Confronting Assumptions and Doctrines that Thwart the Cultivation of Virtues in Teacher Education

Elizabeth Campbell

Introduction: The Ethical Work of Teachers as Virtuous Professionals[i]

In 1993, well-known educational researcher, Philip Jackson, published his ethnographic study of the moral work of schools that specifically focused on the implicit and embedded nature of the moral nuances of the teacher's daily and routine practices (Jackson *et al*, 1993). This study stands as one of the pivotal qualitative investigations in a body of education literature that first started to recognize the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching several years previously (Goodlad *et al*, 1990; Tom, 1984). Since then, scholarship in this fairly small field has probed, both philosophically and empirically, the work of teachers and how it reflects their beliefs, characters, dispositions, intentions, and attitudes, specifically as viewed through a lens of virtues commonly associated with good teaching, such as: fairness, diligence, honesty, consistency, integrity, open-mindedness, empathy, patience, courage, conscientiousness, trustworthiness, kindness, care, and sensitivity to the needs of others, notably their students.

While theorists and researchers writing in this field (e.g., Campbell, 2003; Carr, 2000; Colnerud, 2006; Hansen, 2001; Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013; Sockett, 2012; Strike & Ternasky, 1993) understandably differ in their focus, conceptual orientation, and methodological approach, they are united in their argument that teaching is inevitably a moral profession; consequently, the teacher's role as an ethical professional relies heavily on an understanding of the complexities, responsibilities, and challenges that can both embrace and threaten the practical expression of virtues, such as those listed above. As Bullough, Jr. (2011) commented in his review of articles in this area, "ethics are at the heart of the teacher's disciplinary knowledge . . . (and) to teach is to be embedded in a world of uncertainty and of hard choices, where what a teacher does and how he or she thinks is morally laden" (p. 27).[ii]

It would be impossible to separate consideration of the professional ethics of teachers from the embedded moral aspects of teaching. The choices teachers make and the judgements they exercise over matters of curriculum taught, pedagogical styles used, methods of assessment and evaluation implemented, disciplinary approaches adopted, and the relational dynamics of working with children as well as parents, colleagues, school administrators and others, all are matters of ethical significance. They are not simply the technical aspects of practice that one may apply ethics to; they are at their core ethical aspects of practice. They are infused by moral imperatives associated with the teacher's legal role as being *in loco parentis*—in the place of the parent—as well as the inherent fiduciary duty that underlies the trust-based relationship between teachers and students (Scarfo & Zuker, 2011). And, teachers' judgements and choices are not only exercised in planned and predictable curricular contexts; alternatively, they are more often compelled in continuous and spontaneous classroom moments.

Additionally, the uniqueness of teaching as a profession greatly complicates, or at least adds another dimension to, the teacher's exercise of ethical judgement. Firstly, teachers usually meet their primary "stakeholders" (Freeman, 1998), the students, in groups rather than individually. Within the class group, needs and interests vary and often conflict, and for the teacher the balancing of competing demands becomes an ongoing quest to be simultaneously fair to both the individual and the larger group. Issues of comparative justice are always on display in the classroom, as are other principles such as respect, care, and honesty. This reality flags a second distinctive aspect of the education profession. Traditionally, there has endured the implicit expectation that teachers are responsible not only for their own moral and ethical conduct as teachers, but also for the moral education of their pupils. Consequently, part of their ethical role is an educative one, and as moral educators and models, their practice has a dual requirement— what Sanger and Osguthorpe (2013) distinguish as "teaching morally" and "teaching morality" (p. 3).

A teacher's capacity to develop an astute awareness of how his or her intentions and actions uphold as well as model ethical principles is at the core of what I have previously defined as "ethical knowledge" (Campbell, 2003). As the personal and professional foundation of teaching practice, ethical knowledge "may be recognized in the tone of voice a teacher uses to address students, the care a teacher takes with students' work, the substance of a lesson taught, the casual remarks a teacher makes, the way a teacher arranges groups or adjudicates among the sometimes conflicting needs and interests of students" (Campbell, 2008, p.4). For me, ethical knowledge in teaching is the enhanced appreciation of the connections between familiar professional practices and everyday ethics. Its cultivation aims to augment teachers' awareness of how what they do in the context of their daily work aligns (or fails to align) with fundamental virtues; it is about internalizing the professional wisdom and judgement to apply what are often recognizable ethical concepts in one's daily non-professional life to the details of one's practice as an educator. Ethical knowledge is a kind of practical wisdom, a bit like the ancient concept of *phronesis*, defined by Carr (2011) as the "guiding intellectual virtue of human moral life" (p. 107). As Dunne (2011) further explains, "practical wisdom is more than the possession of general knowledge just because it is the ability to actuate this knowledge with relevance, appropriateness, or sensitivity to context" (p. 18). For teachers, the context is the nuanced and complex worlds of the classroom, the staffroom, the school as a whole, and beyond to include the homes of their students and the policy arenas that define the formal parameters of their work. Their ethical navigation of this context is guided by the practical wisdom that enables them to exercise morally defensible professional judgement, engage in ethical decision-making, relate to others, notably their students, in humane, fair, honest, respectful, and responsible ways, and cope with ethical dilemmas that confront them.

Ethical knowledge in teaching, as practical wisdom, requires much more than a superficial familiarity with ethical codes and standards, although such codes should contribute to enhanced appreciation of teaching as a moral profession. It must also go beyond the mere avoidance of unethical conduct, often formalized in policy statements as professional misconduct, although, of course, such avoidance is absolutely mandatory. As Johnson and Ridley (2008) note, "Much like laws, ethics codes often are concerned with minimum standards of practice . . . Ethical excellence requires more than adherence to minimum standards. It demands a deeper commitment to live according to bedrock virtues and aspire to timeless principles" (p. xvi).

For the purposes of this presentation, I refer to the cultivation of teacher virtues as being akin to the fostering of ethical knowledge in teachers. So, how then can this cultivation be facilitated? The most obvious place to initiate the ethical development of professional teachers would seem to be within programs of initial teacher preparation. Therefore, this paper will consider the role of teacher education/teacher training in cultivating in individual student teachers the virtues necessary for moral and ethical teaching. It rests on the well-worn argument that the moral and ethical nature of teaching has been and continues to be generally a neglected area of programmatic study in initial teacher education and training (Colnerud, 2006; Nash, 1996; Strike & Ternasky, 1993; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013; Sockett, 2012; Willemse *et al*, 2008). My own study (Campbell, 2011 & 2013a) of whether and how schools of education in Canada teach applied professional ethics and contribute to student teachers' ability to hone their ethical judgement and cultivate their ethical knowledge yielded results sadly consistent with the literature in the field that has for some time criticized the lack of ethics instruction in most teacher education programs.

Using brief snippets of interview data from student teachers in this study to illustrate certain points, this paper explores two elements (or what I call "barriers") that, I argue, thwart the cultivation of teacher virtues.[iii] The first relates to common assumptions, myths, and misconceptions about both the inherent moral character of individuals who choose to become

teachers and the limited capacity and practicality of teacher education to accommodate an ethics or virtue-based curriculum. The second emanates from the increasingly prevalent focus in teacher education on doctrines and ideologies that have shifted ethical expectations for teachers from the individual cultivation of personal and professional virtues to the collective mission to engage in radical or critical social justice activism. Rather than defining the individual's own personal responsibility for his or her character and virtuous conduct, the language of teacher ethics has morphed into a call to challenge and disrupt inequities perpetuated by wider societal systems and structures. By way of summary, the paper considers how virtue cultivation may be enhanced in initial teacher education; it borrows briefly from other professional disciplines to suggest important principles to observe in the conceptualization of an ethics curriculum in teacher education, and it offers some suggestions for teaching ethics taken from my own practice. Ultimately it concludes that such cultivation could be achieved only if teacher educators are prepared to confront the dual barriers of prevailing assumptions and prevalent doctrines.

Barrier #1: Assumptions, Myths, and Misconceptions

> I didn't feel we were specifically taught ethics (in my pre-service teacher education program); I didn't feel that we were taught how to handle ethical situations. One of the instructors did talk about being fair, about being equitable, but did she really talk to us about what that looks like, sounds like, and feels like? I don't think she did, and that's what we need to see. What does it look like when you treat someone with respect? She never said the words, "Would you feel okay if someone went and did this to you?" I think that's really important, to say, "Now I'm going to do this to you, I'm going to call you up here to the front of the class and I'm going to do this to you – how does that make you feel? How do you think it would make a child feel if you were to do this?" I don't think this was really ever done, but I wished it had been. (Student teacher, in Campbell, 2013a, p. 29)

> I would have liked to know more about ethics on the basic day-to-day level. Little things like decision making that really affect most teachers. I would have liked it if they'd have covered some of the smaller seemingly less important things to do with ethics as well – like just being aware of how you speak to students. It was addressed but it wasn't talked about in terms of ethics and how that makes you an ethical teacher or not. So, unless you're introspective, you wouldn't really catch on. (Student teacher, in Campbell, 2011, p. 85)

Student teachers seem to want to engage with the moral and ethical aspects of teaching as part of their pre-service education. Like most people, they generally consider themselves to be virtuous individuals of moral character; yet, many realize that this may not be enough to equip them with the practical wisdom they will need to be good teachers who make ethically defensible choices and decisions and who behave in ways consistent with their own intuitive moral ideals and intentions. So why do they seem to get so little guidance?

The following series of italicized phrases are not direct quotations; they are, however, familiar refrains that are commonly expressed in teaching and teacher education that serve to thwart attempts to develop an ethics curriculum that might help student teachers to cultivate virtues of teaching.

> *It is not necessary to teach ethics, as those drawn to the vocation of teaching, as a moral profession, are inherently good people.*

Not only is such a claim empirically suspect, it also misses the point about ethics education. It is optimistically grounded in the almost taken-for-granted belief that teachers are essentially ethical; we can root out the odd ones who are not if they happen to be caught engaging in professional misconduct, but otherwise we should leave teachers alone to get on without interference, and all will be well. However, this is not adequate. As Strike (1993) notes, the goal of instruction in the ethics of teaching is not to "make students saints or sages, but it can help them to conduct their professional lives in a more responsible way" (p. 107). Cultivating professional judgement and practical wisdom as ethical knowledge is concerned with enabling student teachers to reflect on their conduct and practice in terms of whether it supports or violates virtues such as fairness, care, honesty, and respect; it acquaints them with the kinds of interpersonal realities—an angry parent, a negligent colleague, a challenging student—that create tensions and pose ethical dilemmas so that they can anticipate complex situations and resolve them in the least harmful and most ethically defensible way. As I have argued elsewhere, "Ethics education and enhancing the appreciation of the moral nature of teachers' work are not about making bad people good. They are about making good people aware that their choices and actions have the potential either to uplift and advance or hinder and thwart the emotional and intellectual wellbeing of the students in their care" (Campbell, 2013a, pp. 41-42).

> *Ethics cannot be taught. It is a matter of one's character.*

This claim, although similar to the previous one, may be at least in part true. It harks back to the ancient question regarding whether in fact virtue can be taught. As one of the student teachers I interviewed commented,

> I see a lot of lack here in this area (professional ethics), but I also feel it needs to come from within first, and then we need to be exposed and maybe trained to hone it better, I guess. But unless I am ethical and believe that integrity is something that I need to stick to, I don't think that any amount of faculty training is going to help me get there. (Campbell, 2011. p. 89)

However, while we may never fully be able to resolve this philosophical question, it should not provide the rationale for ignoring ethics instruction in professional faculties. In his article on the reasons we should want teachers who are virtuous, Osguthorpe (2008) aims to "point teacher educators towards a conception of teacher education that focuses on preparing teachers of good disposition and moral character simply for the sake of teaching that accords with what is good, right, and virtuous" (p.288). He asks, "How morally good does a teacher need to be?" (Osguthorpe, 2008, p. 293) and argues that while it may be "unrealistic" to expect teachers to be "a perfect example of virtue" (p. 294), they should be committed to and able to demonstrate virtuous teaching at all times. For Osguthorpe, this means that they should teach "fairly," "magnificently," "honestly," "compassionately," and "respectfully" (p. 296), and teacher education has a pivotal role in facilitating this awareness in student teachers. It is not simply enough to rely on the luck of the draw that those choosing teaching as a career are inevitably virtuous people who will naturally bring that part of their selves to their work.

Ethical teaching requires the cultivation of ethical knowledge—the cultivation of virtues, of practical wisdom. As mentioned previously, the central goal of ethics education is not redemptive as much as it is intended to enhance awareness among student teachers of how the daily demands of what they will do as professional practitioners affect the wellbeing of others (notably students, but other stakeholders as well). Its intention is to expand and extend their moral sensibilities so

that they can ask themselves hard questions about their actions and decisions and assess their answers from an astute perspective on core ethical principles such as those mentioned throughout this paper as well as the foundational principles of professional ethics: beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy.

Additional assumptions, myths, and misconceptions about the limited capacity and practicality of teacher education to accommodate an ethics or virtue-based curriculum undermine the likelihood that teacher educators would agree that ethics education as a means towards the goal of virtue cultivation in student teachers would be a desirable pedagogical component of their programs.

Ethics is a frill that we don't have the time or space to include.

Teacher education programs are traditionally short in duration and content-heavy. They always tread the line between balancing the development of students' practical skills of implementing curriculum and instruction and the theoretical knowledge often referred to as foundational in that it surveys concepts drawn from, among other fields, sociology, history and philosophy of education, child psychology, and school law. However, it is conceivable to embed attention to the ethical work of teachers in every one of these components. Ethics is not, indeed should not, be an "add-on," but rather a lens through which student teachers are encouraged to examine teaching practices and the virtues that they reflect.

How can we teach about the ethics of practice to students who lack practical experience?

It is a fair question. As one of my participants, a second-year teacher reflecting back on her teacher education program, remarked,

> I think maybe it's probably only over the last couple of years that I have really started thinking about, am I being really fair with the kids? . . . I don't know if at that point (teacher education), ethics are something teachers are thinking about. Do they think about what it means to be ethical? I think not, because at that point they haven't been put into situations where their ethics were tested. It's only when you teach a couple of years and you're put into situations where you really need to think about whether you are treating a student in the most fair manner, whether or not you are completely professional in speaking to a colleague, whether or not you are professional speaking to a parent. So, it's hard to teach ethics that no one has really applied yet. (Campbell, 2011, p. 90)

Following from this line of thought, then, one would be forced to admit that it is premature to include ethics education in professional preparation programs. How can we expect student teachers to develop a keen sense of the ethical aspects of teaching until they experience them first-hand? However, this question makes me nervous. It seems to be an excuse, if not a rationale, for skirting the teaching of professional ethics altogether in pre-service preparation programs. It rests on a speculative and overly optimistic belief that, once a bit more experienced, teachers will intuitively start to awaken to the ethical complexities of their work and thereby be able both to recognize ethical situations and to respond correctly to them. Yet there is ample evidence in the research literature to confirm that mere experience does not necessarily lead to enhanced ethical knowledge and by extension more morally responsible conduct (Campbell, 2003; Colnerud, 1997; Tirri, 1999). Why wait until students are socialized into existing teacher cultures that may or may

not prioritize ethical practice? And, at any rate, it is not a matter of them lacking all experience. Student teachers engage in practice teaching (or clinical) sessions throughout their programs and are not unfamiliar with schools and classrooms. Teacher education programs have a professional responsibility to introduce new practitioners to the ethical aspects of their chosen profession so that they can embrace new teaching experiences with a trained sensitivity to their ethical expectations as well as the dilemmas that arise from them.

> *OK, so it is not the in-faculty part of the program that should be responsible for the cultivation of ethical knowledge; instead, student teachers learn about the ethics of teaching in their practicum (clinical) experiences.*

This may be true. By engaging in classroom life and observing experienced teachers, students may well glean examples of exemplary ethical practice if they are intuitive enough to recognize it, as it is not likely something that their associate teachers would explicitly reference. Regrettably, however, student teachers also return from their field experiences with disturbing accounts of negative role modelling they witness—teachers who act in careless, unfair, dishonest, sarcastic, gossipy, spiteful, and even cruel ways. The student teachers feel powerless to address such situations and report that, when they try to talk about them upon their return to their programs, they feel shut down. "Story-telling" of that sort seems discouraged in faculties of education out of what I believe is a misguided and "blind commitment to collegial loyalty in the guise of professional relations" (Campbell, 2013a, p. 37). Teacher education programs need to find professionally defensible ways to debrief student teachers openly about their practicum experiences—both the good and the bad—in order to cultivate deeper understanding of the ethical dimensions underlying often normative behavior in schools.

Another way to conceptualize the well-documented neglect of ethics education is to assume that, rather than actually being absent, it is somehow embedded implicitly within other components of the teacher education curriculum.

> *We teach ethics as it is folded into other foundational units in our programs.*

Student teachers in my study recognized that they did not experience much in the way of ethics education; however, they did identify areas of their programs that were "kind of like ethics." One is subsumed under a focus on issues of professionalism broadly and address formalized and codified policies and laws (portrayed by some as "scare tactics" employed to deter them from engaging in acts of professional misconduct such as violating the duty of care, neglecting to report suspected child abuse, misrepresenting one's qualifications, failing to maintain proper records, being negligent in the supervision of students). However, references to legal requirements and restrictions, while important, were not normally represented as *ethically* relevant and significant. Their application to the daily work of teachers as moral professionals was decidedly absent, and their relevance to virtue in teaching was remote.

Similarly, a narrow and decontextualized reference to the formal *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Ontario College of Teachers) seemed to be the best one could hope for in terms of any reference to the ethics of teaching. As in the case of the legal aspects of teaching, the *Ethical Standards* seem to be presented more as policy regulation than a foundation for thinking about the moral complexities of teaching. It seemed to have a fleeting, if any, impact, as the quotations from three recently graduated teachers explain,

> The *Ethical Standards* document? I guess I could say it means nothing

to me because I don't really remember anything specific from them . . .

We got a big pamphlet thing about the ethics of teaching, and I remember a   lot of my course teachers were surprised to see them and read them. They talked with us but it was just kind of an informal meeting that was held once for an hour during the school year . . . The *Ethical Standards*? Do I know what they are? I couldn't name them. No, nope, I only had to do them for the one time; I know one of them was honesty, integrity, I remember words like that but, no, I can't tell you what they were. It was at the first part of the year, and ethics were never, ever, ever, ever touched on again. (Campbell, 2013a, pp. 31-32)

Identifying a virtue, such as honesty or integrity, from a list of formalized teaching standards or codes of ethics in no way parallels the cultivation of teacher virtues, the development of ethical knowledge, and the honing of moral sensibilities that would enable student teachers to discuss with depth and practical awareness what it means to be ethical or virtuous as a teaching professional. As has been reinforced in the literature, the "language of ethics" (Colnerud, 2006; Strike, 1995) or a "moral language" (Sockett & LePage, 2002) that could be richly understood and used to describe actual practice is still missing from teaching and teacher education.

This lack, combined with such prevailing assumptions as those discussed in this section, does not bode well for the potential cultivation of teacher virtues through teacher education and training.

As an aside, coincidentally and regrettably, the Government of the Province of Ontario, where I am from, recently revised the requirements for teacher education programs throughout the province as of September 2015 (in Canada, jurisdiction over education policy is entirely the responsibility of the individual provinces). Curiously titled the *Modernized and Enhanced Initial Teacher Education Program* (Ontario Ministry of Education, draft working document, 2013), the program framework identifies three types of knowledge to be cultivated in teacher education: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and instructional strategies, and contextual knowledge. Within each of these categories of knowledge are lists of relevant components. The only specific hint of what is addressed in this paper and the wider literature as the ethical and moral work of teachers is inserted by way of a possible example to cover in the second to last component. It is represented under contextual knowledge as:

- "Education law (i.e. regulations/ethics/occupational health and safety/professional misconduct)."

Given the repetitive emphasis put on other aspects of the newly envisioned program, this very brief, almost optional, and clearly non-integrated dimension is extremely disappointing and seems not to recognize the value of conceptualizing the curricular, pedagogical, technical, practical, and foundational work of teaching as being ethically infused. It is not difficult to speculate that in the new teacher education program, an ethics curriculum will continue to be neglected. From my conversations with international colleagues elsewhere, I do not think Ontario is unique in this regard.

Barrier #2: Critical Doctrines and the Displacement of Virtue

> We are often so busy marshalling evidence for our pet theories and opinions, we forget that we have—or should have—our character and inner growth to attend to. While "correct" thinking on social issues looms large in contemporary culture, correctness is not virtue, nor has it much to do with personal character. It takes no special effort to hold opinions. But virtue is inseparable from personal actions and relationships (Kay, 2015, p. A10).

One area that student teachers in my study saw as possibly ethical, although not directly related to teacher ethics *per se*, was the increasing emphasis that many teacher preparation programs are putting on education for social justice. They were conversant with the sociopolitical language of social justice theory (e.g., equity, diversity, oppression, bias, privilege, power, culturally relevant pedagogy, education for critical democracy), but not the language of virtue (e.g., fairness, empathy, care, honesty). Social justice is a political orientation to societal issues that takes a stand that increasingly positions itself as being moral or ethical; however, it is not the same as professional ethics in teaching. Regardless of one's ideological perspective on the doctrines associated with social justice, they should not be seen as an adequate substitute for ethics education, as the aims of each are quite different. This is reflected in the words of one teacher educator, who summed up what many others advocate: "I teach social and political ethics rather than individual ethics in classrooms" (Campbell, 2011, pp. 86-87). Yet, it is precisely the individual ethics of the teacher that define professional judgement, ethical knowledge, practical wisdom, and the need to educate professionals to be proficient in practicing in virtuous ways.

This section of the paper is arguably the most contentious, and requires clarification of how I define and situate social justice education and how I see the two worlds of scholarship—the moral and ethical work of teachers and social justice education—as being fundamentally juxtaposed.[iv] While there is general agreement that ethics education in teacher training programs is a neglected area, as addressed previously, there is concurrently and coincidentally growing recognition of a "proliferation of work in social justice in education" (Chapman & Hobbel, 2010, p. 2) and of the increasingly prominent promotion of social justice as an ideological framework for teacher education (Cochran-Smith *et al*, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2002; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; North, 2008; Sleeter, 2009). One need only consult the literature bases of these two broad areas (moral/ethical/virtuous teaching and social justice) to see that they are quite separate and discrete fields. Despite the implied ethical meaning of the word "justice," social justice scholarship tends not to prioritize the language of ethics, morality, and virtue (Nash, 1997). More recently, however, social justice scholars have started to position their arguments, in and of themselves, as implicitly ethical (Boler, 2004; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Nieto, 2010; Slattery & Rapp, 2003), as reflected in Ladson-Billings' claim that social justice education is "less a thing and more an ethical position" (2006, p. 40). And, within such literature, teaching has been identified as being at its core a "moral *and political* act" (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 2; Nieto, 2010, p. x; emphasis added). However, one might note that simply declaring one's arguments as ethical without actually acknowledging and using a "moral language" (to recall Sockett & LePage, 2002) to explain why seems rather vacuous.

By its own definition, social justice education is not politically neutral, but rather oriented around broader sociopolitical issues such as those relating to diversity, sustainability, equity, inclusion, poverty, race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. By extension, the role of teacher education is to prepare student teachers to be social justice activists and educators. Its doctrines reflect

multiple variations of critical theory, critical pedagogy, and other radical contexts that promote "progressive" causes and initiatives in education. As I have stated elsewhere,

> (The) critical imperatives of social justice clarify its radical foundations in which all aspects of teaching and schooling are sites of political struggle, political action, political vision, and ultimately political transformation. Under a broad umbrella of socialist, Marxist, collectivist, and other leftist political orientations, the theoretical foundations of social justice represent a complex range of differing contemporary bodies of knowledge and schools of thought, including, critical theory, anti-oppression pedagogy, anti-racist and multicultural education, feminist theory, queer theory, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, disability studies, peace education, critical democratic citizenship education, social reconstructionist philosophies, and revolutionary pedagogy, among others (Adams *et al*, 1997; Ayers *et al*, 2009; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010; North, 2008; Slattery & Rapp, 2003). Understandably, these political theories and philosophical perspectives vary in significant ways, and not all advocates of social justice education would embrace all of the principles they advance. Nonetheless, they share a common ideological position that social justice educators express in their critique of society's institutions and power structures, emphasis on diversity, and orientation towards activism and social transformation. It is framed by political hostility and resistance to policies and values associated with more centrist neoliberal and conservative worldviews that create what they portray as the dominant social patterns of an oppressive mainstream society. (Campbell, 2013b, p.222)

Within the U.K. context, Hill and Boxley (2007) offer, in their "Ecosocialist Manifesto," a particularly searing critique of what they see as an overall resistance to social justice education; they urge the voices of "socialists and Marxists" to be more present and advocate for "a Radical Left perspective (that) calls for teacher education (and schooling) to be socially egalitarian, ecologically sustainable, anti-racist, and anti-sexist, and also to challenge other forms of structural inequality and discrimination, such as those based on sexuality and disability" (Hill & Boxley, 2007, p. 45). Similarly, other social justice scholars, writing from the context of U.K. teacher education, both critique what they see as contemporary neo-liberal and neo-conservative influences in education and call for more dominant social justice initiatives (Bagley & Beach, 2015; Boylan & Woolsey, 2015; Mitchell & Alexandrou, 2011; Pantic & Florian, 2015; Spratt & Florian, 2013).

Within schools of education, social justice political and theoretical foundations can be manifested in a variety of curricular and extracurricular initiatives. By way of some personal examples, at my own institution there have been several social justice conferences over the past few years designed for student teachers who were required to attend them as complementary to the teacher training programmatic goals. Their titles included, *Educating for Peace and Justice: Action for Safe and Equitable Classrooms, Schools and Communities*; *Environmental and Sustainability Education* (with connections to "social justice," "eco-justice," and "race, class and economic status (that) are implicated in environmental learning"); and *Teacher Activism: Social Justice in Classrooms, Schools, and Communities*. Sessions within the conferences ranged from "food systems education programs as viewed through an anti-oppression and anti-racist framework," to "teacher union activism—working for equity and social justice," to "teaching on the edge: resisting, surviving and thriving while educating for change." This last session was billed as follows: "This workshop will focus on the challenges of being a teacher activist in the classroom and the promotion of social/political consciousness and action among students. Highlights will include: linking progressive educational theory and practice; drawing on the political inherent in all

curriculum; creating alternative spaces in the mainstream; resisting the authoritarian tendencies of the institution; and choosing your battles" (OISE website, Teacher Activism Conference, 2015, unpublished). This description in many ways encapsulates the conference's stated goal which was "to enable participants to share, learn, and act on ideas, strategies, and best practices related to teacher social justice activism . . . (and) will address Aboriginal Issues—Race—Religion—Culture—Gender—Sexual Orientation—Class—Dis/Ability and More!" (OISE website, Teacher Activism Conference, 2015, unpublished).

Although such initiatives are increasingly portrayed in the literature by those who develop them as being moral or ethical, they have very little to say about the moral or ethical cultivation of the individual teacher and even less about virtues. For social justice advocates, personal morality based on practical decency, virtuous character, and the humane treatment of others are insufficient in confronting and challenging deeply unjust societal inequalities. As one social justice advocacy report stated, those educators who equate "equity" with "respect for others" and notions of "fairness" hold a "very limited conception of the term 'equity'" (OERE, 2012, p. 2). From my point of view, social justice education is more committed to sociopolitical causes than to character. As a trend in teacher education, it either disregards or denigrates the concept of "virtue" and the significance of the individual's cultivation of virtue or, to recall Osguthorpe (2008), good disposition and moral character. Within social justice seminars, virtue may be dismissed as the expression of Eurocentric, middle class, neo-liberal bias (interestingly, a similar critique is often levelled at character education); and the responsibility of teacher educators is not to guide student teachers in the cultivation of teacher virtues or ethical knowledge, as argued in previous sections of this paper. Instead, it is to enable them to develop the capacity to critique, disrupt, and realign patterns of power and privilege, to engage their future students in the same recognition of injustices, and to agitate both within and outside the classroom on behalf of the political agenda embedded in social justice worldviews (Adams, 2010; Ayers *et al*, 2009; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010).

Such worldviews are, as Nord (2001) claims, inevitably controversial in the public sphere. And, according to Null (2011), "they admonish teachers to espouse revolutionary, left-leaning views in the classroom all in the name of social justice" (p. 114). Given its general intolerance of alternative political perspectives and the conviction that it alone has the capacity to promote broader goals relating to the common good (Cochran-Smith *et al*, 2009), social justice education has been criticized for its potential to lapse into ideological indoctrination of student teachers as well as of elementary and secondary school students.[v] A deeper discussion of indoctrination and its ethical violation is beyond the scope of this paper; again, I have explored this issue in a previous publication (Campbell, 2013b).

The objective of this current conference paper is to argue that there is an essential difference between the virtuous teacher as role model primarily and personally responsible for internalizing and upholding virtues of honesty, empathy, fairness, kindness, and responsibility, by example, and the social justice teacher as transformative change agent whose focus is not on character development but on developing curriculum to critique the *status quo*, teach about oppression, sexuality, race and gender privilege, and enable students to take social action against societal structures and systems seen to propagate inequities (Darling-Hammond, 2002).[vi]

However, much to the chagrin of *bone fide* social justice educators (Adams, 2010; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010; Nieto, 2010; North, 2008), the term "social justice" has become a "politically contested term" (Grant & Gibson, 2010, p. 29); in some contexts, social justice has become vaguely defined, watered down ideologically, and weakened politically, as it gets adopted as education's latest catchphrase (North, 2008) by some mainstream educators who interpret social justice as nothing more critical, radical, or progressive than "a package of desirable dispositions—

for example, treating individuals equally and fairly, having a special regard (i.e., compassion) for the underprivileged in society, and so on" (Sockett, 2009, p. 297). In such cases where this "diluted, trivialized, or co-opted" (Cochran-Smith *et al*, 2009, p. 627), interpretation of social justice education is implemented in practice, its relationship to ethical teaching as it is addressed in this paper seems admittedly less polarized. Of course ethical teachers treat all of their students with respect, compassion, honesty, fairness, and sensitivity to specific needs that may vary within diverse contexts. Virtuous teachers, as discussed in the literature on the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching, do this without being *de facto* social justice educators dedicated to the more radical orientations that define the doctrine. So, why would teacher educators, teachers, and policy-makers, who essentially believe that teaching morally and ethically requires being attentive to such virtues, confuse the cultivation of those very virtues by employing such an "ideologically loaded term" (Villegas, 2007, p. 370) as social justice, if they do not fully buy into its political doctrines? As I have argued before, "Ethical teaching revolves around the individual teacher's personal responsibility to teach all students in his or her care with fairness honesty, compassion, respect, practical wisdom, diligence, consistency, dedication, and integrity, and to recognize how these and other moral principles underpin even the most routine curricular, pedagogical, evaluative, and interpersonal school activities. This is one of the cornerstones of professional ethics in teaching. It need not be limited by one specific political orientation on the left, right, or middle of the ideological spectrum" (Campbell, 2013b, pp. 232-233).

As the language of virtue ethics continues to fade from teacher education programs, and the language of social justice (whether used in ways that honour its ideological integrity or in more muddled and politically naïve ways) continues to gain momentum, the aspiration to engage student teachers in the rigorous and ethically astute cultivation of teacher virtues becomes thwarted. And the barrier, established by increasingly prevalent social justice trends, I regret to admit, seems increasingly insurmountable.

Conclusion: Confronting the Barriers and Moving Forward

The objective of this paper has been to identify and discuss two broad realities of contemporary teacher education that, I argue, present barriers that thwart the cultivation of virtue in student teachers. This argument is situated within a conceptualization of ethical teaching, developed in the scholarly literature, that describes both the implicit and explicit moral and ethical aspects of the teacher's professional work. Central to this scholarship is a foundation rooted in virtues of teaching—fairness, honesty, compassion, respect, diligence, responsibility, trustworthiness, courage, and integrity, among others. A conceptual thread that has run throughout the paper positions the cultivation of teacher virtues as achievable if teacher education could become more proficient at guiding student teachers to an awareness of how moral and ethical character and the core virtues exemplified by such character are intricately woven into the daily nuances of teaching. If an ethics curriculum in teacher education could enable students to make practical and conceptual connections between teacher virtues and everyday practices, while also increasing their awareness of their own character and how it will be reflected in their future teaching, the potential for what has been discussed here as the cultivation of virtue may be enhanced.

So far, I have not offered recommendations to this end. However, the most obvious starting point for those who consider the barriers discussed here to be problematic is to acknowledge them as such, challenge them, confront them, and ultimately work around them. Regarding barrier #2—the growing tendency for social justice education to be positioned as a kind of new teacher ethics—it falls on those of us engaged in the theoretical and empirical study of the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching, centred around the virtuous teacher, to distinguish between the

knowledge of our field that has clarified over the past 25 years or so what ethical teaching looks like, and social justice scholarship that has provided the catalyst for an alternative vision for teaching and teacher education. Social justice and teacher ethics are neither synonymous nor interchangeable, and to pretend that they are is to do an ideological disservice to both. If we do not confront this issue, given current trends, the loose application of the "ethical" label will come to be associated entirely with social justice education, and all the critical sociopolitical elements that come with it will overwhelm any objective to cultivate teachers to be first and foremost personally responsible as virtuous professionals. And this will ultimately have quite significant political and practical implications for teaching and teacher education.

Regarding barrier #1—the common assumptions, myths, and misconceptions that push against the motivation to develop in teacher training programs a clear ethics education component—they can be questioned and refuted whenever they are repeatedly raised, as I have tried to do in this paper. Ultimately, there is no defensible intellectual or programmatic reason to allow them to set curricular limits on whether and to what extent teacher ethics should be taught to emerging professionals in the field.

Moving forward, then, we might ask how teacher education could develop an ethics curriculum that is attentive to the cultivation of ethical knowledge and of teacher virtues.

Interdisciplinary Wisdom

> *What can we learn from other professional disciplines about ethics education that would be relevant to the conceptualization of an ethics curriculum?*

An extension of my research on ethics instruction in teacher education programs involved the interviewing of university faculty teaching ethics courses in a range of professional disciplines (e.g., medicine, nursing, physical therapy, law, social work, business, engineering). The purpose of this complementary data collection was not to develop a comparative study, but rather to gather suggestions and recommendations from others that might add to our collective understanding about best practices in teaching ethics to students in the professions. I should note that I did not interview any of the students in these programs. Therefore, I am not in a position to argue that the ethics instruction they received had any more of a profound influence on them than what the teacher education students reported. Nonetheless, what did seem clear was that the "descriptions of other professional programs revealed at least a serious curricular *intention* to familiarize students with the professional ethical standards and complexities of their respective fields" (Campbell, 2013a, p. 33) to an extent that seems regrettably lacking in many teacher education programs. From the data, I identified the following four themes that represent guiding principles and strategies for action that cut across the disciplines and that I believe offer much to the conceptualization of a curriculum in professional ethics.

- a faculty-wide belief that ethics must be a *focused* and *mandatory* component of professional preparation that transcends person opinion or intuition and reflects foundational knowledge in the discipline.

- the affirmation of explicit goals for teaching ethics that move philosophical theory and formalized codes or ethical standards (which are strongly emphasized) towards their concrete application.

- instructional approaches that involve the extensive use of *case study pedagogy* in which scenarios describing dilemmas and complexities of real practice are analyzed using ethical

resources (e.g., contrasting philosophical orientations, codes of ethics, policies), not only personal beliefs and reflection.

- careful attention to the thorough debriefing of students' clinical practice that highlights the ethical aspects (both the positive and negative) of their collective experiences in the practitioner field.

While the structure of the various programs described by the participants varied considerably, the one constant was that clear attention to the professional ethics of each discipline was "consciously built into the programs, not left up to chance to be 'touched on' in embedded ways . . . Ultimately, professional ethics was not simply something students had to divine from the curriculum for themselves, but rather was an intentional aspect of their pre-service preparation" (Campbell, 2013a, pp. 35-37).

Of course, this leads to a predictable question:

> *Should instruction in ethics be embedded in a cross-curricular way throughout multiple components of professional preparation programs or highlighted in a focused and discrete unit or course that is entirely dedicated to the teaching of ethics and the honing of professional ethical judgement?*

The participants in my study outside of teacher education referred favourably to both models, and one described what I believe to be the ideal approach: address ethics directly and forcefully at the beginning of the program in a special course or unit, and then maintain attention to ethical decision-making and the cultivation of virtuous action throughout subsequent courses and components—like a thread that unites the program around a common theme. By comparison, when asked whether lessons on ethics were part of a core foundations course on professionalism, one teacher educator responded, "No, I don't think it (ethics) is consciously part of a thread; it's there because it's naturally there" (Campbell, 2011, p. 85). Regrettably, however, the students did not seem to be aware of this natural presence.

It is for this reason that I have changed my perspective on this question about integration or separation of an ethics curriculum. I once believed that integrating it across the program to show vividly how ethics permeates all aspects of curricular, pedagogical, evaluative, and interpersonal decision-making in classrooms and schools is the best approach. I still do really; however I no longer trust the integrative model to communicate important ethical lessons. It leaves too much up to chance if we assume that ethics embedded across a program will be made obvious. As I have argued,

> While infusion may still seem to be a preferred approach to integrating ethics into the teacher education curriculum, it also threatens to render the topic invisible. It is too easy to overlook or lose the focus on the moral and ethical nature of teaching if it is made implicit within the context of other curricular content . . . (Instead,) explicit and non-elective courses or units of study that consciously identify their objective as being the cultivation of ethical practice in teaching may be more successful in making the moral dimensions of teachers' work visible, authentic, and significant. (Campbell, 2013a, p. 31)

In his own teaching of professional ethics, Strike (1993) observed that "students find moral ideas familiar even though they are not the kinds of considerations that come to their minds first and they often need help in finding the words to express them" (p. 104). It is for this reason that professional faculties need to stimulate a profound awareness of the ethical dimensions of

practice so that students, regardless of their discipline, are enabled to make conceptual and practical connections between likely recognizable ethical principles and virtues and the details of their future daily work with clarity, insight, informed judgement, and a rigorous knowledge of their chosen field.

As Applied to Teacher Education

Despite the general neglect of professional ethics widely reported in the teacher education literature, I know I am not alone among teacher educators, many of whom are also researchers in the field of ethics in education, who are individually attentive to raising such awareness among their own students, even if it occurs by means of elective courses within what is otherwise a programmatic moral vacuum (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). They may use similar strategies and resources to those that I use with my pre-service teacher education students. The following is an abbreviated listing of the general themes and instructional strategies that, while not particularly innovative or unique, I have found useful in framing my seminar courses on professional ethics in teaching.

- I adopt two broad and intersecting approaches: the use of case study pedagogy and the examination of policy and research literature on a series of relevant themes.

- First, I start with a thorough introduction to the formalized policies and regulations governing professional conduct.

- To introduce philosophical ethics as it applies to professional decision-making (to be practiced through case study examination and analysis), students discuss readings and frameworks based on distinctions among versions of consequentialist and non-consequentialist theories (e.g., teleology, utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, ethics of justice and care). I prioritize engagement with the language of ethics and virtues (e.g., fairness, honesty, care, respect, integrity, trust).

- The ethical decision-making frameworks used in case study analysis differ in structure and detail but generally follow similar conceptual patterns (e.g., identify the ethical dilemma in the case; clarify relevant facts and consider first reactions; identify various stakeholders; consider alternative actions to take in the resolution of the dilemma; apply ethical resources [ethical principles; consequential considerations; ethical policies and standards; general maxims; exemplars of others' judgements] to the alternative actions to determine ultimately the best course of action). I use frameworks from both within and outside of education (e.g., Freeman, 1998; Markkula, 2006; McDonald, 2000; Ontario College of Teachers, 2003).

- *Case study pedagogy*: with reference to both the ethical decision-making frameworks and the relevant course literature (research, policy, and theoretical/philosophical), students read and analyze in small groups and as a whole class on an ongoing basis throughout the course a series of short ethical case studies (drawn from casebooks in the education literature). Each case study is written as a fictional but nonetheless very real account in which a teacher is faced with a difficult decision. Students take turns facilitating the small group discussions of approximately 45 minutes per case that focus on possible ethical implications of the situation, ways to resolve the dilemma, consequences of actions and inactions, while highlighting the underlying ethical principles and considering how the virtuous teacher might respond. Discussions must be grounded by connections between

personal intuition, opinion, or judgement and the academic and professional resources of the course.

- As the course progresses, the case study analysis discussions also draw on students' deliberations of actual practice experienced during their own clinical teaching sessions in schools. Whole group "debriefing" of the practice teaching component of the program aids in this discussion.

- One of the course assignments requires students to write their own case study and analyze it using course resources (frameworks, codes, policies) and the research literature that addresses a range of thematic issues.

- Broad themes introduced in both the academic literature (course readings) and the dilemmas posed in the case studies include:
  - Teachers' higher standards of expected conduct
  - Position of trust and the fiduciary duty
  - The teacher as a moral agent and implications for daily practice
  - The teacher as a moral educator and implications for daily practice
  - Dilemmas and tensions as a result of administrative regulations, school policies, assessment standards, curricular expectations, balancing of disparate student needs and demands on teachers' time, resources, and attention.
  - The ethically complicated interpersonal life of teachers (e.g., professional relationships with students, adjudicating among students, dealing with parents, coping with colleagues and their possible negligence or misbehavior)
  - The ethics of teaching controversial curricular issues
  - The lines between teaching and indoctrinating; the limits on freedom of expression; and the associated question of whether teachers should disclose their own perspectives on issues of a political, ideological, social, cultural, or religious nature

<u>Final Note</u>

From an empirical perspective, I cannot assess whether the ethics instruction I implement ensures that my students will become more ethically responsible and virtuous professionals. However, one may speculate that in at least exposing students to the practical dimensions of their professional work in ways that connect clearly and coherently to larger, and essentially familiar, virtues, they will start to cultivate the ethical knowledge, the practical wisdom that will guide their professional judgement.

And, while I know of no research to either confirm or deny this speculation, anecdotal evidence seems to support the idea that by having students grapple with daily ethical choices and keeping the spotlight on the ethical aspect of their work, not just the technical aspect, they do become more morally and professionally astute. Graduate students, to whom I also teach ethics, who are mostly experienced teachers, report that the issues we discuss in class are real to them—they resonate with their own professional experiences. Yet, this is the first opportunity for them to view their practice through a lens of ethical sensitivity. They seem to value this—it is as if a new way of looking at normative and everyday work opens up a whole new appreciation of the moral significance of what they do and what they cope with on a regular basis. They express a belief that if teachers in schools could develop a level of collegial comfort in order to share rather than

conceal their ethical dilemmas and concerns, they might collectively be able to re-frame the culture of teaching, at least within locally relevant contexts. With support structures in place, enabled by an administrative presence that models virtuous conduct and prioritizes ethical responsibility, they would welcome the chance to collaborate with colleagues about each other's work, without feeling defensive, and explore the ways their decisions about curriculum, assessment, discipline, and interpersonal relations, among other things, both reflect and compromise good ethics.

Given that this does not seem to be currently the norm within the teaching culture, the challenge to pre-service teacher education seems even more intense. Nonetheless, perhaps by confronting the kinds of barriers as addressed in this paper, teacher educators could become less hampered in their efforts to situate ethics and the cultivation of teacher virtues at the centre of their programmatic visions and goals.

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[i] An earlier version of selected parts of this paper was presented as a keynote lecture at a 2014 symposium, entitled, "Educating Professionals: Ethics and Judgement in a Changing Learning Environment," sponsored by the Chartered Professional Accountants Canada and the University of Toronto. Additionally, it was adapted for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia, 2014.

[ii] The frequently interchangeable use of "moral' and "ethical" to define the teacher's practice is reflective of the variation in the literature and has been seen, at least in an applied philosophical sense, as being defensible (Colnerud, 2006).

[iii] I gratefully acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its support of the research project, entitled, "The Cultivation of Ethical Knowledge in Teaching." All data cited in this paper were generated from this study.

[iv] For a deeper discussion of the arguments presented here, see Campbell, E. (2013b). Ethical Teaching and the Social Justice Distraction. In, H. Sockett and R. Boostrom (Eds.). *A Moral Critique of Contemporary Education*. National Society for the Study of Education, v. 112, n. 1, pp. 216-237. New York: Teachers College Press.

[v] For a particularly pointed and illustrative example from a popular, non-partisan Canadian magazine, see the article, entitled, "Why are schools brainwashing our children?" It argues that, "Increasingly, faculties of education in Canada and much of the Western world are preparing their student teachers to weave social justice throughout the primary

school curriculum—in math and science, language arts and social sciences, drama and even gym—as well as into a range of cross-curricular activities, events and projects. The idea is to encourage kids to become critical analysts of contemporary issues, empathetic defenders of human rights and gatekeepers of the beleaguered Earth" (Reynolds, 2012, p. 2).

[vi] Interestingly, social justice theories do not have a monopoly on social action initiatives in education; character education (not normally aligned with the sociopolitical progressive doctrine characterizing social justice) has long recognized the power of social action and service learning in cultivating moral character in individual students while contributing to the overall betterment of society. By way of example, the Jubilee Centre's own "Character Through Youth Social Action" (2014) initiative is clear in its intent to enable students to cultivate their own character while benefitting others. Nothing in its mandate or practical implementation seems to suggest alignment with social justice theory as it is described in this paper; nor does it use the activist language of social justice. Instead, it uses the language of virtue and character, the same language that should define ethical teaching.