation, enjoyment of helping others, inclusive attitudes to outgroups, and positive interpersonal behavior in class. [O'Keefe (1997), Schaps and Lewis (1999)].

O'Keefe (1997) also notes that the most effective community service programs have classroom reflection as an essential ingredient and recent guidelines urge that service be integrated in to the academic curriculum in order to provide structured time for students to think, talk, and write about what they experienced during the actual service activity. Schaps and Lewis (1999) also suggest some practices to help create a caring community in the classroom through the routine use of: activities that help students and teachers get to know one another as people and build a sense of "unity"; class meetings in which children help shape classroom norms and practices, plan future activities, and solve problems that arise; collaborative learning that emphasizes respectful, helpful
treatment of fellow students as well as challenging academics; disciplinary approaches that play to students' desire to do what is right, rather than rely primarily on rewards and sanctions; and thoughtful discussion of the ethical issues of the heart of literature, history, and other academic subjects. A community service program will be effective only if it is part of an ethos of public community that permeates all aspects of the institution (O'Keefe, 1997).

The development of character is the major goal of conscientious child raising. Putman (1995) notes that contemporary psychology indicates that character traits central to virtue ethics are critical for the development of mature, well-functioning adults, and that by developing such virtues, children will enrich and live fulfilled happy lives. Children usually acquire rules of conduct when rewarded for compliance, punished for violations, and by observing and imitating behavior of adults and friends (Wilson, 1994). Putman (1995) identifies three factors or elements that are essential to the socialization process in children, and when lacking are destructive to both themselves and to others: controlling impulses, delaying gratification, and becoming aware of others needs. The role of character development in influencing a sense of community and sharpening one's values is a powerful starting point for teaching ethics and values to young children. His conclusions are that children who are not taught to delay gratification will have difficult lives, those who cannot control impulses become unsocialized human beings who are lacking in fundamental pre-requisite of human beings, and those whose nurture emphatic emotions will grow into dangerous people both to themselves and to society. Character education helps overcome these deficiencies. Riley (2000) notes that a nation can achieve true greatness if they can treasure their families, serve their communities, value honesty, and respect others. Schools that have successfully implemented character formation have integrated character development into all aspects of curriculum and disparate aspects of it (Shaeffer, 1998). Etzioni (1998) views character formation and education as a series of experiences, whether they take place in the classroom, in the gym, or elsewhere, and these factors have deep effects in the experiences that schools impart.

Since instituting a comprehensive character education program in 1993, Wake County's schools have become a more supportive and positive learning environment which has translated into more students completing high school and better student behavior in all grades (Riley, 2000). At twenty-five elementary and middle schools completing the Jefferson Center – Los Angeles Unified School District pilot character education program during the 1990-91 school year, major discipline problems decreased by 25 percent, minor discipline problems went down by 39 percent, suspensions fell by 16 percent, tardiness dropped by 40 percent, and unexcused absences declined by 18 percent (Brooks and Kann, 1993).

Brooks and Kann (1993) give key elements for workable character education programs: direct instruction (students should hear and see the words, learn their meanings, identify appropriate behaviors, and practice and apply the values); language-based curriculum (students' attention in the basic language that expresses core concepts and links the words to explicit behavior); positive language ("be on time" as opposed to "don't be
late"); content and process (to provide a process for implementing values when making decisions); visual reinforcement to illustrate and reinforce good character; a school climate approach that generates a common language and culture that fosters positive peer recognition and encourages all to exemplify and reward behavior consistent with core values and ethical decision-making; teacher-friendly materials (teachers must be able to implement the character education curriculum with limited training and preparation); teacher flexibility and creativity to allow teachers to exercise creativity in addressing special classroom circumstances while still adhering to school-wide standards; student participation (it is not enough to tell students how to behave; they must participate in the process of framing goals in order to achieve them); parental involvement; and evaluation.

Lickona (1993) identifies a comprehensive approach to character education which calls upon the individual teacher and schools to: act as caregiver, model, and mentor; create a moral community; practice moral discipline; create a democratic classroom environment; teach values through the curriculum; use cooperative learning; develop the "conscience of craft" by fostering students' appreciation of learning, capacity for hard work, commitment to excellence, and sense of work as affecting the lives of others; encourage moral reflection; teach conflict resolution; foster caring beyond the classroom; create a positive moral culture in the school; and recruit parents and community as partners in character education. Lickona (1993) also identifies factors that will determine the character education movement's long-range success: support for schools, the role of religion, moral leadership, and teacher education. Lemming (1993) also offers the following observations: didactic methods alone - codes, pledges, teacher exhortation, etc. - are unlikely to have any significant or lasting effect on character, the development of students' capacity to reason about questions of moral conduct does not result in a related change in conduct, character develops within a social web or environment, and character educators should not expect character formation to be easy.

Ryan (1993) summarizes policies and practices that a school requires to make a positive impact on the character of young people: a mission statement; a comprehensive program of service activities; a high level of school spirit and healthy intergroup competition; external charity or cause; a grading and award system that recognizes academic effort, good discipline, contributions to the life of the classroom, service to the school and community, respect for others, and good sportsmanship; exemplars of high ethical standards from teachers and older students; display of mottoes and pictures of exemplary historical figures in public areas; and regular ceremonies that bring community together to celebrate achievements of excellence in all realms. Huffman (1993) developed a five-year strategic plan for implementing character education: identify a core of values as the heart of the character education efforts, present the strategies to the staff and community, write the core values into the existing curriculum, write a behavior code that reflects core values, encourage all employee groups to acknowledge their role in the development of ethical students, provide an ongoing character education parenting program for the community, develop
community service programs and create a caring environment that ensures the success of each student.

Without a good character therefore, other moral approaches become ineffective. Many students find that the virtue of developing virtuous character traits are naturally appealing since they engage with the challenge of what type of person they ought to be and how to become that kind of person (Sommers, 1993). Character educator then builds a foundation upon which child would become a prudent decision maker and so character development is the primary goal behind all conscientious child raising in developing moral maturity.

End Notes

1 The question of whether or not there is a real objective standard of morality, although not directly the thrust of this paper, has always been a controversial issue. Most ethicists and philosophers agree that such a standard does indeed exist. Velasquez (1992, pg 30) argues that the members of any society must accept if that society is to survive and if its members are to interact with each other effectively, there must be certain standards. All societies have norms against injuring or killing, about using language truthfully, against taking personal goods of others, etc. Objective standards of morality, can also be reasoned using Natural Law, for example Lewis (1978) illustrates the Tao (way) from common consent using several independent sources (cultures, religions, writings, etc.) and discovered that certain ideas about how one becomes a good person recur in the writing of the ancient Egyptian, Babylonians, Hebrews, Chinese, Norse, Indians, and Greeks, and in Anglo-Saxon and American writings (Ryan, 1993).

2 Another popular approach that has been used to develop moral education is the self-esteem experiment. Although there are several commendable aspects of this model, however, it is fraught with a number of deficiencies [see Nesbit (1993), Dewhurst (1993) and Statman (1993)]. According to Hunter (2000), the idea behind self-esteem, for example, is children who feel good about themselves tend to do well in school, are less likely to take drugs, will be sexually responsible, and will be more tolerant of others. Though the self-esteem concept lost some currency in the 1990s, other terms have arisen to take its place - for example,* emotional intelligence or what its theorists call the EQ (emotional quotient).

3 Hunter (2000) points out that when it comes to the moral life of children, it is the psychologists, and in particular the developmental and educational psychologists who have owned this field - in theory and in practice. All of the major players in the last half of the twentieth century have been psychologists: Erik Erikson, BF Skinner, Benjamin Spock, Havighurst, Carl Rodgers, Jean Plaget, Abraham Maslow, Rudolf Dreikurs, William Glasser, Lawrence Kohlberg, Louis Ruth, Sidney Simon, Jane Loevinger, Daniel Levinson, Robert Selman, and Maurice Elias.

4 The six stages of moral development are grouped in pairs in three levels of social awareness: Preconventional Level (punishment and obedience; and individual instrumental purpose and exchange), Conventional Level (mutual interpersonal expectations, relations and conformity; and social system and conscience maintenance) and the Postconventional and Principled Level (prior rights and social contract or utility; and universal ethical principles). In an updated formulation of the theory in 1983, Kohlberg and others propose that stage six be withdrawn from the sequence of stages and it be designated rather as "theoretical construct in the realm of philosophical speculation" to be used as an interpretive principle in relation to other stages (Crittenden, 1999).

5 For example, an ethics of virtue does not at all preclude our giving sense to such moral rules as lying is morally wrong, or one ought to keep one's promises. The point of such virtue ethics is rather that such general deontic judgements find their justification in terms, which are basically aretaic. Therefore telling lies is wrong because it is dishonest, breaking a promise is something we ought not to do because it is unjust or a case of betrayal (Steutel and Carr 1999, pg 8).

6 For example, *duties* can include: one should always speak the truth, one ought to keep one's promises, stealing is wrong, in other words, issues of right and wrong, obligation, prohibitions, permissions, etc.; aretaic or virtue include: good or bad, admirable and deplorable, courageous and cowardice, etc.
Carr and Steutel (1999) is an excellent source on the topic of virtue ethics and moral education and give a comprehensive and indepth view. Statman (1999) and Crisp and Slotte (1997) bring together some of the most important recent writings that have influenced the field of virtue ethics over the last four decades; both books essentially provide a complete course in virtue ethics.

This is called the Doctrine of the Mean in which a virtue lies between two vices – a deficiency and an excess, for example, the virtue of courage lies between the vices of cowardice and rashness. The virtue does not lie exactly halfway between the vices but will always lie somewhere between both.

Tocqueville was a Frenchman who visited America in the summer of 1831, and left as his legacy a vast collection of observations about the land, its institutions and its people; he tapped into something profoundly felt and truly great in America, a sort of patriotism that had sprung from the disinterested, undeniable and unpondered feeling that ties a man’s heart to the place where he was born (Ankeney, 1997).

Such questions would include, for example: Is there a purpose to our lives? Can we be truly happy unless we are fulfilling that purpose? What really makes for a fulfilling life? Is there something in our human nature that is not satisfied merely by seeking pleasure? What is the wisdom of the ages with regard to such matters? What have great thinkers, religious and nonreligious, said about these questions? What does our experience and that of those around us have to say? What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be good? What must we know? How shall we live? Who am I? Why is there evil? What is the meaning of our life? What is the meaning of suffering? What will the end of this life bring to us? We must all die, but after death, what? What is the meaning of death? Is there really life after death? What will it be like? What part shall we play in it?

REFERENCES


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