# STUDIES ON CHARACTER

# A SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL DISSERTATIONS FROM THE MA CHARACTER EDUCATION 2020

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM | THE JUBILEE CENTRE FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES

# THE MA CHARACTER EDUCATION

**The MA Character Education at the University of Birmingham is the first and only distance learning Masters in Character Education programme in the world. The Programme focuses on the theory and practice of human flourishing and adopts a broad understanding of character – encompassing aspects of wellbeing, moral education, ethics, citizenship, positive education and social and emotional education. Students on the Programme come from a range of sectors; including education (formal and non-formal), voluntary and business. The flexible curriculum allows students to apply their learning to topics most relevant to their personal or employers' interests and goals.**

The Programme is run by The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues based at the University of Birmingham. The Centre is widely acknowledged as one of the world's foremost research and teaching centres specialising in the examination of how character and virtues impact on individuals and society. Drawing on the wealth of research and experience of academics in the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and internationally regarded academics attached to the Centre, the Masters enables students to develop their knowledge and expertise in the field of character education.

The main features of the programme include:

- It is multi-disciplinary – it includes learning from the fields of education, philosophy, (positive) psychology, sociology, social sciences and theology.

- It is flexible – the learning is guided but students work through it at their own pace.

- It is suitable for professionals seeking to transform their organisation or career, or individuals looking for a foundation for further postgraduate study such as a PhD.

- It utilises the latest technology to ensure an engaging and participatory online learning experience.

- It provides a supportive learning environment – all students have a dedicated personal tutor.

- It is focused on the contexts in which students work – the assignments and dissertations can be directed towards students' personal and professional interests in the field.

- It is collaborative – students have the opportunity to work alongside and learn from fellow students from around the world.

Most importantly it is practice focused – the learning contributes to making a difference. It helps students to play their part in transforming people, organisations and places.

**More details of the MA Character Education can be found here:**
**www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/2855/character-education/ma-character-education**

# INTRODUCTION

**It is an absolute pleasure to introduce the 12 dissertation summaries that appear here. The 2019-2020 graduating cohort, which extends beyond those who have kindly provided summaries, are the second group of students to complete the innovative and unique MA Character Education programme. Over the three years of study, each student has engaged with (and indeed grappled with!) a wide range of questions about the theories, histories, politics, teaching and assessment of character education – and this breadth is reflected in the summaries presented.**

It goes without saying, too, that as the students embarked on their dissertation studies in late September 2019 none of us could have imagined the events that would occur in 2020 and the impact the global pandemic would have on the educational settings in which our students worked and had intended to research. For many of the MA students entering into lockdown, the closing of schools, universities and other settings represented a major challenge – personally, professionally and academically. Where adaptations were needed and were appropriate, changes were made to methodologies and analyses. The fact that so many students were able to complete their studies is testament to their dedication and resilience.

Presented in these pages are summaries of what were 15,000-word research dissertations. Other than providing a basic guiding structure, we did not want to impose any particular rules for what details should be included in the summaries. Rather, the summaries are intended to provide an overview of the study, and each of the students has provided contact details should any reader be interested in hearing more.

To conclude, the summaries here present a picture not only of the studies themselves but of the hard work, commitment and dedication of their authors. We hope and trust that you enjoy reading them.

**MA Character Education Programme Team**
within the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

**Dr Tom Harrison -** Reader in Character Education Pedagogy and Practice & Director of Educatio*n*
**Professor Andrew Peterson -** Professor of Character and Citizenship Education & Deputy Director
**Paul Watts -** Lecturer, MA Character Education.
**Professor Kristján Kristjánsson -** Professor of Character Education and Virtue Ethics & Deputy Director

# MA CHARACTER EDUCATION
# -
# CLASS OF 2020

Johann Botha

Imani Clough

Joanne Cogan

Miroslava Durankova

Manuel Fernandez Gonzalez

Thomas Haigh

Elizabeth Keogh

Louise MacArthur-Clare

Andrew Maile

Benjamin Miller

Natasha Neale

Thomas Pole

Elizabeth Style

Carrie Taylor

Julie Taylor

Camilla Wellman

# TABLE OF CONTENTS





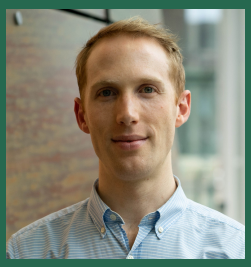






# TABLE OF CONTENTS CONT...













JOHANN L BOTHA
johannlionbotha@gmail.com

# Into the divide: Bohmian dialogue as contemplative wisdom-inquiry into shared meaning

**Background/context**

The core problems that this study addresses are the current global risk threats (WEF, 2020), which include concerns of communication breakdown and the fragmentation in our perceived views and understanding of our common situation. Such issues have resulted in a lack of social cohesion and of shared meaning to orientate our global efforts to tackle global threats such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and now, also, the satisfactory handling of pandemic outbreaks.

This study suggests dialogue as a method of inquiry towards the clarification of minds in a participatory community-building approach known as Bohmian Dialogue. Dialogue as a dialectic method dates back to Plato but I investigate a more recent form as outlined by physicist David Bohm's (1996) later work. This study positions dialogue in the wisdom-inquiry tradition, which Maxwell (2019) differentiates from knowledge-inquiry; where the latter is primarily attending to knowledge acquisition, wisdom-inquiry is able to tackle discussions on shared living solutions.

Wisdom, with an agreed-upon moral foundation, seeks to 'see through illusion' to the root reality or source of the problem. Bohmian Dialogue is aimed at clarifying our collective minds, awareness and common consciousness by looking at how thoughts fragment and parse perception and understanding in distorted or self-serving, biased ways. Wisdom-inquiry, rather than knowledge-inquiry, is aimed at having these shared living, shared understanding and shared meanings dialogues. The study first tries to establish a good foundational understanding of what Bohmian Dialogue is and how it is applied, since character educators may not be familiar with his work. Then the study aims to show the appropriateness of Bohmian dialogue in a Character Education context by connecting its dimensions to Sherman's (1989) fourfold path towards Aristotelian practical wisdom.

**Main summary**

A. What is dialogue and what makes it distinct from other forms of conversation or communication? Furthermore, what is unique about David Bohm's conception of Dialogue?

Dialogue is a form of conversation that can be described as thinking together. The emphasis is on thinking as a matter of doubt and not one of certainty. What sets dialogue apart from mere conversation is that it engages a question that is worth inquiring and reflecting upon. It is not simply explaining or narrating experience. It is full of doubt,curiosity and wonder to stimulate an open-minded attitude and a process of thinking together. Debate, on the other hand, is building up an argument and defending one's claims. I argue that dialogue may include moments of debate and dialectic arguments, such as can be seen in Plato's dialogues. But unlike the

seemingly argumentative style of the Socratic-Method found in Plato's dialogues, Bohmian dialogue is aimed at a collaborative inquiry into the truth of a matter. Bohm is sensible to assume that truth is an ideal, rather than a practical destination to arrive at. There is no road to truth through one's perspective and opinions: what is practically achievable in dialogue is shared meaning.

Bohm's vision of dialogue is to facilitate inquiry into what is true in a coherent participatory process of impersonal fellowship. Important to Bohm's vision of dialogue is the sharing of views and distinguishing their meanings, which at the same time becomes a way to let them go and be suspended in the group. There is no pressure to take up any particular view or to persuade anyone of your point of view. In Bohm's sense, truth is unconditional and underneath all of our perspectives. To this, I've argued for seeing Bohmian Dialogue as a contemplative practice with others. Emphasis falls on the listening, perceiving and attending to all that emerges, strengthening our rational ability to see the interconnected ways we are influencing one another.

B. How can Dialogue cultivate practical wisdom?

Here the study argues for the similarities, differences and complimentary approach Bohmian Dialogue has with Nancy Sherman's fourfold pathway to Aristotelian phronesis (practical wisdom). I argue that Bohmian Dialogue gives one the tools and practices to inquire and reflect on Sherman's 'Aristotelian' four factors of phronesis:

1. Perception and Understanding is the ability to discern the particulars of an event. To be able to attend to moral-relevant and salient cues. In Bohmian Dialogue it is suggested this is achieved through 'suspension' and 'proprioception of thought'. The aim is to suspend judgement and, as in a contemplative state, become mindful of the movements of thoughts and feelings present. If one simply reacts to what is salient to oneself, one may be guided by the passions without time for reflection, yet to suppress passion, feeling and emotion is to turn one's anger, for example, upon oneself. Suspension is to let it hang and be seen, yet not compelled to act it out. Done collectively, we gain insight of what feelings and thoughts are present, which are influencing our perceptions and understanding of the situation.
2. Choice-making, or deliberation, is linked to the Bohmian notion of 'coherence', as a way of deliberating to see what 'hangs together' and what is incoherent in our shared opinions. Important to consider here is Bohm's sense of harmonizing inner measure with outer comparison of reasons given to the so called 'doctrine of the mean', to cultivate the appropriate response to a situation via dialogue. This could be an inner dialogue with oneself as well as with others.
3. Sherman's concept of Shared Living is drawn from Aristotelian ideas of man as a political or social animal and, more importantly, the high value he placed on friendship. For Bohm, participation is fundamental in life. This can take the social and interconnected ideas of Aristotle to the extreme of harmonizing with the unfolding universe. There seems at first a major difference between Aristotelian friendship and Bohemian impersonal fellowship. Yet I argue that Bohmian impersonal fellowship tries to emphasise relational power, the intersubjective realm, to link with reason and logic, where an over emphasis on egoist subjective wellbeing may misjudge that the power does not solely lie in the individual but in their relational stance. That is in the quality of their friendships to others, which I believe agrees with Aristotle.
4. Habituation offers a way to interrogate Bohm's relative neglect of the topic of forming good

habits of dialogue; though he did show regret that more emphasis was not placed on the self-discipline that is inherent in dialogue (Nichol, 2005). Since dialogue does not aim to correct or discipline others, it is intrinsically a self-disciplined exercise. Though Bohm may have underestimated the need to cultivate such self-discipline through habituation, the Aristotelean focus on good habits can stabilise a good practice of Bohmian Dialogue.

## Looking ahead

Next steps would be to test, reflect and refine Sherman's framework of practical wisdom in my suggested dialogical learning approach in the professional work context, and refine the framework by supplementing it with recent and ongoing work on phronesis by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. Wisdom research is currently seeing major increase of interest, for example the recently established Toronto Wisdom Taskforce (2020) is aimed at creating a shared understanding of wisdom research. Dialogue may play a major role in establishing a shared meaning, while also promoting itself as a means to gain insight and practice wise reasoning, focused on shared living solutions to establish the ethos, habitat and dwelling spaces that shape our character in mutually influential processes.

## References

Bohm, D. (1996). On Dialogue. Routledge: New York
.
Nichol, L. (2005). 'Wholeness Regained'. In Banathy, B. & Jenlink, P. M.(Eds.) Dialogue as means to collective communication. Kluwer Academic Publishers. New York.

Maxwell, N. (2019). How Wisdom Can Help Solve Global Problems. In R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems. Pp. 337-380. Palgrave Macmillan: Switzerland.

Sherman, N. (1989). The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

World Economic Forum. (2020). The Global Risks Report 2020 Insight Report 15th Edition. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risk_Report_2020.pdf.

IMANI CLOUGH
contact@imaniacademy.co.uk
Imani Academy

# An exploratory and critical evaluation of the links between character education and oracy and the impact of a dialogic approach to teaching

**Background/context**

In the current climate, policy and research discourses on character and oracy are typically explored separately. This dissertation critiques literature that considers both areas of development and provides an analysis of the links between character education and oracy education and the impact of a dialogical approach to teaching. A dialogic approach to teaching requires a skilled and trained teacher, facilitator, or coach with good questioning skills (Philosophy for Children, 2008). It also needs to be a strategic priority of the education system, to be given equal weighting and importance alongside other key educational milestones in schools (Philosophy for Children, 2008). This academic piece explored what opportunities young people were given to philosophise in the classroom and what is required to propel the discussion of oracy skills forward and make this integral to the fabric of education.

This dissertation's intention was to contribute to that debate. My professional practice has been a facilitative one, as I have continued to work with children and young people to support their realisation that they can gain the confidence to ask questions whilst recognising the importance of respecting others through argument formation (Philosophy for Children, 2008). This dialogue-driven method of engaging with young people is highlighted in the work of Professor Matthew Lipman (1974). He has influenced the approaches to applying philosophy in the classroom through evaluating the complex but vital relationship that philosophy, education, theory, and practice have with each other. This has been achieved whilst framing a dialogical approach to teaching by providing conditions and opportunities for a class of children and young people to engage with a philosophical problem and to converse with each other, so that they can begin to explore the issue in a thought-out and appropriate way.

**Main summary**

This small-scale academic study utilised mixed-method research, which explored the impact of implementing a dialogic approach into the teaching space. The critical reflection evaluated the current provision of oracy in UK Schools and the synergy that can be created when aligned to the teaching of character education and development. As part of this research, the researcher collected data via semi-structured interviews with primary and secondary teachers and surveyed secondary aged pupils in key stages three and four, to support and validate the research hypothesis. The research assesses the value and impact of oracy education, with a focus on the links between character development.

The questions below provided a good entry point to develop some critical exploration:

1. What is the impact of quality oracy education on the future life chances of young people: specifically, how does ‘teaching talk’ affect social mobility?
2. What value do education institutions and businesses give to oracy?
3. How can educators use oracy within the classroom to empower young people to engage in social issues?

The findings suggest that the participants found that oracy development is an important skill to help students respond constructively to situations they may find themselves in beyond school, as active citizens of society and the workforce.

Oracy has a positive impact on civic engagement and empowerment, increasing children and young people’s ability to debate issues, while also increasing understanding about social issues and ability to manage differences with others.

The general argument I put forward is that oracy and character education can work together to drive the educational experience of pupils, supporting their moral development and crucial verbal communication skills. In private schools, pupils are offered a range of taught public speaking and debating opportunities, allowing those students exposed to this method of teaching a higher level of acquisition and application of skills in new and varied contexts, politically and socially (Oracy Cambridge, 2020; https://oracycambridge.org/).

For those students who attend state schools and come from socio-economically deprived backgrounds, oracy education can bring substantial benefits, such as, improved curriculum learning and reasoning skills; I have found this to be the case in my own practice.

The research literature found that this required skilled and confident teachers to role model best practice, accompanied by strong leadership skills. To implement this in schools requires teachers to develop the knowledge and understanding of the practice of oracy and character education. The findings are located within the broader literature review on philosophy for children, Socratic dialogue and Aristotelian character education, and the possible impact of reimagining and narrating the underpinning principles of teaching.

## Looking ahead

The data suggests that the provision of an educational environment that enables students to proactively engage in dialogue goes on to naturally contribute to building their verbal skills as well as appreciative questioning to and from their peers.

That questioning is therefore informed but also, and importantly, cognisant of the differing viewpoints of peers in the classroom. Ownership of these enhanced verbal skills goes on to support their ability to articulate but also elaborate on their own ideas. The journey is an incremental one and serves to deepen understanding and cultivate critical thinking in children and young people. Through the purposeful and conscious teaching of speaking skills and the provision of opportunities to use their voice through public speaking and debates, and increasing the spaces and arenas for the practice of talk, children and young people can become agile and confident communicators.

As I enter the next stage of my own leadership development journey in the education sector, this dissertation provided me with a timely opportunity to reflect on my practice as a facilitator and practitioner working with young people who are perceived to experience barriers to learning. My professional approach to supporting the developmental needs of children and young people is to provide a space for children and young people to learn through critical reflection and develop appreciative enquiry competencies, enabling them to explore their thoughts and articulate their ideas in a safe space, thus allowing them to find their voice and have a fair and equitable chance to flourish.

In February 2021, I will be hosting a six-month learning marathon: Education for Liberation, to connect with a variety of educational initiatives around the UK. I will be bringing people across disciplines together to facilitate a powerful learning experience with peers, to help us revolutionise the way we engage and inspire young minds. Together we will create alternative futures for education, innovate our way around shortcomings, and cultivate a shared set of community values. If you would like to join us to explore and act on your own big questions, for example: How might we share more wisdom between generations? What role does ‘play’ have in adolescent learning? How might I develop a unique pedagogy to offer in my youth work practice? Please apply, it would be great to hear from you.

## References

Philosophy for Children. (2008). Philosophy for Children. Available: https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/oracytoolkit/. Last accessed 17th August 2020.

JO COGAN
jo.cogan@protonmail.com

# Friends for life: Autobiography as a source of proxy friendship and moral guidance in the development of character

**Background/context**

The aim of this study is to make a claim for autobiography as a uniquely placed ethical guide in the lifelong development of character. Autobiography is a genre of literature that also traverses into history, philosophy and psychology; a combination which enables the reader to engage her moral emotions with the enquiry into how to live well. Engaging with a well-written and insightful account of someone's life can help us make wiser choices in our own life.

We engage with autobiography differently from other genres of literature, accepting the narrator as a real person and the narrative as an authentic account. This allows us to form a relationship which can stand as a proxy for a real friendship. While role modelling might be the more expected route, I argue that the subject of the autobiography is not a moral exemplar; it is a form of friend whose psychological intimacy and complexity allows the development of compassion and comradeship and can guide our moral development on a deeper affective level.

Drawing together research on literature, life narratives, psychoanalytic theory, and friendship in relation to Aristotelian character education, I find that autobiography can both provide a meeting point for these areas and bring strengths of its own. It can remind us to see the bigger view of our lives and seek our telos; guide us towards self-knowledge; help us find meaning and purpose in life; and (in a departure from Aristotle) open our minds to the possibility of moral transformation. While the subject of this essay is theoretical, it can have very real and practical applications.

**Main summary**

My approach is to analyse selected autobiographies as examples. My areas of investigation are: how the autobiography relates to Aristotelian theory; the aspects that make the autobiography particularly well-placed to teach us how to live; and how these areas are illuminated by the form of the individual autobiographies, in terms of themes, style and language.

My intention is to understand how someone takes shape as a person, creates meaning, and learns to live in the world, rather than following any one theoretical school of literary analysis. The selection of autobiographies has been intended to include books which illustrate the themes I am investigating in well-written and insightful ways and engage the reader's moral emotions. The autobiographies are Jeanette Winterson's Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal? (2011), Hilary Mantel's Giving up the Ghost (2004), Oliver Sacks' On the Move (2015), Paul Kalanthi's When Breath Becomes Air (2016), Brian Keenan's An Evil Cradling (1992), Jan Morris' Conundrum (1974), Stephen Bernard's Paper Cuts (2018), and Mark Rowlands' The Philosopher and the Wolf (2018), with comparisons and contrasts drawn with Helen MacDonald's H is for Hawk (2014), Raynor Winn's The Salt Path (2018), Rebecca Solnit's Recollections of my Non

Existence (2020), and Diana Athill's Somewhere Towards The End (2008).

My investigation falls broadly into four categories, which are not discrete, but closely interrelated:

i)The Bigger View of Life: Starting at the Beginning.

While we do not need an autobiography to tell us that the environment we experience in our early years is hugely formative in shaping our character, it can enlighten and encourage us in demonstrating that to varying extents we can take control of our own life direction and change it for the better. Through travelling with an author as she grapples with the elements that have shaped her and consciously chooses to change her life trajectory, the reader can raise her head to see her own life on a larger scale, engage her phronesis, and be lifted above mundane preoccupations to seek her telos.

ii) Finding Meaning and Purpose

The moral and psychological benefits of meaning and purpose have been the subject of much research, but it is not always easy to discover them in our own lives. While each person's life has its own particularities, we can learn much from someone else's insightful account of their own quest. Where a moral exemplar would provide us with a hero to emulate, the psychological intimacy we have with an autobiography as a proxy friend allows us a much deeper connection; we can engage with the narrator's struggles, wrong turns and misjudgements, and feel the effects of finding meaning and purpose in life. Through living someone else's experience, we are better equipped to discover what matters most in our own lives.

iii) Searching for the Self

Self-knowledge is an essential part of the virtuous and integrated life, without which we cannot find phronesis and eudaimonia. It can be revealed to people in different ways; sometimes this is through an extreme situation which provides a very different perspective on the world and our place in it. The emotional engagement we have with narrators who have undergone such situations can provide us with this perspective and the experience of one who has lived through it. Autobiography can provide a lived testimony of an imperfect human being seeking herself in the world, provoking complex questions and uncomfortable truths. Such accounts will speak to the reader on a different, more emotionally and psychologically engaged level, than a philosophical text which guides us in dealing with suffering, and help us to understand the philosophy in the context of a life lived. The personal narrative works as a friend speaking to us of his own experiences, drawing us into confidences that can help shed light on ourselves and others.

iv) Transformations

While moral transformations are considered a departure from Aristotle, they are not uncommon in autobiographies. Usually taking the form of the gradual and existential rather than the immediate or radical, an autobiography allows us psychological insight into how a person can change her life, however slowly and painfully, for the better. Such transformations occur symbiotically with attaining a bigger view of life, finding meaning and purpose, and self-knowledge; the themes are all a part of the lifelong cultivation and development of character and the interconnected routes to eudaimonia.

## L**ooking ahead**

The autobiographies analysed demonstrate that the genre is rich ground for the Aristotelian quest into how to live well, and that the relationship with an autobiography as a proxy friendship is an effective one in engaging the moral emotions and acting as an ethical guide.

The opportunities autobiographies can present in our lifelong cultivation of character are myriad; this paper has explored a small number of them, and I believe that this rich and insightful genre can provide many more that could form the basis of further enquiries. One such theme, which emerged repeatedly from the analysis, is that of the necessity of love for the achievement of eudaimonia. There are also opportunities to explore the effects of a friendship with autobiography at different life stages (I have speculated that it might be most effective in young adulthood), and for further exploration of its effects on the themes I have investigated here.

MIROSLAVA DURANKOVÁ
mirka.durankova@gmail.com
Collegium of Anton Neuwirth, Slovakia

# The importance of moral imagination and desire in character education: Evaluation of the one-year intervention of Great Works Academy for secondary school students with a focus on moral imagination and students' desire to act virtuously

## Background/context

What educators definitely have in their hands is a power to inspire students to "want the right things" (Lewis, in Bohlin, 2005) and to desire for the better version of themselves. This 'power' is the subject of interest of 'schooling of desire' and of moral imagination, as presented by Karen Bohlin in her book Teaching Character Education Through Literature (2005). Her thoughts inspired me the most. Moreover, I considered the ideas of V. Guroian (1998, 2005), J.A. Appleyard (1991), K. Kristjánsson et al. (2020), D. Carr and T. Harrison (2015), J. Kekes (1991), A. Cunningham (2001), N. Carroll (2002) and papers of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues.

Great Works Academy is a one-year programme for secondary-school students with the aim of awakening students' desire to find beauty and wisdom in their everyday life and to desire for virtuous life. The 7-15 students met with the teacher on a weekly basis after school for a 90-minute seminar at a time to discuss a great story, its characters and to ask deep questions based on the story. We used four different genres to tell the stories - literature, movies, fine art and music.

## Main summary

The aim of my research was an evaluation of the Great Works Academy one-year programme for secondary-school students with a focus on moral imagination and students' desire to act virtuously. As stories and story-telling are strong tools that support the development of moral imagination and desire of students to act virtuously (Bohlin, 2005), I evaluated the programme to explore the following research questions:

- How do students evaluate their moral imagination?
- Do students desire to improve their character traits after our one-year programme?
- Which aspects of the one-year programme were the most influential to students?
- Which stories and their components were the most influential to students?

I used multi-strategy research design with qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The main quantitative data collection method in this study was the Defining issue test. Other data collection methods, such as students' self- evaluation questionnaire, feedback forms after every seminar and teachers' evaluation, were both quantitative and qualitative.

Most of the Academy students desire to improve their character traits after the programme, and they also know what they need to improve - they lack confidence and courage to act. Bohlin says that “the schooling of desire in students’ own lives depends on the development of a well-exercised moral imagination” (Bohlin, 2005: p.29). Our study showed that 66% of students expressed agreement with moral imagination statements and they improved in moral reasoning by 4.4 points (DIT) finally leading to 77% of students who desire to improve their character traits. Thanks to the programme, 88% of students desire to improve their good qualities - mostly courage, judgement and empathy, and 78% of them would like to be better people.

The most important parts of the programme are teachers (95%), discussions (94%), literature (93%) and the combination of genres (87%). All of them were also evaluated by the teachers as influential for students, but, unlike students, the teachers thought that the combination of genres had the biggest impact on students (100%) and the teachers had a smaller influence (75%).

The students considered these works to be the most influential - (1) Viktor Frankl - Man’s Search for Meaning, (2) Harper Lee - To Kill a Mockingbird, (3) Plato - Defense of Socrates, (4) Jan Kadar and Elmar Klos - The Shop on the Main Street, (5) Julius Schnabel - The Diving Bell and the Butterfly.

All of them have several things in common - they are all very strong stories, mostly based on true events (Frankl, Plato, Schnabel), and they open important questions about life, such as: the meaning of life (Frankl), prejudice and childhood (Lee), personal values, integrity and one’s attitude to death (Plato), the Holocaust, justice and our own lack of courage (Kadar and Klos), as well as the meaning of life with severe disability (Schnabel).

The most important components of the story for students are: the problem and the pain of the story (90%) and that the story opens important questions to which students want to know the answers (92%). The main topics for discussion for our secondary school students are the meaning of life, values, integrity, prejudice and justice, which confirms the Appleyard argument that adolescent readers need stories which help them find their own way of living their life (Appleyard, 1991).

Based on this data, we can claim that the one-year programme of Great Works Academy based on great stories and the art of our Western culture with all its components offers a significant opportunity for the development of students’ desire to work on their character. The combination of genres, narrative aspects of the selected stories, relationships with teachers and other students awake students’ moral imagination and desire.

Although I did not focus my research on teachers and my aim was to use their evaluations to achieve triangulation of data, I found teachers’ evaluations very interesting. 60% of them agreed with the different statement of moral imagination, 90% of them want to work more on their good qualities and 95% of them want to study more and explore new things. Thanks to the programme they want to improve in modesty (15%), empathy (13%), courage (12%) and deliberation (12%). Moreover, students rated ‘teachers’ as the most influential part of the programme. I think that their mindset of growth and desire to improve their character (Jubilee Centre, 2015) is a good sign that the one-year programme is a good model for character development as “the single most powerful tool you have to impact a student’s character is your own character” (Jubilee Centre, 2015: p.1).

## Looking ahead

For the one-year programme, I would recommend even more of a focus on challenging literature and arts and prioritising the works which have more narrative aspects.

The topic offers space for further research. I would recommend evaluating the programme participants a few months and one year after the end of the intervention. This could reveal the permanence of the results, the reflection on the programme and its influence on the students with the passage of time and see if the students have turned their desires into action.

I would also suggest using the self-evaluation questionnaires to evaluate the moral imagination of the participants at the beginning of the programme and to compare the results with the data evaluated at the end of it, so we can evaluate the students' progress in moral imagination.

In addition, I would recommend focusing on the 'gappiness problem' (Kristjánsson et al., 2020), because I have found out that moral imagination and desire are interconnected and that stories have great influence on schooling desire and moral imagination.

## References


Appleyard, J.A., (1991) Becoming a Reader. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Bohlin, K. (2005) Teaching Character Education Through Literature: Awakening the Moral Imagination in Secondary Classrooms. Routledge: New York.

Carr, D., & Harrison, T. (2015) Education Character Through Stories. Exeter: Imprint Academic.

Carroll, N. (2002) 'The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge'. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism. 60 (1). 3-26.

Cunningham, A. (2001) The Heart of What Matters - The Role for Literature in Moral Philosophy. University of California Press.

Guroian, V. (1998) Tending the Heart of Virtue: How Classic Stories Awaken a Child's Moral Imagination. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Guroian, V. (2005) Rallying the Really Human Things. ISI Books

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2015). Statement on Teacher Education and Character Education. University of Birmingham

Kekes, J. (1991) 'Moral imagination, Freedom and the Humanities', American Philosophical Quarterly. 28 (2). 101-111.

Kristjánsson, K., Darnell, C., Fowers, B., Moller, F., Pollard, D., Thoma, S., 2020. Phronesis: Developing a Conceptualisation and an Instrument - Research Report. Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. University of Birmingham

MANUEL JOAQUÍN FERNÁNDEZ GONZÁLEZ
manuels.fernandezs@lu.lv
University of Latvia

# Assessment of a pilot programme for supporting principals' leadership for character education in Latvian schools

**Background/context**

This dissertation presents the elaboration and assessment of a nine-hour long professional development programme (hereinafter – the Programme) for school principals about the implementation of character education in Latvian schools in a cultural-sensitive way. This dissertation had a practical and a theoretical goal. The practical goal was to show how the Programme was developed. The theoretical goal was to assess, empirically, the Programme fit and feasibility and its effectiveness as perceived by participants.

The body of scientific literature about school-leaders' education, including leadership for character education, is enormous. The review of literature presented in the first section of the thesis illustrated the worldwide efforts of the scientific community to provide evidence-based support to school-leaders for implementing character and virtue education at school and revealed the characteristics and effective practices of CE leaders (e.g., Murray, Berkowitz and Lerner, 2019; Walker, Sims and Kettlewell, 2017). Three main needs in the school-leaders' training for CE were highlighted: self-knowledge and personality development, deep knowledge of the field, and communicative competence.

Unfortunately, in Latvia there is no training provision for school leaders addressing those needs, excepting some short seminars for schoolteachers and some sporadic reminders about the legal requirement of including virtue education in the new school curriculum.

**Main summary**

Based on this theoretical background, the research questions guiding the study were formulated as follows:

1. What was the fit and feasibility of the Programme? Concretely, what were participants' perception of its usefulness, methods, activities, and materials?
2. How did participants perceive the influence of the Programme on their knowledgeability of the field and their leadership competence for CE?

The programme elaboration was based on the analysis of school principals' needs in Latvia, and it was implemented in February-March 2020 in Riga and surrounding areas. Thirty-five school-leaders participated in this practitioner research, which used mixed methods (questionnaire pre- and post-intervention with rating and open questions, focus group discussion and a reflective journal). The rich data obtained were analysed using SPSS 26, AQUAD 7 and NVivo 11.

The key findings regarding Programme fit and feasibility revealed that there were six recurrent themes in the data. The key to the success of the Programme seems to be the combination of participants' "Reflection" and subsequent "Collaboration" and sharing. Those two themes were already present in the initial beliefs of participants and, at least regarding collaboration, in their expectations. As the final evaluation showed, several methods and activities successfully combined those two aspects. Two other recurrent themes were "Professionality" and "Practical tools", which were also present in the initial expectations and beliefs of respondents, and for which provision was highly valued during the assessment of methods and activities, respectively. The provision of practical tools was also positively highlighted in the overall assessment of the Programme. Finally, the themes "Values" and "Atmosphere" of friendship, respect and mutual support were also interwoven through the data, in particular, in participants' initial beliefs and in their assessment of the lector, the methods and the Programme overall.

Reflecting on these key findings, it was found that the six themes were conceptually interconnected (see Figure 1). The Programme's "Professionality" and "Practical tools" provided the necessary material for "Reflection" and "Collaboration", which in its turn were facilitated by the "Values" and the friendly "Atmosphere" of the Programme.

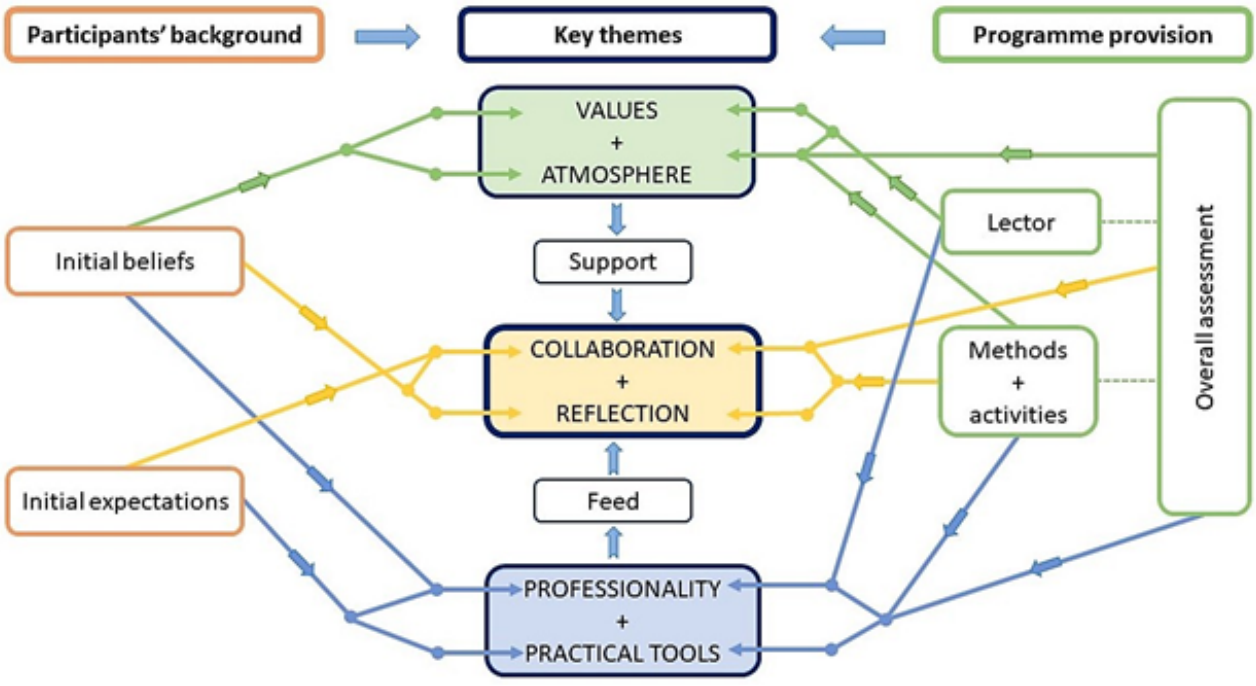



*Figure 1: Key themes and their interconnection*

Summarising, it can be said that the Programme fitted participants beliefs and expectations, providing a variety of methods and activities led by a lector who, sharing quality professional knowledge and demonstrating practical tools, enhanced participants' personal reflection and mutual sharing in a context of mutual trust and friendship with underlying common values of coherence and responsibility.

One of the most relevant results was the unanimous approval of activities combining personal reflection and classroom or peer sharing. The integration of reflection and collaborative learning has been proven to be very useful in other professional development programmes. For example, Loughran (2002) argued that working in groups helps to see practically that one's colleagues also engage in personal reflective efforts, and how others' perspectives enhance critical thinking and help to avoid rationalisation (p. 35).

Another aspect highlighted by participants as a key of the Programme's success was the emergence of an atmosphere of mutual support, optimism, and respect. It was created by considering participants' needs during the Programme preparation and by acknowledging their experience and expertise throughout the Programme. In adult learning, the importance of a friendly atmosphere is widely recognised (Tennant, 2019) and, in particular, the feeling of being appreciated, which is "the most social of the needs" (Knowles, 1980: p.85).

Another relevant finding, which is related to the Programme atmosphere, was that, when reporting their perceptions about the lector, participants highlighted virtues and moral attitudes such as 'helpfulness' and 'coherence' along with professionality and positiveness. In this regard it can be noted that, traditionally, in social cognition research 'warmth' and 'competence' were seen as the two universal dimensions of person perception (Fiske et al., 2007: p.77), but more recently, moral character has been found to be a more important driver of impression formation regarding other persons (Goodwin, 2015: p.38).

## Looking ahead

In the future implementation of the Programme, space should be given to addressing in more detail the methods for communicating with and involving families. At the level of education policy in Latvia, during the Programme, it became clear that the current legislative efforts need to be completed with concrete educational opportunities for principals in this field, and with more financing for translating and adapting existing classroom materials and tools for involving the whole school in the CE initiative. The study is also relevant for improving the practice of principals' training for CE, as it revealed some key factors of success (the combination of reflection and sharing, professionality, a supportive friendly atmosphere) and showed in a practical way how to implement them. It can be expected that the further implementation of such a programme, with adequate improvements, may have a positive impact in character and virtue education at school, and subsequently, on the flourishing of individuals and society.

## Acknowledgements

This work was implemented with the support of the ERDF postdoctoral research grant No. 1.1.1.2/VIAA/1/16/071. Dissertation available here: https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/handle/7/52875

## References

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., & Glick, P. (2007) Universal dimensions of social cognition: warmth and competence. Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 11(2), 77-83.

Goodwin, G.P. (2015) Moral character in person perception. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 24(1), 38-44.

Knowles, M. S. (1980) The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy (2nd ed.). Cambridge Books.

Loughran, J. J. (2002) Effective reflective practice: In search of meaning in learning about teaching. Journal of teacher education, 53(1), 33-43.

Murray, E. D., Berkowitz, M. W., & Lerner, R. M. (2019) Leading with and for character: The implications of character education practices for military leadership. The Journal of Character & Leadership Development, 6(1), 33-42.

Tennant, M. (2019) Psychology and adult learning: The role of theory in informing practice. Routledge.

Walker, M., Sims, D., & Kettlewell, K. (2017) Leading character education in schools: Case study report. National Foundation for Educational Research. https://www.nfer.ac.uk/leading-character-education-in-schools-case-study-report/

TOM HAIGH
haigh.t2468@gmail.com

# How do Schools of Character ensure their continuity through effective leadership succession planning?

**Background/context**

Succession planning is ‘the deliberate and systematic effort made by organisations to recruit, develop and retain individuals with a range of leadership competencies capable of implementing current and future organisational goals,’ (Leibman, Bruer and Maki, 1996) and, ‘to create positive and coordinated flows of leadership, across many years and numerous people’ (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, in Bush, 2011: p.181). The study considers succession planning in relation to Schools of Character whose leadership is essential to the success of its character education. The headteacher is the only member of staff whose remit extends across all areas of the school and is pivotal to developing and sustaining a ‘whole-school’ approach to its character provision. The importance of a headteacher in promoting and sustaining a school’s character provision prompts the critical question of how a school ensures it remains a school of character when the headteacher moves on? The study draws on research into succession planning within schools, which is prompted by the current crisis of a shortage in headteachers. The study also applies leadership theory and draws on existing research into values-based recruitment.

**Main summary**

Existing research pointed to two ways that successful leadership succession could be secured in a School of Character when a headteacher moves on. Firstly, to develop internal talent that would be well positioned to become future successors. Secondly, to have recruitment practices that ensured headteachers are hired who possess the virtues that the school promotes and have the practical wisdom required to make the good judgement decisions that the role requires. These existing areas of research shaped the study’s two research questions:

1. How do Schools of Character develop internal talent to help safeguard succession?
2. How do Schools of Character assess and recruit new headteachers who will safeguard the school’s focus on character development?

The study used semi-structured interviews with three participants who were headteachers of Schools that had received the School of Character Kitemark from the Association for Character Education. This ensured participants’ schools had all demonstrated a standard of character education that had been externally validated in terms of their whole-school approach, as outlined in the Kitemark Framework (https://character-education.org.uk/Schools-of-Character-Information-Pack.pdf). The study found that how the participants planned for headteacher succession within their schools was an integral part of how they led their schools on a daily basis, and was shaped through their leadership style.

This enabled them to 'retain the best and brightest of the leadership pool… and coach… their successors,' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2004: p.8). In the same way as character education isn't delivered in isolation to the rest of the curriculum and wider school, succession planning isn't an additional responsibility for the headteacher that is undertaken as a silo exercise. As servant leaders, the study's participants constantly developed their internal talent so they would be well positioned to take on the leadership of a School of Character in the future.

It was found that staff development wasn't delivered in the form of explicit professional training, but through an ongoing nurturing of their staff. This nurturing came in the form of empowering staff with a clear vision of what they needed to achieve, but allowing them the autonomy of how to get there. This aspect of servant leadership was complimented by providing character-based leadership roles throughout the school. These roles helped develop a critical mass of staff who supported and drove character education within the school. This critical mass provided numerous benefits to help safeguard the schools' character provision when the time came for new leadership. Firstly, it provided on-the-job character-based leadership training for internal talent, so they were well positioned to lead a School of Character in the future. Secondly, it ensured any future headteacher would inherit a team skilled and dedicated to driving forward the school's character provision. Thirdly, providing character-based leadership opportunities provided staff with the kind of 'intellectual stimulation' associated with transformational leadership (Bass, 1990). By providing this 'intellectual stimulation,' it gave 'staff opportunities to develop their skills and supported them in their professional expertise,' which is proven to increase staff retention (Huang and Cho, 2010: p.15). Retaining internal talent is critical to succession planning, especially against a backdrop of younger teachers moving on more often than their predecessors (Jurkiewicz, 2000) and an overall shortage of headteachers in relation to positions available (Bush, 2011).

All three participants within the study attempted to assess the values and virtues of headteacher candidates during interviews. Assessing a candidate's values and virtues was done using a variety of methods with differing levels of success. There was limited confidence as to whether they were able to ascertain that a candidate simply believed in the school's values or could express them behaviourally as well (Ciulla, 2004, in Hackett and Wang, 2012: p.874). Assessing candidates' ability to perform good judgement through practical wisdom, was an area all the study's participants had little confidence in knowing how to do. This study showed that the participants preferred to recruit headteachers from their internal talent pool as they could have greater confidence in their ability to lead with virtue and make wise decisions and judgements. A School of Character virtue ethics-based recruitment framework could provide them with the additional confidence to recruit from outside their school, which would broaden the range of candidates and further secure the school's leadership succession.

## Looking ahead

It is recommended that leadership training within Schools of Character includes ways to develop their internal talent so there is a pipeline of potential successors with the attributes to continue to execute the school's vision for character into the future. It is recommended that this training is situated in theories of servant leadership. The development of virtues, including foresight/future-mindedness, empowerment and stewardship for the greater good, are essential for servant leadership and should be considered as part of this training.

The study has highlighted the opportunity for Schools of Character to be provided with more structured support in developing their recruitment practices for headteachers as a means to ensure successful succession. It is recommended that guidelines or a virtue-based recruitment framework is developed. Learnings can be taken from the NHS National Values Based Recruitment (VBR) Framework (2014) launched after the Francis Inquiry (2013) for the NHS, which was criticised for its lack of attention to virtue ethics and practical wisdom, (Groothuizen, Callwood and Gallagher, 2018). Despite flaws in the NHS National VBR Framework in regards to the absence of virtue ethics and practical wisdom, it does provide a format and starting point for the development of a Schools of Character virtue ethics-based recruitment framework.

## References


Bass, B. M. (1990) 'From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision'. Organizational Dynamics. 18 (3). 19-31.

Bush, T. (2011) 'Succession planning in England: New leaders and new forms of leadership'. School leadership & management. 31 (3). 181-198.

Groothuizen, J.E., Callwood, A. and Gallagher, A. (2018) 'NHS constitution values for values-based recruitment: a virtue ethics perspective'. Journal of Medical Ethics, 44(8), 518-523.

Hackett, R. D. and Wang, G. (2012) 'Virtues and leadership: An integrating conceptual framework founded in Aristotelian and Confucian perspectives on virtues'. Management Decision. 50 (5). 868-899.

Huang, D. and Cho, J. (2010) 'Using professional development to enhance staff retention'. Afterschool Matters. 12. 9-16.

Jurkiewicz, C. (2000) 'Generation X and the public employee'. Public Personnel Management. 29 (1). 55-74.

Leibman, M., Bruer, R. A. and Maki, B. R. (1996) 'Succession management: The next generation of succession planning'. People and Strategy. 19(3). 16.

LOUISE MACARTHUR-CLARE
Lmacarthur-clare@teachfirst.org.uk
Development Lead – Teach First

# Developing the 'Ideal Self' of trainee teachers on the Teach First training programme

**Background/context**

The aim of Initial Teacher Education (ITT) is to deliver a curriculum that prepares trainees for the initial stages of their career as a teacher. The curricula designed by many training routes focus largely on instrumental teaching methods linked to The Teachers' Standards. What is often missing from these curricula is a consideration of the development of the teacher as a professional, the development of their identity and the character they enact.

Research suggests ways that trainee teachers can develop their character and ethical reasoning is through knowledge of virtues, with the exploration of ethical dilemmas being a useful part of this. While current character education research does not explore the process of the development of identity, possible selves theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986) does examine the identity development of individuals through the exploration of their hopes and fears for the future and the creation of a vision for who they want to be in the future. This vision provides a roadmap to achieve their hopes and motivation to avoid their fears. Developed further in research with trainee teachers, the theory has proved useful in supporting trainees to develop a vision of the type of teacher they would like to be.

In the researcher's role as teacher educator at Teach First, they were interested in the type of teacher that their trainees wanted to become. The research was conducted as trainees entered the final term of their training year. It was felt that this would be a pivotal time to re-focus them on their ideal self as a teacher as they prepare to make the transition from being a trainee to an NQT.

**Main summary**

The primary aims of this research were to understand the vision of the ideal self that was held by a small group of first year Teach First trainees and to explore the impact that a targeted intervention could have on trainees' vision of the ideal self. The participants were made up of a group of trainee teachers from the training portfolio of the researcher.

It was decided that an exploratory mixed-methods approach was to be taken as this would give the flexibility of design that was required to explore the opinions of the participants. The ideal self of the trainees and the potential impact of the intervention were measured through a quasi-experimental approach that utilised a pre-test post-test single group design.

The intervention was a one-hour cooperative session that was conducted on a one-to-one basis. The aims of the intervention were to: 1) Develop the participants' vision of their ideal self and 2) introduce trainees to the building blocks of character and explore how this may impact on their actions in the classroom through the exploration of a dilemma. The intervention was underpinned by possible selves theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986) where trainee teachers had to explore their hopes and fears for the future as a teacher. This was done through a coaching approach, and trainees were questioned by the facilitator to strengthen the decisions they had made, especially regarding the dilemma.

A survey with a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions was administered prior to (pre-survey) and following (post-survey) the intervention. A small group of participants were then selected as a representative sample of the initial group to take part in a semi-structured interview that explored themes from the surveys.

The research produced a variety of interesting findings, with three key areas relating closely to the research focus and questions:

*Theme 1 - The ideal self of trainee teachers on the Teach First Training Programme*

The ideal self of trainee teachers on the Teach First Training Programme falls into five broad categories. The trainees show a desire to develop strong relationships with their pupils; to be a good role model who inspires and guides pupils; to be someone who can effectively manage the behaviour of a class; to be someone who possesses the relevant skills and knowledge to teach the children and demonstrate the professional knowledge and qualities to be a successful teacher. These categories cover most of the areas of trainees' professional lives and have been identified in research as being important to trainee teachers, either for being areas experienced as dilemmas or as part of their possible selves, with one notable exception: the desire to be a good role model for their pupils. The inclusion of this in the ideal selves of the trainees could be due to the mission of Teach First – to build a fair education for all. With pupils from low-income backgrounds, this could be inspiring them to achieve more and developing their character in a way that isn't required in schools in higher income areas.

*Theme 2 - Compassion, confidence and resilience – the virtues valued the most*

From the post-intervention survey data, the virtues that the trainees value the most fell inside the moral virtue category. They gave high ratings to compassion and resilience, which echoes previous research on the values of trainee teachers on university-based routes, however, trainees of the Teach First Training Programme valued confidence at a much higher level and included the moral virtues of judgement and reasoning, justice and humility. These differences could be due to the differences in experience and responsibility during their training year and how this impacts on the development of their professional identity.

*Theme 3 - The intervention supported trainee teachers on the Teach First Training Programme to develop their vision of their ideal self*

Through both the interviews and the survey data, it was evident that the intervention had supported participants to develop their vision of their ideal self as a teacher. It appears that the changes that the participants made to their vision were not a complete overhaul, but more of a refinement of their ideal self, showing that they had an idea of who they wanted to be before the

start of the research. The largest change from pre- to post-intervention was seen in the virtues selected as being an important part of the idea self. Overall, the moral virtues and performance virtues switched, with the moral virtues moving to first place and performance virtues to second in the post-intervention survey. This could potentially show that the focus on the development of personal character and the associated virtues in the intervention had changed the trainees' perception of the type of teacher they wanted to be and, hopefully, the focus they will put on enacting those virtues in the classroom.

## Looking ahead

Considering these findings and the literature reviewed, the subsequent recommendations are made for further research:

- A follow-up study conducted with the initial participants to investigate the long-term impact of the research conducted in this paper, so that adjustments and further recommendations can be made.

- The present research is repeated with participants from a range of ITT routes and providers to enable more generalisable conclusions to be made.

In addition, the following recommendations are made relating to the field of ITT:

- The DfE include the development of professional identity and the character of the teacher into their guidance to ensure it becomes a focus in the development of teachers across the different stages of their development.

- Curricula designed by ITT providers should have a focus on identity development and how the character a teacher features within this and could be enacted.

- Space is created for trainees to take part in future-facing reflection on the ideal self and for coaching conversations with a mentor to take place that challenge the enactment of, and progress towards, the ideal self.

## References

Markus, H. & Nurius, P. (1986) 'Possible Selves', American Psychologist, 41 (9). 954-969.

ANDREW MAILE
a.j.maile@bham.ac.uk
Research Fellow, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

# Identifying the Character Gap in Business Education: Cultivating Phronesis among Business School Students

**Background/context**

In light of far-reaching business scandals and failures of business leaders, the question of whether this is the natural result of business school pedagogy and curriculum has often been raised (Bachman et al., 2018; Ferrero et al., 2005; Ghoshal, 2005). This has stimulated a renaissance of interest in practical wisdom (phronesis) as an antidote and recommendation for business school education, in contrast to an instrumentalist, skills-focussed approach (Sison and Ferrero, 2015; West and Buckby, 2020). In the context of business ethics education, accepting the inadequacy of rules in governing ethical conduct and the preference for a virtue-based approach, a method by which the relevant character virtues can be cultivated in students, is necessary (Hartman, 2008).

Guided by economic values and ignorant of the moral implications, graduates often engage in their careers in ways that seek to serve themselves at the expense of broader societal wellbeing (Murcia et al., 2016). The intellectual virtues are closely associated with educational environments and enable moral agents to pursue new knowledge and understanding, and to engage with it in a critical way (Harrison et al., 2016). Further, they remain educable throughout the university years and beyond (Jubilee Centre, 2020).

**Main summary**

This dissertation sought to make two conceptual contributions to phronesis education in business schools. Firstly, by exploring a nuanced conceptualisation of phronesis focused university business education that resonates with emerging adult needs and expectations (Ardelt, 2018; Brooks et al., 2019). Secondly, by exploring how phronesis education might be cultivated through reflection that nurtures open-mindedness and intellectual humility.

The intellectual virtues relate to the pursuit of epistemic goods, such as knowledge, truth and understanding, central to the higher-level inquiry that is characteristic of a university education (JCCV, 2020). However, business schools have been critiqued for promoting an uncritical, narrow pursuit of management technique (Hahn and Vignon, 2019). By focussing on natural science as an explanation for organisational behaviour, business education misses the opportunity to explore the role of moral responsibility and good judgement (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Roca, 2008). Prioritisation of an instrumental approach at the expense of pursuing epistemic goods and cultivating the intellectual virtues highlights how corporate and economic scandals might be the product of a business education (Ferrero et al., 2020; Ghoshal, 2005; Pettigrew and Starkey, 2016). Thus, not only ought the cultivation of intellectual virtue be central to university curricula and pedagogy, it appears especially the case for business schools.

Phronesis requires an understanding of the good life to indirectly inform the moral agent and enlighten their development and future decisions. Accordingly, when deliberating about what choice or action to make in the here and now, the moral agent will deliberate about different courses of action befitting their blueprint of the good life (Kristjánsson, 2014; Russell, 2009). The role of finance in the blueprint of the good life, as well as the opportunity for reflection by the moral agent on the importance of 'money' in their life, is one example of how the 'blueprint' principle can be applied in business education (Christensen, 2010; Dolan et al., 2007; Huo and Kristjánsson, 2018; Sison, 2015). Questions that encourage contemplation and discussion about one's interests, how one pursues them, and how they fit within conceptions of the good life, are important topics that are often dealt with superficially. Consideration of such issues will help to undermine any unreflective assumptions that business students may have (Hartman, 2006).

With business experts and industry collaboration, group role-play and the use of "culture carriers" are recommended as methods for cultivating phronesis through reflection. It seems appropriate that, in order to cultivate phronesis, methods and approaches focussing on harnessing the intellectual virtues should be considered (Ardelt, 2020; Hartman, 2006; Lamb et al., 2020; Webster, 2007). Some of the proposed methods for cultivating phronesis in business schools are, in essence, skills. Reflection, for example, can be learnt, and thus the skill analogy described by Annas (2011) is particularly relevant to this understanding (Aldao, et al., 2010; Glück and Bluck, 2018; Kross et al., 2005; Webster et al., 2018).

The educator's role in this regard involves engaging in discussion with students and creating space for reflection. Students need to be guided in a rational, reflective and self-directed way (Baehr, 2013). The business educator's role thus includes supporting students to reflect on important questions they have about themselves, who they are, and who they want to become (Jubilee Centre, 2020). These guided reflections can include personal considerations of goals and priorities for life, as well as a focus on particular business dilemmas (Christenson, 2010). Business does not take place in a vacuum, and, as such, issues that pertain to personal flourishing need to be considered alongside issues of business practice (Ferrero and Sison, 2015; Hahn and Vignon, 2019). The business educator needs to be able to draw from a variety of sources and "culture carriers" to capture students' moral imagination and stimulate their business interests (Roca, 2008; Toledano, 2020). This ought to encourage students to think critically about making business decisions and evaluating scenarios in ways that are consistent with their virtues and 'blueprint for the good life' (Kristjánsson et al., 2020; Roca, 2008).

Thus, the educator is not merely a transmitter of knowledge (Baehr, 2013), "but a conductor of students' reflections" (Roca, 2008: p.616; Toledano, 2020). The ability to authentically express and enact one's values in the workplace is important, and a business education should equip and motivate students accordingly (Kristjánsson et al., 2017). This could include important considerations linking working in the business world to motivations outside of work, and inviting students to reflect on their own life and consider what they want to achieve with it (Sison, 2015).

## Looking ahead

The implications of this conceptual dissertation emphasise that more attention should be paid to the cultivation of virtue in university business education settings. Particularly, efforts focussing on phronesis education should be considered. Firstly, friendship is understood to have "intrinsic educational value" (Kristjánsson, 2020b: p.130). Considering the pedagogical role of dialogue and

role-play in cultivating phronesis through reflection, stories and narrative, the interaction that occurs between business students should be further explored. The intrinsic value of such interactions should be nurtured in pedagogical approaches and curriculum design, and used as a valuable resource by the business lecturer (Lamb et al., 2020; Roca, 2008; Toledano, 2020). Secondly, trialling a phronesis intervention with business school students could develop and extend the method of reflection and nuanced conceptualisation of phronesis as proposed in this dissertation. These two considerations of further research are going to be applied in the undertaking of a PhD, which I will be completing part time, alongside a research fellowship at the Jubilee Centre. In my capacity as a Research Fellow, I will be further exploring the link between phronesis and the inclusion of character education in the preparation of professionals at university.

## References


Aldao, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Schweizer, S. (2010) 'Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: A meta-analytic review'. Clinical Psychology Review, 30(2), 217-237. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2009.11.004

Annas, J. (2011). Intelligent virtue. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Antonacopoulou, E. P. (2010) 'Making the business school more 'Critical': Reflexive critique based on phronesis as a foundation for impact'. British Journal of Management, 21(Special issue), s6-s25. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2009.00679.x

Ardelt, M. (2018) 'Can wisdom and psychosocial growth be learned in university courses?'. Journal of Moral Education, 49(1), 30-45. doi:10.1080/03057240.2018.1471392

Ardelt, M. (2020) 'Can wisdom and psychosocial growth be learned in university courses?'. Journal of Moral Education, 49(1), 30-45.

Bachmann, C., Habisch, A., & Dierksmeier, C. (2017) 'Practical wisdom: Management's no longer forgotten virtue'. Journal of Business Ethics, 153(1), 147-165.

Baehr, J. (2013) 'Educating for intellectual virtues: From theory to practice'. Journal of Philosophy of Education, 47(2), 248-262. doi:10.1111/1467-9752.12023

Brooks, E., Brant, J., & Lamb, M. (2019) 'How can universities cultivate leaders of character? insights from a leadership and character development program at the University of Oxford'. International Journal of Ethics Education, 4(2), 167-182. doi:10.1007/s40889-019-00075-x

Christensen, C. (2010) 'How will you measure your life?'. Harvard Business Review, July (https://hbr.org/2010/07/how-will-you-measure-your-life, accessed on 31/08/2020.

Dolan, P., Peasgood, T., & White, M. (2008) 'Do we really know what makes us happy? A review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being'. Journal of Economic Psychology, 29(1), 94-122. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2007.09.001

Ferrero, I., Rocchi, M., Pellegrini, M. M., & Reichert, E. (2020) ‘Practical wisdom: A virtue for leaders. Bringing together Aquinas and authentic leadership’. Business Ethics (Oxford, England), doi:10.1111/beer.12298

Ghoshal, S. (2005) ‘Bad management theories are destroying good management practices’. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 4(1), 75-91. doi:10.5465/amle.2005.16132558

Glück, J. & Bluck, S. (2018) ‘The development of wisdom: New cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence’. Innovation in Aging, 2(suppl_1), 552-553.

Hahn, C., & Vignon, C. (2019) ‘Management education from episteme to phronesis: The contribution of French didactic theory’. Management Learning, 50(3), 337-354. doi:10.1177/1350507619831118

Harrison, T., Morris, I., & Ryan, J. (2016) Teaching character in the primary classroom. London: Sage.

Hartman, E.M. (2008) ‘Reconciliation in Business Ethics: Some advice from Aristotle’. Business Ethics Quarterly, 18(2), 253-265.

Huo, Y., & Kristjánsson, K. (2018) ‘Why is there lack of growth in character virtues? an insight into business students across British business schools’. Cultivating moral character and virtue in professional practice (1st ed., pp. 207-225) Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781315182414-16 Retrieved from https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781315182414/chapters/10.4324/9781315182414-16

Kross, E., Ayduk, O., & Mischel, W. (2005) ‘When asking "why" does not hurt distinguishing rumination from reflective processing of negative emotions’. Psychological Science, 16(9), 709-715. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2005.01600.x

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. (2020) Character education in universities: A framework for flourishing. Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, Retrieved from http://www.econis.eu/PPNSET?PPN=663396786

Kristjánsson, K. (2014) Phronesis and moral education: Treading beyond the truisms. Theory and Research in Education, 12(2), 151-171. doi:10.1177/1477878514530244

Kristjánsson, K. (2017) ‘Recent work on flourishing as the aim of education: A critical review’. British Journal of Education Studies, 65(1), 87-107. doi: 10.1080/00071005.2016.1182115.

Kristjánsson, K. (2020a) ‘An introduction to the special issue on wisdom and moral education’. Journal of Moral Education: Wisdom and Moral Education, 49(1), 1-8. doi:10.1080/03057240.2019.1705041

Kristjánsson, K. (2020b) ‘Aristotelian character friendship as a ‘Method’ of moral education’. Studies in Philosophy and Education, 39(4), 349-364. doi:10.1007/s11217-020-09717-w

Lamb, M., Brant, J., and Brooks, E. (2020) ‘How is Virtue Cultivated? Seven strategies for postgraduate character development’. Journal of Character Education, 17(1).

Murcia, M. J., Rocha, H. O., & Birkinshaw, J. (2018) ‘Business schools at the crossroads? A trip back from Sparta to Athens’. Journal of Business Ethics, 150(2), 579-591.

Pettigrew, A. & Starkey, K. (2016) ‘From the Guest Editors: the legitimacy, impact of business schools—key issues, a research agenda’. Academy of Management Learning, . pp., 649- 664. ISSN 1537-260X.BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Roca, E. (2008) ‘Introducing practical wisdom in business schools’. Journal of Business Ethics, 82(3), 607-620. doi:10.1007/s10551-007-9580-4

Russell, D.C. (2009) Practical intelligence and the virtues. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Sison, A.J.G. (2015) Happiness and Virtue Ethics in Business. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Sison, A. J. G., & Ferrero, I. (2015) ‘How different is neo-A ristotelian virtue from positive organizational virtuousness?’. Business Ethics: A European Review, 24, 78-98.

Toledano, N. (2020) ‘Promoting ethical reflection in the teaching of social entrepreneurship: A proposal using religious parables’. Journal of Business Ethics, 164(1), 115-132. doi:10.1007/s10551-018-4077-x

Webster, D.J. (2007) ‘Measuring the character strength of wisdom’. The International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 65(2), 163-183. doi:10.2190/AG.65.2.d

Webster, J. D., Weststrate, N. M., Ferrari, M., Munroe, M., & Pierce, T. W. (2018) ‘Wisdom and meaning in emerging adulthood’. Emerging Adulthood, 6(2), 118-136.

West, A & Buckby, S. (2020) Ethics education in the qualification of professional accountants. Dordrecht: Springer Nature B.V. doi:10.1007/s10551-018-4064-2

BEN MILLER
miller.bj83@gmail.com
Reading School

# Christian generosity: What does a Christian, theological conception of the virtue of generosity offer character formation?

**Background/context**

This study investigates the virtue of generosity from a Christian, theological perspective and in the context of character formation. It explores the virtue of generosity from a historical, social and philosophical perspective before outlining the distinctive characteristics of a Christian, theological interpretation of the virtue. It reflects on the wider implications of a Christian, theological approach to generosity and examines how this approach can support character formation more broadly. The paper concludes that the Christian approach to generosity is a robust and rich framework for developing the virtue and a helpful 'lens' through which the virtue can be viewed. It also identifies several practical principals that link a Christian understanding of generosity to effective character formation and sets out the practical application of these principals for those engaged in character formation in a range of contexts.

**Main summary**

This study focuses on three main research questions:

1. How has the virtue of generosity been interpreted through history and in different academic traditions?
2. What are the distinctive characteristics of a Christian, theological approach to the virtue of generosity?
3. How does a Christian, theological approach to the virtue of generosity form a person's character, and what does a Christian theological approach to the virtue of generosity offer character formation in general?

Chapter one of the study charts the renewed interest in character and virtues marked by a renewal of interest in the role of character and virtue formation. This renewal has been visible both at an academic level, particularly in the fields of philosophy, theology and ethics, and in a wider civic sense, influencing the policy and practice of professionals in areas such as education, business and healthcare (Jubilee Centre, 2013). The UK education sector has also seen a notable resurgence in the promotion of character formation within schools and a call to rediscover character development as 'an intentional aim of education' (Kristjánsson, 2013: p.271). It also introduces a number of key terms and concepts in which the study is situated, including: character and character formation, virtue and virtue ethics and theological conceptions of character.

Chapter two focuses on the virtue of generosity and the literature and research on this virtue. It recognises that although generosity is widely accepted in society as a positive trait (Science of Generosity Initiative, 2012), the research on the virtue of generosity, until recently, has been an area of neglect in many areas of academia. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the virtue

of generosity is a surprisingly complex concept and one that can mean different things to different people in different contexts. There are many potential avenues of exploration. Generous behaviour, generous action and becoming a generous individual are different aspects of this multi-faceted virtue, and all closely linked, yet possess their own characteristics and distinctive features (Miller, 2014). Secondly, the term generosity is generally not used by researchers in many academic disciplines, outside of philosophy and religion (they prefer constructs such as 'altruism' and 'prosocial behaviour'). The chapter explores the historical, social and philosophical literature in an attempt to answer a number of questions, such as: Why do we think of some people as being 'generous people?' Why are some people able to give their money, time, and talents so freely? What have these people discovered about giving that others find so difficult? Is acting generously something that all human beings must do or is it something only truly remarkable people can aspire towards? How does generosity function as a virtue and how does it link to other virtues? What is the role of motivation on generous behaviours and can those behaviours be cultivated? How can a person develop generous practise in order that they might become a generous person?

Chapter three explores how Christians internalise and practise generosity and identifies the distinctive characteristics of a theological approach to generosity. This is a question that many theologians and philosophers have attempted to address and they have been aided by a rich scriptural and historical tradition that suggests that giving is a central feature of Christian discipleship. It recognises five characteristics of a theological approach to the virtue:

1. Christian generosity is transformational not transactional
2. Christian generosity has a Christocentric dimension
3. Christian generosity is intrinsically linked to other virtues
4. Christian generosity is demonstrated in a multitude of ways
5. Christian generosity is cultivated in community

Chapter four suggests that a Christian understanding of character is more than a moral compass set on a life of human virtues and earthly flourishing. Its focus on character formation emphasises the communal and holistic aspects of the virtuous life and provides a richer approach to many of the questions that even contemporary character educators, with their focus on learning skills, abilities, and forms of knowledge to strengthen outcomes and attainment success, are concerned with. Not only does this theological approach to generosity provide a robust framework for individuals to develop and grow in generosity, but these five areas also serve as a framework for character formation more broadly. Chapter four discusses how each of the five characteristics of a theological approach to generosity contribute and inform effective character formation practice in a range of contexts.

## Looking ahead

This study lays some theological foundations for viewing the virtue of generosity upon which further theoretical or empirical research could be undertaken. There are a number of potential directions in which this virtue could be explored, such as, charitable giving, hospitality and volunteering, and there are also overlaps with a number of related terms, including: general helping behaviour or cooperative behaviour, altruism and prosocial behaviour. Where studies in prosocial behaviour or philanthropic giving are more common, there has been a reluctance to engage with generosity as a virtue and therefore a lack of engagement with the issues connected to developing generosity as a disposition, character trait or virtue, and this is perhaps the most interesting avenue for further research

## References

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2013) A Framework for Character Education, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham.

Kristjánsson, K. (2013) ‘Ten myths about character, virtue and virtue education–plus three well founded misgivings’. British Journal of Educational Studies. 61(3). 269-287.

Miller, C. B. (2014) Character and Moral Psychology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

NATASHA NEALE
natasha.neale@ntu.ac.uk
Widening Access and Outreach Coordinator, The Centre for Student and Community Engagement, Nottingham Trent University

# Is the use of moral dilemma discussions effective in developing virtue practice in widening participation cohorts in UK schools?

## Background/context

Nottingham is a city with lower than the national average attainment rates at Key Stage 4, as shown in both Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores. Only 33% of learners from the city are likely to attain Level 5 or above in five or more GCSE qualifications, including English and Maths, compared to a national average of 43% (Gov.UK, 2020). Attainment in English and Maths in particular may limit the post-16 options available to individuals as well as access to higher education (Raven, 2019). Nottingham has traditionally low progression rates into higher education, despite having two top 50 universities located within the city (Complete University Guide, 2020).

The attainment rates of learners within the city have been linked to the prevalence of indices of multiple deprivation, over which, the pupils have no control. For instance, a pupil's eligibility for free school meals and the socio-economic background from which they come sees them classified as 'disadvantaged' and can impact school performance detrimentally (Lessof et al., 2019). Nottingham Trent University (NTU), through interventions from the Centre for Student and Community Engagement (CenSCE), seeks to mitigate the impact of indices of deprivation, closing the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils in the region and thus widening participation in, and increasing access to, higher education.

CenSCE sought to evaluate the impact of a specific taught pilot character education intervention for disadvantaged pupils at a local partner school. Character education was chosen due to the link between character and attainment especially evident for disadvantaged pupils (Earl et al., 2018).

## Main summary

The pilot intervention aimed to replace the 'caught' presence of character education through the existing nine core school values, with a taught programme. The programme encouraged the exploration of those nine school values through the use, and creation of, moral dilemmas. Moral dilemmas encouraged the development of a language of character and knowledge within the participants which enabled them to explore their own environment, actions and behaviours through that lens (Lickona, 1991). Treatment group participants were encouraged to discuss, reason and reflect in their own sphere to develop the habits of practice beneficial to them in their education and progress in the school. The use of moral dilemmas for character education, through the cognitive development of reasoning skills leading to changes in practice, has been evidenced as being effective (Althof et al., 2006).

The partner school were particularly keen to elicit behaviour change in the treatment group seeking to establish 'good' moral behaviours in the classroom. This would be achieved through

the development of moral reasoning and then practice, or habits, in the pupils. It was hypothesised that through the development of ‘good character’ practices within school, there would be fewer instances of disruptive behaviours to detrimentally impact learning. More time in the classroom would lead to more time for learning, and so, increased attainment. Further to more positive in-school behaviours, it was also theorised that the recognition of morally good practices would decrease absence from school. More time in school would positively impact attainment.

The impact of the pilot intervention was measured using mixed methodologies. A treatment group was established comprised of disadvantaged learners with low levels of attendance, high prevalence of negative behaviour points awarded and those performing below their potential. These were drawn from within a specific year group. The remainder of the year group cohort was used for control and comparison purposes. Data for the entire cohort that depicted attendance, the award of both positive and negative behaviour points within the school, and predicted GCSE attainment in the key subjects of English and Maths, was gathered prior to any intervention taking place. Pupil attitudes were measured with the Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) test (GL Assessment, 2020). A comparison data set was due to be gathered following the completion of the intervention at the end of the academic year. The impact of Covid-19 and the closure of schools to all but children of essential workers saw the intervention paused prior to achieving this. As such, the conclusions drawn in this study have been done so from demonstration data. The demonstration data set was created by an impartial agent with no connection to the study for validity of analysis.

Overall, the data showed average increases in attendance and behaviour for the treatment group post character intervention when compared to their peers. This did not, in all cases, correspond to an overall improvement in attainment. There are individual cases however that can be used to prove the hypothesis that this character education intervention, and the exploration of morality through the lens of character, does improve attainment. While the link to attainment was not proven conclusively, the PASS test showed that the treatment group self-reported higher than previously in areas such as self-regard as a learner and confidence in learning. This can also be termed self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, an individual’s belief about their capability to produce outcomes to achieve goals (Bandura, 1997), can be a determining factor in the progression of young people to higher education.

The evidence from this pilot intervention suggested that the use of moral dilemmas for cognitive development in the treatment group has been a success through their ability to converse and reflect in terms of the nine characteristics embodied in the school ethos. In keeping with the model of neo-Aristotelian character education from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (University of Birmingham, 2017), this increase in knowledge, as well as the opportunity to discuss and practice moral behaviours and reasoning, is demonstrated by the increased average attendance rates of the treatment group.

This taught programme, compared to what has been a traditionally caught approach to character education in the school, has led to the socio-moral reasoning development of the treatment group, which Bier and Berkowitz (2005) cite as the “most commonly supported outcome of taught character education programmes”. The application of reasoning to moral behaviours, improved behaviour and attendance, concludes a character ‘sought’ development in the treatment group; a shift from a caught approach through a direct taught programme.

## Looking ahead

Further investigation is required in all areas that appeared to have a correlation in the evidence from this pilot due to limitations in sample size and the impact of Covid-19.

Some increases in attainment are in evidence through this pilot study, although a failure to attain Level 5 in English and Maths in the treatment group was a disappointing outcome. That said, entry to higher education courses at Nottingham Trent University currently requires only Level 4 in both subjects. Encouragingly, over half of the treatment group achieved this outcome, thus the first step on the path to higher education progression had been taken.

Attainment alone however is not a predictor of future educational outcomes for disadvantaged learners. Progression to higher education may also be impacted by the presence, or absence, of both self-efficacy and agency (Bowes et al., 2015). The trends seen in the PASS test data implied that greater gains were made in the development of these two areas through the intervention. With this in mind, the use of character education as a means to increase attainment could be reframed for school partners as developing agency and self-efficacy.

## References:


Althof, W. and Berkowiitz, M. (2006) 'Moral education and character education: their relationship and roles in citizenship education'. Journal of Moral Education, 35:4 495-518 [Online 14/11/2020] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03057240601012204?needAccess=true

Bandura, A. (1997) Self-Efficacy: The exercise of control. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman.

Berkowitz, M. and Bier, M. (2005) ,What works in Character Education: A research based guide for practitioners'. Journal of Research in Character Education, 5(1), 2007, pp. 29–48 [Online 14/11/2020] file:///C:/Users/sst3nealen/Downloads/whatworksinjrce2007.pdf 24/08/2020

Bowes, L., Evans, J., Nathwani, T., Birkin, G., Boyd, A., Holmes, C., Thomas, L. and Jones, S. (2015) Understanding progression into higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups. BIS research paper number 229. Department for Business Innovation and Skills. [Online 14/11/2020] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474269/BIS-15-462-understanding-progression-into-higher-education-final.pdf

Complete University Guide, (2020) University league tables. [online 14/11/2020] https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings/east-midlands

Earl, S. and Arthur, J. (2018) Character and Academic Attainment: Does Character Education Matter? The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, Insight Series. The University of Birmingham

GL Assessment, (2020) Pupils Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) Test. [Online 14/11/2020] https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/pupil-attitudes-to-self-and-school-pass/

Gov.UK (2020) Find and compare schools in England. All schools in Nottingham. [online 14/11/2020] https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/schools-by-type?step=phase&region=892&geographic=la&phase=secondary).

Lessof, C., Ross, A. and Brind – Kantar, R. (2019) Multiple disadvantage and KS4 attainment: evidence from LSYPE2. Department for Education. [online 14/11/2020] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908927/LSYPE2_multiple_disadvantage_and_KS4_attainment.pdf

Lickona, T. (1991) Educating for character. How our schools can teach respect and responsibility. New York, Bantam.

Raven, N. (2019) ‘Patterns of progression: explaining local variations in HE participation rates’. Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, Vol 21, No: 3, pp. 99-131 [online 14/11/2020] https://doi.org/10.5456/WPLL.21.3.99

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017). A Neo-Aristotelian Model of Character Development. The University of Birmingham. [Online 14/11/2020]

https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/character-education/ModelOfMoralDevelopment_JubileeCentre.pdf

TOM POLE
tompole101@gmail.com
Associate Principal Tudor Grange Academy, Solihull

# Failing to flourish in an unjust society: When character is used to perpetuate injustice and inequality can a neo-Aristotelian educational approach to character education be successfully defended against the claims that it is too politically conservative to address that injustice?

**Background/context**

There is, at present, much debate in education and the media about the way that schools should respond to social justice issues, in particular the Black Lives Matter movement. Critics claim that character education has little to offer to such debates. This essay attempts to mount a defence against such arguments and outlines a neo-Aristotelian conception of character education that places deliberation about the preconditions for societal flourishing, social justice and the common good at its centre. It argues that rather than having little to say about social justice, such a conception of character education can provide a convincing account of how schools might support young people to develop the sorts of emotions, motivations and understanding that will help them engage successfully with social justice issues.

**Main Summary**

Critics claim that character education focuses too much on the individual and, consequently, it fails to engage with issues such as racism, sexism and classism. In fact, instead of tackling injustice, critics claim that character education is inherently conservative and supports the status quo (Winton, 2008; Boyd, 2011; Suissa, 2015; Walsh, 2018; Jerome and Kisby, 2020). Critics argue that although character education seems to encourage students to help others it does so in a way that encourages an apolitical and compliant attitude focussed on “personal achievement” (Suissa, 2015). This, they claim, leads a form of ethical myopia that discourages students from questioning the context in which they find themselves or being able to imagine how society might be improved.

Advocates of character education have responded to these accusations by rejecting what they claim to be critics’ reactive understanding of social justice issues. They suggest that social justice education has become fixated on the negative barriers and injustices that affect various groups within society and that this leaves educationalists to “flounder down the cul-de-sac of fighting individual ills of injustice without any sense of what combines them into cases of injustice” (Arthur, Kristjánsson and Vogler, 2020). They suggest that what is required first is a positive conception of social justice and the common good that binds the flourishing of individuals to the flourishing of all. Central to their account is the belief that “‘seeking the good’ is logically prior to ‘working against the bad’” (Arthur, Kristjánsson and Vogler, 2020) and that without a conception of the good life, it is not possible to deal with injustice.

Neo-Aristotelian conceptions of character education regard flourishing as the ultimate aim of education. Flourishing does not describe a final state but rather a lifelong activity. It involves the expression, not just the possession, of virtues (Kristjánsson, 2020). Virtuous behaviour is understood to be the ultimate realisation of our human capabilities and is comprised of different

components, such as perception, emotion, motivation, reasoning and, ultimately, action (Jubilee Centre, 2017). It is the attention paid to these different components that provides a convincing and thick educational account of how young people might become committed to social justice and the common good. Recent research suggests that social justice should both be considered a virtue and the highest of all virtues (Arthur, Kristjánsson and Vogler, 2020). Treating social justice as a virtue helps situate it within the thick description of how individuals can become emotionally committed to particular virtues that character education offers (Kristjánsson, 2004). Furthermore, it explains how individuals can make the sorts of complex decisions, weighing up competing virtues using the meta-virtue of phronesis, that are associated with an understanding of good character.

In order to flourish, there are certain basic human needs that must be met. These preconditions to flourishing can provide the basis for discussions with students about the flourishing of society, the common good and social justice. However, such issues also pose practical challenges for the character educator. As some critics highlight, judgements about character are commonly used to defend and perpetuate injustices such as racism, sexism and classism. This behaviour, in turn, creates barriers to character development that will likely disrupt the effectiveness of character education. Critics have questioned how robust the pedagogy of character education is in this regard and have asked whether “the process of translating virtue ethics into character education lessons may itself be a problematic step” (Jerome and Kisby, 2020). This essay attempts to provide an answer to these concerns by outlining some aspects of what might be considered a pedagogy of the virtue of social justice.

Character education is not, as the critics suggest, all about the individual. The development of virtues is a practical process pointed outwards towards others. Take the virtue of generosity. If an individual is focussed on themselves, they are not, in fact, being generous. Learning to be generous requires developing the right reasoning and emotions towards others. The pedagogy of the development of virtue reasoning and emotions provides the groundwork for an understanding of deliberation and the virtue of civility. These play an important role in bridging the gap between an individual’s initial virtue development and their role later in life as a democratic citizen. It is within this wider context that the virtue of social justice can be fully developed.

An effective pedagogy of social justice should primarily focus on promoting a positive definition of character and social justice. Social justice is complemented by other virtues such as civility and tolerance and insomuch they might be considered to form a supportive cluster of virtues in much the same way as the allocentric quintet (Annas, 2011; Kristjánsson, Gulliford, Arthur and Moller, 2017; Gulliford and Roberts, 2018). However, attempts to avoid social justice being defined negatively, should not result in students being denied the opportunity to deliberate about injustice and inequality. The development of these virtues requires an engagement with both positive and negative examples, and, to use the example of civility, “it is only through understanding civility and comprehending how “civility” and “incivility” are actually experienced by various groups in the real world that pupils (and for that matter all citizens) can start to consider questions of how misuses of civility might be challenged and redressed (Peterson, 2019). Similarly, deliberation is an essential part of the pedagogy virtue of social justice, and “once we recognise the situated nature of character within particular democratic communities we can conceive the capacity to resist undue political persuasion and to critically analyse political messages as central elements within character education given that these elements represent salient features of a given situation requiring moral sensitivity, perception and discernment” (Peterson, 2019). Consequently, exploring examples of inequality and injustice in this way seem to offer the character educator

both an effective way to firstly deal with the influence of issues which create the sorts of barriers to flourishing outlined above and secondly to create an effective pedagogy of social justice.

## Looking Ahead

If social justice is to be considered the highest of all virtues then schools must support students to understand that their flourishing is linked to bringing about the circumstances which supports the flourishing of others. Society is likely to have the best chance to flourish when individuals, guided by practical wisdom, can use their imagination to find new and better ways to arrange things. Students therefore need to be given the opportunity to deliberate about social justice issues and should feel safe to explore controversial social and political issues within the classroom. These discussions might be accessed best through an exploration of the preconditions of flourishing and also the concept of barriers to flourishing. In order to develop all the components of the virtue of social justice, teachers should use a rich and diverse set of tools that reflect the thick description of behaviour that virtues offer. For example, students should be encouraged to explore their emotions, as well as developing their reasoning, with regards to social justice issues. This might best be achieved through the use of stories, poetry and the arts. Schools should also try to give students an opportunity to meet those from beyond their immediate community (for example, DofE or National Citizen Service Trust). However, it is important that students are also given the opportunity to situate these individual experiences within a wider understanding of their context. Schools should also reflect on their own institutional structures. It is important that the way a school is arranged encourages students to understand that in order for them to flourish the school community must also flourish. They might consider how they give students a democratic voice and help develop a fellow feeling and civic friendship. Schools might also examine how their citizenship curriculum supports the development of social justice. In order to be effective citizens and to promote social justice, students must have the right knowledge about the functions of the state and democratic institutions. Finally, schools should be aware of the ways in which injustice and inequalities may present particular barriers to flourishing for their students. They should ensure that the levers outlined in this section are used to ameliorate these barriers as best as possible. The indicators of these barriers might be found in unexpected places. For example, the choices of students for their GCSEs options might show that students in a school tend to opt for subjects that reflect gender stereotypes.

## References

Annas, J. (2011) Intelligent Virtue. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.

Arthur, J. Kristjánsson, K. and Vogler, C. (2020) ‘Seeking the common good in education through a positive conception of social justice’, British Journal of Educational Studies, pp. 1-17. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2020.1724259 (Accessed: 18 Feb 2020).

Boyd, D. (2011) “Character Education from the Left Field.” in: DeVitis, J. and Yu, T. (eds) Character and Moral Education: A Reader. New York: Peter Lang.

Gulliford, L. and Roberts, C. (2018) ‘Exploring the “unity” of the virtues: The case of an allocentric quintet’, Theory & Psychology, 28 (2), pp. 208–226.

Jerome, L. and Kisby, B. (2020) ‘Lessons in character education: incorporating neoliberal learning in classroom resources’, Critical Studies in Education, doi:10.1080/17508487.2020.1733037.

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017) A Framework for Character Education. Available at: http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/character-education/Framework%20for%20Character%20Education.pdf (Accessed: 04 April 2018).

Kristjánsson, K. (2004) 'Beyond Democratic Justice: A Further Misgiving about Citizenship Education', Journal of Philosophy of Education, 38 (2), pp. 207-219.

Kristjánsson, K. Gulliford, L. Arthur, J. and Moller, F. (2017) Gratitude and related character virtues: Research report. Available at: https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/GratitudeRelatedVirtues.pdf (Accessed: 21 August 2018).

Kristjánsson, K. (2020) Flourishing As The Aim Of Education: A Neo-Aristotelian View. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Peterson, A. (2019) 'Character education, the individual and the political', Journal of Moral Education. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2019.1653270 (Accessed: 10 Nov 2019).

Suissa, J. (2015). 'Character education and the disappearance of the political'. Ethics and Education, 10 (1), pp. 105–117.

Walsh, G. (2018) Character education and social justice. Available at: https://curriculumforequity.org/2017/10/01/character-education-and-social-justice (Accessed: 10 Dec 2019).

Winton, S. (2008) 'The appeal(s) to character education in threatening times: Caring and critical democratic responses', Comparative Education. 44 (3). 305–316.

JULIE TAYLOR
J-A.Taylor@warwick.ac.uk / jtaylor77.home@googlemail.com
Senior Teaching Fellow: Centre for Teacher Education, University of Warwick

# The ethical ITE mentor: Mentor perceptions of the role the ethical plays in ITE mentoring

**Background/context**

This paper considers the role of the ethical in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) mentoring from the perspectives of practising ITE mentors working with trainee teachers on a one-year Primary/Early Years School Direct Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme led by a Russell Group university in England, UK. On this programme, trainees spend eighty percent of their time in school, with the equivalent of one day a week accessing the university taught programme. Each trainee is allocated a Professional Mentor for the duration of each of their two school-based placements.

The literature against which the study was situated includes research from the fields of coaching and mentoring, teacher education, professional ethics and character education, enabling the ITE mentoring role to be considered through a moral lens. With a lack of existing research explicitly focusing on the ethical in ITE mentoring, this study aims to raise awareness of this important and neglected aspect of ITE by adding additional insights to the current literature.

**Main Summary**

The research design enabled the following research questions to be addressed:

1. How do existing ITE mentors currently perceive the nature of their role and what part, if any, does the ethical play in this perception?

1a. How do mentors perceive what it means to be an ethical ITE mentor?

1b. What are the perceived barriers that may hinder consistent ITE ethical mentoring practice?

This predominantly qualitative study involves the use of a survey and semi-structured interviews, both conducted after the trainees had undertaken a full Autumn Term placement and ten weeks of their Spring Term placement. The online survey, aimed at a wider sample of mentors, helped to elicit how existing mentors currently perceive the nature of their role and begin to consider the role the ethical plays in these perceptions. To build on the survey responses and to more explicitly explore the ITE mentoring role through an ethical lens and the ensuing potential barriers that may hinder consistent ethical practice, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller purposive sample of mentors. To further enrich the analysis, the views of current trainees were also sought to allow their perceptions to be compared with those of the mentors.

In line with mentoring and coaching literature, the survey findings illustrate the lack of a clear consensus regarding the mentoring paradigm and an inconsistency of understanding and application of ethical practice within the context of the ITE mentoring role. Therefore, in order for more pertinent conclusions to be drawn about the role the ethical plays in mentors' perceptions, further clarification was necessary through the semi-structured interviews. Data analysis and coding of the interview data led to the emergence of recurring concepts: positive professional mentor-mentee relationships, role modelling and ethical coaching practices.

These are further developed and refined in the discussion within the following three key themes: i) The ITE mentor as a virtuous professional ii) The ITE mentor as a moral exemplar and iii) The ITE mentor as an ethical coach and facilitator of critical reflection.

i) The ITE mentor as a virtuous professional – with direct or indirect references to the ethical being subsidiary to the focus on the more technical and measurable aspects of the mentoring role in a number of survey responses, this led to a discussion on the potential implications that may arise from both a lack of emphasis on the ethical in ITE programmes and a variation in the understanding of mentors of the moral nature of their role and their conceptions of what it means to be a professional. Where moral virtues were prioritised by mentors over other virtue categories in the survey, the virtue selection was often justified within an education-specific context, suggesting that, as teachers, mentors may perceive virtues differently from other professions.

ii) The ITE mentor as a moral exemplar – where mentors were more attuned to their ethical responsibilities, the importance of being a moral exemplar (in addition to being a model of good classroom practice) was well understood, perceiving this important role as a necessity for the moral development of individual trainees and the greater good of the profession as a whole. However, while mentors consistently recognised the need for modelling good teaching, the acknowledgement of the need to be a positive moral role model was less evident, which, as affirmed by the literature, could lead to trainees unknowingly emulating poor ethical practice themselves if they fail to recognise weaker mentoring.

iii) The ITE mentor as an ethical coach and facilitator of critical reflection - where mentors intentionally adopted a coaching approach, either as a result of the university training, or due to a coaching ethos being a part of their school's culture, this was perceived to have had a positive impact on trainee development. Where trainees were given the autonomy to make their own judgements and develop their unique teacher identity, this was conceived as being good ethical practice. From a moral perspective, coaching was considered to be particularly beneficial for trainees when designated time was allocated for reflection on character in addition to the evaluation of teaching practice. Planned opportunities to apply virtue-based reasoning when reflecting on authentic ethical dilemmas were perceived as being particularly useful to support the development of phronesis.

Whilst the study concluded that an understanding and embodiment of ethical mentoring practices would have a positive impact on trainee development and should be an aspiration for ITE partnerships, participants identified a number of significant barriers that hinder mentors in being able to consistently fulfil their ethical responsibilities considered in this study. These were therefore considered alongside the key findings to inform feasible recommendations for ITE providers.

## Looking Ahead

The study identified the following recommendations to develop the quality and consistency of ITE mentoring provision:

- Time and Recognition: Schools need to recognise the importance the role ITE mentoring plays in the greater good of the profession and subsequently give recognition to those undertaking the role.

- Mentor ‘Recruitment’: Schools need to make informed decisions about who is best placed to be an ITE mentor and not assume that experience is synonymous with the ability to become a good mentor.

- Professional Training: All mentors working with trainees should receive training with an explicit focus on ethical practice.

- University Taught Programmes: University programmes should include explicit ethical content to ensure all new teachers understand what it means to be a virtuous professional.

- Reflection: ITE providers should provide designated guided reflection opportunities at key points for both moral self-reflection and the deliberation of ethical dilemmas to support trainees to effectively navigate the complexities of the profession.

Whilst these recommendations will inform future ITE programme developments and mentor training at my own institution, it is hoped the findings from this study will lead to further research in this area that will serve to influence ITE mentoring provision more widely.


UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM
THE JUBILEE CENTRE
FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES