



THE  
JUBILEE CENTRE  
FOR CHARACTER & VALUES


# Character Building in Schools

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# What is Character Education ?

***Character is a set of personal virtues which guide conduct. Character Education is explicit and implicit teaching and learning that helps young people develop moral virtues.***



# The Decline of Moral Education in the West: 1940s–1980s

- ❖ Multicultural developments, which engendered radical moral relativism
- ❖ Individualisation agendas, such as the self-fulfilment agenda of humanistic psychology, which elicited fear of indoctrination
- ❖ Anti-traditionalism, e.g. 'Hippies'
- ❖ Fear of any homogenising and paternalistic tendencies



# The Decline of Moral Education in the West: 1940s–1980s

- ❖ Technicism, e.g. Sputnik-inspired emphasis on technology/science at the expense of ‘soft’ disciplines such as moral education
- ❖ General moral despondency in the wake of WWII; Cold-War pessimism about the possibility of a genuine moral dialogue and moral consensus
- ❖ Kohlbergian pessimism about children as capable moral reasoners
- ❖ Antipathy from religious groups towards secularised moral education

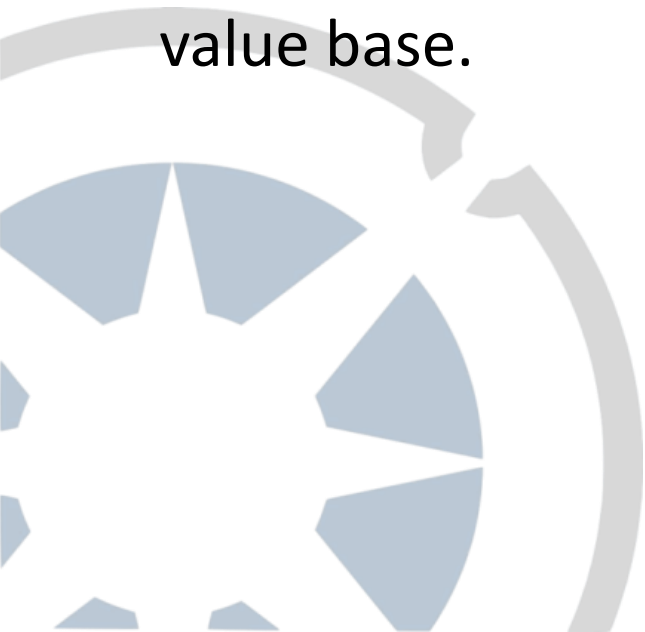
# Value



# Gap

There is a gap in our value layer, more serious perhaps than the gap in the ozone layer.

20th century attempts to mend this value gap took the form of elevating the so-called *self* to a value base.

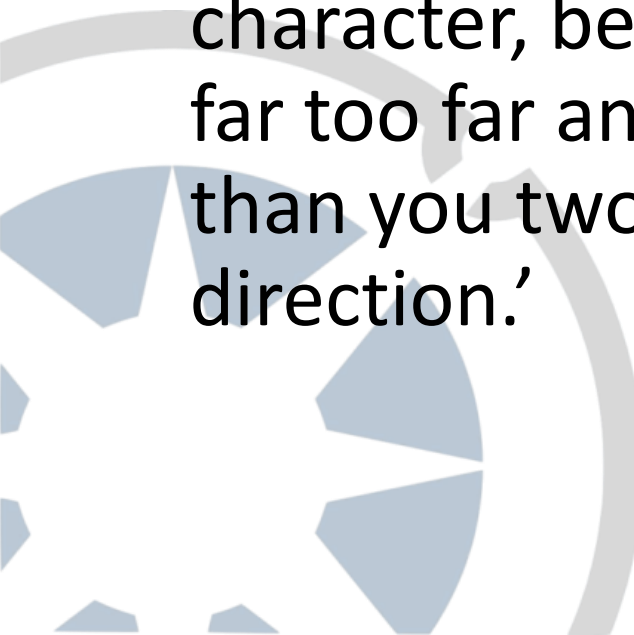


# The Resurgence of Moral Education from the 1990s

- ❖ More female employment led to increased demands on the school to help ‘bring up’ children
- ❖ A perceived increase in youth depression and social disaffection, culminating in events like the 2011 riots – problems that many commentators interpreted as a sign of moral decline in need of rectification

# The Resurgence of Moral Education from the 1990s

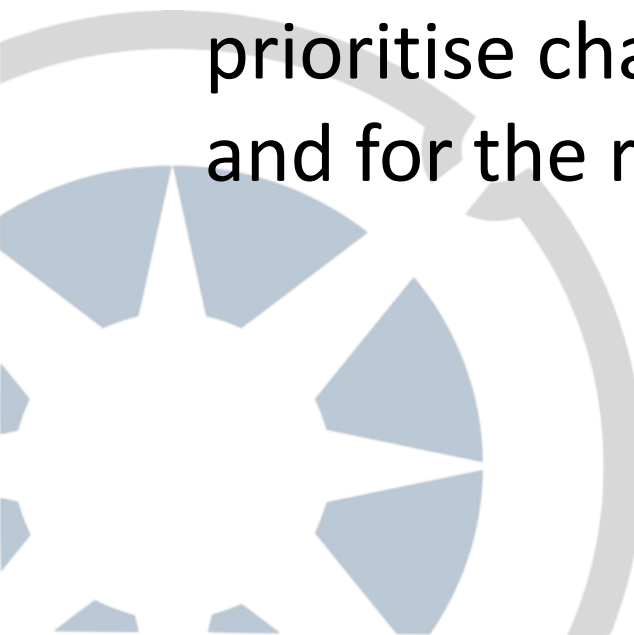
- ❖ More secularisation and less religious education created the perception of a spiritual void that needed to be filled
- ❖ Doubts about Kohlberg's methodology reignited hopes about children as capable moral agents
- ❖ The upsurge of virtue ethics in moral philosophy spawned new movements in moral education, such as *character education*, *social and emotional learning* and positive psychology's virtue theory (*positive education*)
- ❖ *Finally: The 2008 financial crisis as a wake-up call*



‘Dear Michaels, you are guilty of spreading an untruth, of popularising a false dichotomy, that schools can either have exam success or develop good character. The best schools have both and if forced to prioritise one or the other, our schools should be prioritising character, because the pendulum has swung far too far and no one is more responsible than you two for pushing it so far in the one direction.’

*Anthony Seldon, 2013*





‘Why then do I say that schools should prioritise character-building above exams? Because if you prioritise exams in the way that you are both doing, Michael and Michael, little or nothing will happen with character. But if you prioritise character, exam success will follow, and for the right reasons’

*Anthony Seldon, 2013*

# What about Policy?

- ❖ Introduction of Citizenship Education
- ❖ Green Paper, *Schools: Building on Success* (February, 2001)
- ❖ White Paper, *Schools: Achieving Success* (September, 2001)
- ❖ Demos Character Inquiry
- ❖ Learning for Life 'Of Good Character' report
- ❖ Riots Commission Report

# Policy

*“And we’ve got to be ambitious, too, if we want to mend our broken society. Because education doesn’t just give people the tools to make a good living – it gives them the character to live a good life, to be good citizens.”*

David Cameron, September 2011

## *Stephen Twigg*

‘Of course passing exams is an important milestone on the pathway to success. But so too is personal development. The whole child. If we look at many of the leading independent schools, what sets the education that they provide apart from many state schools is the importance that they place on character development. Whilst many state schools-academies and maintained schools alike- are doing fantastic work in this area, we need to see a culture change in our schools.’

# Policy Influence

*“Finally – and far too neglected in the current debate – there is a set of behaviours and attitudes, a kind of social literacy that we must foster. An exclusive focus on subjects for study would fail to equip young people with these, though rigour in the curriculum does help. These personal behaviours and attributes – sometimes termed character – play a critical role in determining personal effectiveness in their future lives, and should be part of our vision.”*

*CBI, November 2012*

Set a good example for others

Stay informed; vote

Cooperate

Be a good neighbour

Don't take advantage of others

Take turns and share

Be open-minded; listen to others

Be compassionate and show you care

Think before you act – consider the consequences

Plan ahead

Do your share to make your school and community better

Do your share to make your school and community better

Protect the environment

Be kind

Always do your best

Be accountable for your words, actions and attitudes

# How often do you hear teachers say....?

Volunteer

Respect authority

Obey laws and rules

Get involved in community affairs

Treat all people fairly

Play by the rules

Do what you are supposed to do

Help people in need

Be self-disciplined

Express gratitude

Forgive others

Don't blame others carelessly

Persevere: keep on trying!

# Good schools...

- ❖ Do extra curricula activities
- ❖ Hold assemblies about character and values
- ❖ Have posters on walls about behaviour
- ❖ Run after school activities – such as sports
- ❖ Have form time, pastoral and personal development sessions
- ❖ Teach Citizenship Education

# and expect to develop (now)...

- ❖ 'Confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives'
- ❖ 'Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society'

National Curriculum Guidelines



**As well as judged on their S.M.S.C  
(Spiritual, Moral, Social and  
Cultural) provision by Ofsted.**



# and expect to (in the future)...

- promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life



# So the sensible question is....

not *if* character education *occurs* but whether it is...

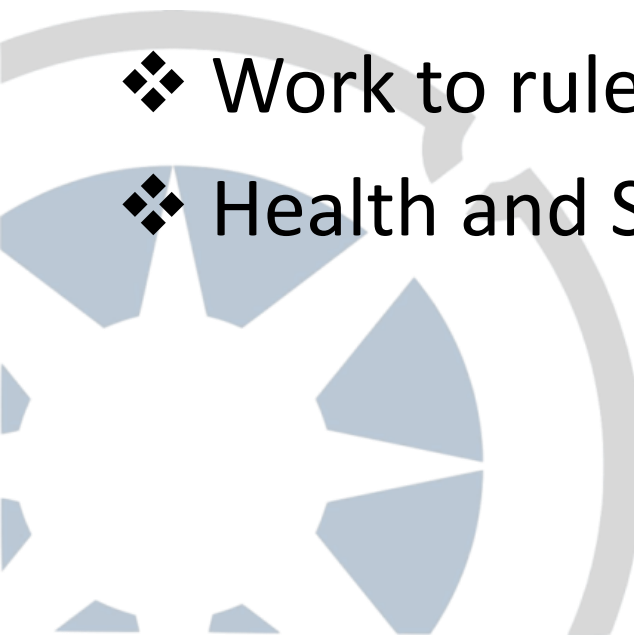
❖ ‘intentional, conscious, planned, pro-active, organised and reflective’

Or

❖ ‘assumed, unconscious, unreflective, subliminal and random’

*(Wiley, 1998, 18)*

# Some Issues

- ❖ Teachers not comfortable with the concept
  - ❖ Confusion – what is character education?
  - ❖ Marketisation of schools – race to the top
  - ❖ Overcrowded curriculum – no space
  - ❖ Work to rule – no time
  - ❖ Health and Safety concerns
- 

There is strong evidence that education's contribution to a student's character is the product of the ethos of the whole school. The most important and crucial dimension of this is the quality of personal relationships between students and their teachers.

## Learning for Life Research

# Teachers as Character Educators?

- ❖ See the fostering of the student's character as a **professional responsibility** and priority
- ❖ Be a **role model** – an example of good character and reinforce of core values
- ❖ **Seize opportunities** by seeing the curriculum as a vehicle of examining character-related and ethical issues

# Teachers as Character Educators?

- ❖ Make space to allow young people to learn about '**being**' as much as 'thinking' and 'doing'
- ❖ **Need Commitment** – to set up and run extra curricula activities

# Win-Win Situation

What do good schools share?

- ❖ Exceptional teachers
- ❖ Effective and appropriate moral climate
- ❖ *The latter tends to attract the former*
- ❖ *The former tends to reinforce the latter*



**6 Myths about**

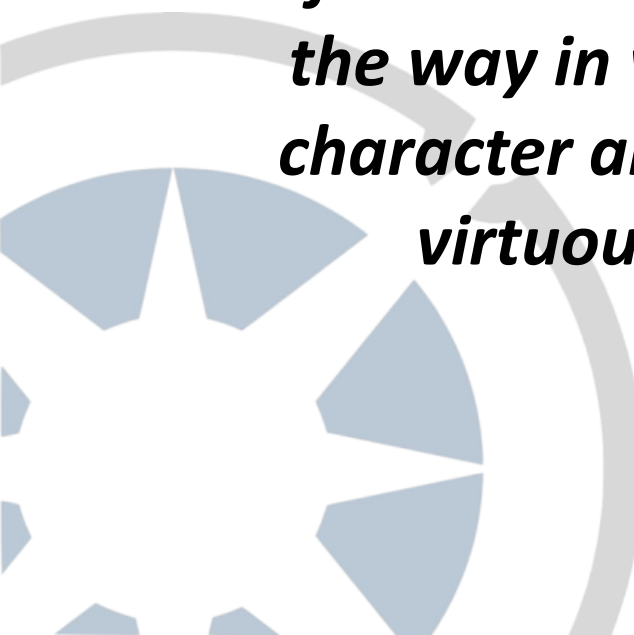


**Character Education**



# Character Education is **unclear**

***The Aristotle-based formal definitions - These definitions allow for a great deal of latitude in the way in which the substantive nature of character and virtue is to be fleshed out – a virtuous expansiveness, if you like.***



## Character Education is **old-fashioned**

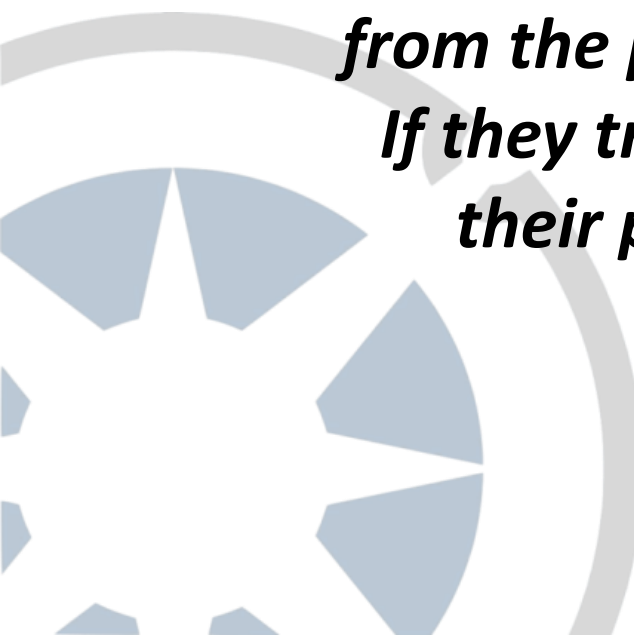
***Revising and restoring old concepts is not necessarily old fashioned. Consider contemporary neo-liberalism in economics or contemporary neo-Darwinism in biology. Both ground their rationales in a set of concepts dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, concepts that large chunks of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were thought to be ripe for the sickle.***

# Character Education is **religious**

***There is no denying the fact that notions of moral character and virtue are the mainstay of all the worlds great religions. The idea that ‘character’ and ‘virtue’ do not make sense or cannot be justified outside of a religious context is, however, an historical non-starter.***

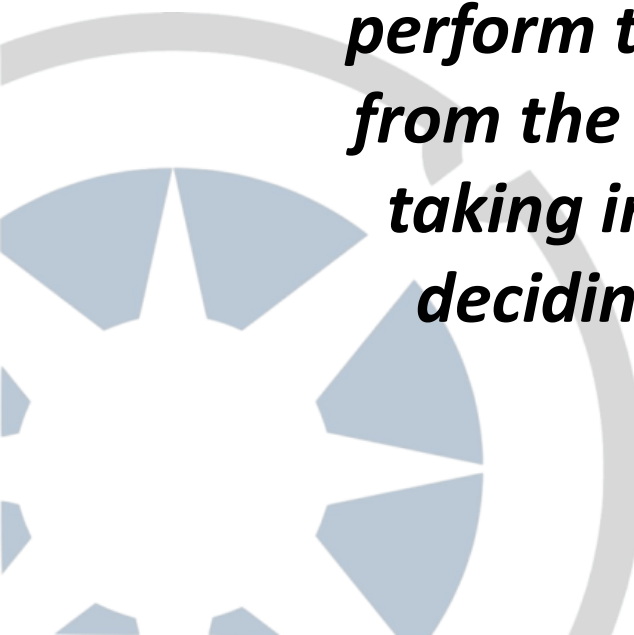
# Character Education is **paternalistic**

***No teacher can logically or psychologically dissociate themselves from the practice of character education. If they try to do so, it is a dereliction of their professional responsibilities.***



# Character Education is **anti-intellectual**

***Truly virtuous persons do not only perform the right actions, but they perform them for the right reasons and from the right motives: knowing them, taking intrinsic pleasure in them and deciding that they are worthwhile.***



# Character Education is **conservative**

*If we look at the history of character-education initiatives in the UK, for instance, these have been primarily advocated by liberals and progressives, harking back to the Scottish Enlightenment, the radicalism of Robert Owen and the secular humanists in the late Victorian era. In recent times, it is New Labour that has re-introduced it.*

# Lost in a Sea of Heterogeneity?

Approaches to CE are rooted in different disciplinary paradigms:

- ❖ Some are *moral*, giving rise to programmes such as character education (CE).
- ❖ Some are *psychological*, giving rise to programmes such as social and emotional learning (SEL) and social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL).

# Lost in a Sea of Heterogeneity?

- ❖ Some are *political*, giving rise to programmes such as civic or citizenship education (CCE).
- ❖ Some are *health*-related, giving rise to programmes such as physical, social and health education (PSHE).
- ❖ Some are *religious*, giving rise to programmes of religion-based moral education (RE).
- ❖ Some are of an *eclectic* disciplinary provenance, such as well-being education (WE) and life-skills/life-competences education (LE).



# The Need for a Moral/Educational GPS!

Is there anything singular to be found in this prodigious plurality of approaches. Or is this a case where arguments are bound to pass each other by because they are, in essence, not about the same thing and, hence, not competing?



# A Framework for Character Education

Currently working on...

- ❖ New national curriculum based on character education – aims, values, purposes
- ❖ A new programme of study for character education for key Stages 1,2,3 and 4
- ❖ A Toolkit – case studies, resources, advice to support implementation etc.

# Core Principles of the framework

- ❖ Prepare young people for **tests of life**, rather than just a life of tests
- ❖ Must be **more than** just a subject
- ❖ Must involve the **community** – incl. Parents
- ❖ Has a place in the **classroom**
- ❖ Can have a positive impact on attainment, behaviour and employability



# Schools of Character

- ❖ Commitment to core values – developing and living by a common language
- ❖ Buy in from head, senior managers, teachers, other staff and students
- ❖ Value driven schools – part of everything they do
- ❖ Excellent student / teacher relationships based on trust



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# Measuring Virtue?

How do we measure Aristotelian virtue  
in people in general and young moral  
learners in particular?



# Getting Involved

In the research

Character Education in British Schools  
Schools of Character Case Studies

In a project

My Character  
Knightly Virtues  
Thank You Film Awards