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Philosophical Perspectives on Education Policy

Why character education?

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About IMPACT

Written by leading general philosophers and philosophers of education, IMPACT pamphlets bring philosophical perspectives to bear on current education policy in the UK. They are addressed directly to policy-makers, politicians and practitioners, though will be of interest also to researchers and students working on education policy.

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Contents

Editorial introduction

Character education in schools has been high on the UK political agenda for the last few years. The Department for Education invested £3.5 million in grants to support character education projects in 2015, and a further £6 million in 2016. The aim of the funding scheme was 'to develop new approaches or expand and evaluate existing approaches that will support children and young people to be well-rounded, confident, happy and resilient – prepared for success in adult life' (DfE, 2016a). A third of the available funding in the 2016 round was earmarked for 'projects that employ a military ethos approach to developing character' (ibid.).

Announcing the scheme, Nicky Morgan, then Secretary of State for Education, declared that it would 'cement our position as a global leader in teaching character and resilience' (DfE, 2014a). A few weeks earlier, in her 2014 Priestley Lecture at the University of Birmingham, she listed some of the traits schools should be nurturing:

> *We want to ensure that young people leave school with the perseverance to strive to win, to persevere against the odds, to overcome the challenges that life throws at them and bounce back with vigour and confidence… We want pupils to revel in the achievement of victory, but honour the principles of fair play, to win with grace and to learn the lessons of defeat with acceptance and humility. (Morgan, 2014)*

There are signs that schools are responding positively to this initiative. In August, the DfE published a research report on the provision of character education in schools, which concludes:

> *Overall, the study found a strong commitment to character education in schools across England. Schools highlighted*

> *the pivotal role they play in providing character education and understood it to be integral to schools' overarching aims and purpose. (DfE, 2017)*

But many commentators are worried by the current enthusiasm for character education. Some, like Toby Young, doubt that character education is possible at all, 'because character traits are inherited, not taught' (Young, 2016); others, like Kat Arney, look despairingly at the plethora of unproven teaching approaches on offer: 'what's lacking is a solid research base investigating which – if any – of these approaches work' (Arney, 2016). Some see character education as a tool of oppression, a way of persuading people to blame their troubles and focus their energies on the state of their own souls, not on unjust social arrangements. The most common objection, though, is that there is something badly awry with the set of character traits the government wants schools to cultivate. For John White, Nicky Morgan's list of favoured traits is 'tied to a competitive ideology of winners and losers' (White, 2015); for Robin Alexander, it is 'a melding of the no-holds barred values of corporate America with that fabled frontier spirit portrayed by John Wayne', and is thus 'an idiosyncratic and unreconstructedly male account' of good character (Alexander, 2015).

In this pamphlet Randall Curren sets out a robust defence of character education in schools. He welcomes the political and institutional support it presently enjoys, but contends that 'greater clarity about the nature, benefits, and acquisition of good character is essential'. In particular, he argues that too narrow a focus on the performance virtues – perseverance, resilience, ability to defer gratification, etc. – is a serious mistake: these traits only qualify as virtues when they are 'part of a more comprehensive package that includes good judgment and valuing what is worthy of being valued'. Critics are right to worry about an undue emphasis on traits associated with military service or life on the frontier, but the solution is to expand and enrich our conception of character education, not to give up on the enterprise.

Curren offers us a compelling and coherent account of what good character is and how it might be cultivated in schools. He explains why schools must be needs-supporting environments that provide students with opportunities to engage in rewarding activity, and why cultivating good character implies promoting the 'fundamental British values' of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance. His groundbreaking pamphlet promises to expand the scope

and strengthen the foundations of character education in British schools, and should go a long way towards allaying the fears of its detractors.

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This is the twenty-fourth IMPACT pamphlet. Written by leading general philosophers and philosophers of education, the IMPACT series brings philosophical perspectives to bear on education policy in the UK. Pamphlets are addressed to policy-makers, politicians and practitioners, though will be of interest also to researchers and students whose work has a policy focus. IMPACT is an initiative of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain.

Previous pamphlets have tackled issues across the spectrum of education policy. Pamphlets on the organisation, management and distribution of schooling include Harry Brighouse's on educational equality, Michael Luntley's on performance-related pay, Mary Warnock's on provision for pupils with special educational needs, and Janet Orchard and Christopher Winch's on initial teacher education. New perspectives on curriculum subjects are set out in Kevin Williams' pamphlet on modern foreign languages, John Gingell's on the visual arts, Philip Barnes' on religious education and Andrew Davis' on the teaching of reading. And ways for schools to address challenging topics in the public eye are explored in Mary Midgley's pamphlet on intelligent design theory, David Archard's on sex education, Michael Hand's on patriotism, and David Aldridge's on remembering the war dead. A full list of previous titles can be found at the end of this pamphlet.

Each IMPACT pamphlet is launched with a seminar or panel debate at which the issues it raises are further explored. Launches have been attended by government ministers, shadow ministers and other MPs, by representatives of government departments, non-departmental public bodies, professional associations, trade unions and think tanks, by education journalists and researchers, and by teachers and students.

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Michael Hand
IMPACT Editor

Overview

- Today in the UK there is considerable political support for strengthening character education, arising primarily from concerns about a growing opportunity gap, youths lost in transition to responsible adulthood, the threat of homegrown terrorism, and defence of 'British values'. Some reasonable recommendations have been made and actions taken, but greater clarity about the nature, benefits, and acquisition of good character is essential. Such clarity suggests that the character attributes promoted as important to social mobility – the so-called 'performance' virtues – can only be properly taught as part of a more comprehensive and cognitively rich approach to character education.
- Good character is a stable and well-integrated cluster of dispositions to value what is valuable, act well, and find pleasure and satisfaction in acting well and devoting oneself to things of value. It involves having moral insight, morally attuned perception of the contexts in which one acts, good judgment in deciding what to do, and not being deflected from acting well by perturbing emotions, distractions or challenges. Perseverance, self-discipline and other such 'performance' virtues are not true virtues unless their exercise is guided by good judgment.
- The motivational heart of a virtuous state of character is valuing people and their well-being and responding to them accordingly. How does such a state of motivation arise? How is the acquisition and possession of such motivation related to a person's own well-being? The satisfaction of basic psychological needs plays a key role in the acquisition of good character and the possession of good character enhances personal well-being. An implication of this is that the promotion of good character can be most successful in a needs-supportive learning environment that enables children to experience progress in living well.

- The fundamental formative purpose of education is to equip students to live well as members of a society that enables all of its members to live well. The categories of personal formation that are essential to achieving this purpose are understanding, capabilities and virtues, so it is appropriate for education to include all three while excluding the development of attributes that are not real virtues. Understanding, capabilities and virtues are necessary to living well, but they are not sufficient. The acquisition and exercise of these attributes require the presence of favourable social factors.
- Critics of character education sometimes ask, 'Whose values will be taught?'. The implication is that people vary widely in their basic value commitments and there is no objective basis for choosing some values over others. This is a socially, philosophically, and psychologically untenable view. 'British values' can be taught and learned as providing a sound basis for a cooperative society of citizens and residents who may adhere to different faiths and traditions.
- The foregoing leads to some obvious conclusions regarding character education. It can be justified as one of the three basic developmental aspects of sound education that equips children to live well as members of a cooperative society. Investment in early childhood development in and out of institutional settings is warranted, as are service-focused programmes to support the transition from school to work. Comprehensive character education in schools would have several components, ranging from an ethos shaped by values more inspiring than the competitive advantage of individual students; cooperative, project-based and service-oriented learning; a just school community approach that involves students in examining issues and in forms of governance; curricula and pedagogy that support the development of judgment, public reason and critical thinking. To facilitate achievement of these learning outcomes, the Department for Education (DfE) should develop a framework for a comprehensive approach to character education, Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) should be made a statutory subject, and teacher education and Ofsted standards should be revised. 'Performance' virtues should be promoted as integral to well-rounded character education that aims to develop good judgment. The contributions of sports to character development should be evaluated with this in mind.

1. Introduction

A notable feature of the current political landscape of schooling in the UK is that there is political support for character education that crosses party lines. Consider the following exchange in the House of Commons on 11 July 2017, in the midst of a debate concerning the causes and remediation of the 'huge regional inequality… expressed in the Brexit vote' and manifested in 'unrest, anger and resentment… political volatility and, arguably, the rise of populism' (HC, 2017, cc 36-39WH):

> *Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con)*
> *The hon. Lady is making an excellent speech in this important debate. I think we can build a cross-party consensus, based on the report [of the Social Mobility Commission (2017)], about access to social and emotional learning. I might call it character education – I think one of her predecessors as shadow Secretary of State for Education and I debated that issue. Persistence, resilience and grit skills, as well as self-confidence and self-belief, are very important. They are often not given the same weight and therefore those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds do not get that access; access to extra-curricular activities is picked up in a similar way. Would the hon. Lady agree that that is something from the debate that could benefit from cross-party working?*
>
> *Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op)*
> *I strongly agree with the right hon. Lady. I thank her for the joint working we have done on some of the issues in the past, and I hope that that will continue. When she was Secretary of State for Education, she was a strong champion for character education*

and extra-curricular education. I hope that that is something we can all work on going forward. (cc 41-42WH)

Morgan seems to have meant that character education is 'not given the same weight' in schools as other aspects of education and this contributes to the limited life prospects of children from disadvantaged backgrounds *because* access to character education and to extra-curricular activities are 'picked up in a similar way'. The implication seems to be that character education and extra-curricular activities both require resources that families may lack, such as resources to provide children with adult-led team-building activities that teach cooperation, self-discipline, and the like. This would be consistent with Morgan's efforts as Education Secretary to expand government subsidies for student participation in National Citizen Service and to establish grants to expand participation in extracurricular clubs and sports, both of which have been justified as building confidence, resilience, and leadership, and promoting virtues of respect, cooperation, and tolerance (Morgan, 2016; NCS, 2017; DfE, 2016b; Birdwell, Scott and Reynolds, 2015, 48). Access to character education and extra-curricular education are taken to be closely related because the latter is taken to be an important vehicle for the former.

This exchange between Morgan and Powell was part of a wide-ranging debate that touched on many aspects of education policy and other spheres of policy as well:

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)
The Government's Social Mobility Commission report, "State of the Nation", told us the scale of the challenge we face to improve social mobility in Britain. The report told us in no uncertain terms:
"Britain has a deep social mobility problem…We identify four fundamental barriers that are holding back a whole tranche of low and middle income families and communities in England: an unfair education system, a two-tier labour market, an imbalanced economy, and an unaffordable housing market." (c 55WH)

The breadth of these barriers notwithstanding, the exchange between Morgan and Powell suggests significant agreement about the desirability of character education and its significance for enhancing social mobility and reducing inequality.

It echoes the speeches and initiatives taken by Morgan when she was Education Secretary and the *Character and Resilience Manifesto* issued by The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility in 2014:

> *There is a growing body of research linking social mobility to social and emotional skills, which range from empathy and the ability to make and maintain relationships to application, mental toughness, delayed gratification and self-control. These findings all point to the same conclusion: character counts… We know that permanently closing the opportunity gap between the affluent and the disadvantaged will require more than raising test scores, important though that undeniably is. Rather, it will require inspiring people from all backgrounds to change their perceptions of themselves, what they can achieve and their relationship to society at large. (Paterson, Tyler and Lexmond, 2014, 4-6)*

The implication of this wording is that combining effective character education with raising test scores would be sufficient to close the opportunity gap 'permanently'. This is not borne out by the research cited in the *Manifesto* or by the findings of the 2017 Social Mobility Commission, but the *Manifesto* cannot be accused of letting society off the hook. If non-educational factors in the growing crisis of immobility are not acknowledged, it nevertheless calls for public interventions to enhance early childhood development, strengthen teacher training and participation in extra-curricular activities, encourage wider participation in National Citizenship Service, and better support youth in the transition from school to work.

An important piece of background to the *Character and Resilience Manifesto* is evidence that 'the current conception of what young people need in order to succeed in life… and the role of the state in supporting them is increasingly anachronistic' (Dixon, Reed, Margo and Pearce, 2006, vii). Rising unemployment and the collapse of youth labour markets in the 1970s have forced many youths to navigate the transition into adulthood and work with far less institutional structure than in the past, and to do so in the face of a more service-oriented economy that requires stronger personal and social skills than the industrial economy required (vi-viii). An Institute for Public Policy Research longitudinal study of youth cohorts born in 1958 and 1970 found that 'in just over a decade, personal and social skills became 33 times more important in determining relative life chances. At the same time, young people from less affluent backgrounds became less likely than their more fortunate

peers to develop these skills' (viii). While several factors have played a role in this, including parental employment insecurity and divorce, differential impacts of consumerism, and the declining collective efficacy and security of local communities, a key aspect of the growing 'socialization gap' is the ability of richer parents to provide their children with costly 'activities and access to institutions that can enhance [their] children's personal and social development':

> *Better-off children are much more likely to attend constructive, organized or educational activities, which research shows are associated with greater personal and social development, while poorer children are more likely to spend time "hanging out" with friends or watching TV – activities associated with poorer personal and social development (viii).*

In addition to such arguments concerning character development and social mobility, there is a related strand of advocacy for character education that is traceable to the August 2011 riots and final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel. The report identified bad behaviour as a risk factor for disengagement from school and work, and offered the admittedly unquantifiable conjecture that 'a lack of character in rioters led to their criminal actions' (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012, 49). Asserting a 'close correlation' between character and 'personal and social development', it cited the Government's 'Positive for Youth' characterization of the latter as a guide to the former: 'developing social, communication and team working skills; the ability to learn from experience, control behaviours and make good choices; and the self-esteem, resilience, and motivation to persist towards goals and overcome setbacks' (HM Government, 2011).

It seems that it is only in the sphere of the Prevent duty that hesitation to acknowledge a role for values in character education has been overcome

Although *values* would seem to be implicated in the idea of making good choices, the language of character in all of these statements is limited to 'skills' or 'abilities' that *enable* success and good behaviour – the so-called 'performance' virtues.

It seems that it is only in the sphere of the Prevent duty arising under the 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act that hesitation to acknowledge a role for values in character education has been overcome. The Prevent duty calls on specified authorities, including school leaders and staff, to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being

drawn into terrorism' (DfE, 2015, 3). Published DfE guidance notes that pupils' resistance to radicalization can be established by 'promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views' (5), while 'providing a safe environment for debating controversial issues and helping them to understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making' (8). The promotion of British values – democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance – is identified as already an aspect of existing requirements to 'promote the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of pupils' (8; see also, DfE, 2014b). PSHE and citizenship education are identified as spheres of the curriculum in which the relevant exploration of issues, debate, critical thinking, and weighing of evidence can occur, along with acquiring virtues of mutual respect and tolerance for the diverse peoples of the UK (8). Their effectiveness in this regard may, however, be impaired by 'failures in teacher training and teachers' consequent lack of confidence dealing with complex political and social issues' (Birdwell, Scott and Reynolds, 2015, 41-42).

In addition to these indications of political support for character education, there is evidence that a large majority of UK parents believe that teachers and schools should provide character education (JCCV, 2013). Nevertheless, it remains controversial, especially when it is identified as moral education or the promotion of good moral character. The language and framing of character education will matter to public reception, but sound policy will also require greater clarity about the nature, scope, and methods of character education than is evident in this brief survey. Do the various rationales on offer support a coherent and comprehensive approach that incorporates fundamental moral and civic values?

The sections ahead will address the 'Why?' and 'What?' of character education, arguing that sound character education is an essential aspect of a good general education, while cautioning that it is not a panacea. This will begin with a sorting out of the nature of character and its relationships to context and judgment, followed by some important findings about the acquisition of good character and its relationship to personal well-being, a general account of the fundamental formative purposes of education, consideration of the values to be cultivated and the characteristics of just school communities, and concluding recommendations.

2. Character, context and judgment

What is good character and how is it related to making and acting on good choices? What is the role of judgment in character? How do distinct virtues function as aspects of good character? How are such attributes as perseverance, resilience, and self-confidence related to good character? This section addresses the nature of character, focusing on questions about it that are important to sound character education. It will explain why good judgment is an essential feature of good character and how distinct virtues equip individuals to manage situations that present specific challenges and opportunities. An important conclusion of this section is that the 'performance' virtues promoted as essential to social mobility are neither the whole of character nor true virtues at all without the guidance of good judgment. They may be crucial to success in life but they are not enough to enable people to make and act on good choices. Another important conclusion is that the promotion of good judgment should be a central aspect of character education.

A virtuous state of character is an *acquired*, *stable*, *integrated* and *complex* attribute of a person. It is not an innate, fixed and independently activated psychological trait such as introversion. States of character develop in ways that depend on individual effort but are also shaped by societal factors that are beyond the control of individuals' and their families. This puts a burden on societies to take care in providing all their members with conditions favourable to forming good character.

To say that a state of character is a stable attribute implies that it endures over time but remains a work in progress, capable of improvement but also degradation. Although early childhood contributions to character development have the greatest impact

and should be prioritized in social policy (Paterson, Tyler and Lexmond, 2014, 18-32), people need opportunities to express and further develop their admirable qualities throughout their lives. It is not safe to assume that resilience and other good qualities can permanently immunize people against damaging circumstances (see, for example, Sherman, 2015).

A virtuous state of character is an integrated package of perceptual, motivational, cognitive and affective attributes. People of good character generally notice what is ethically significant in situations, they generally experience appropriate emotions and desires in response to what they perceive (e.g. compassion and a desire to give comfort when they encounter suffering), they generally know instinctively or think through accurately what a situation calls for, they act appropriately, and they feel good about acting appropriately. At the heart of this package is a state of *integrated motivation* that involves valuing what is objectively valuable, manifested in perceptual attunement to what is good and bad, related understanding and convictions, taking pleasure in the good, and acting for the good. To be virtuously motivated is to be appropriately responsive to what is valuable: the intrinsic value of persons, other sentient beings, their good attributes, their well-being or flourishing, and the various things that are necessary and conducive to flourishing (Curren, 2015). Virtuous motivation in our dealings with other people is moral motivation or goodwill.

Good character gives rise to morally good or virtuous acts, which have three essential aspects:

- They have an outward form that expresses goodwill.
- They are motivated by admirable valuing of persons, their good qualities, and what promotes their well-being.

They reflect good judgment and its perceptual and cognitive antecedents.[1]

Goodwill may be expressed in acts of honesty, non-violence, fairness, kindness, compassion, cooperation, providing assistance, making amends, honoring of commitments, and respect for autonomy, privacy, dignity and property. Moral motivation is an educable valuing of and appropriate responsiveness to the interests of persons and other beings that have interests, evident not just in actions but in pleasure in

1. Jennifer Schubert collaborated in refining the specification of these aspects of virtuous acts that follows, under a University Research Award funded study of Virtues as Moral-Psychological Constructs, Randall Curren, PI, Richard Ryan and Laura Wray-Lake, Co-PIs, University of Rochester, 1 July 2014 to 31 December 31 2015.

others' good fortune and sympathy for their bad fortune. Good judgment has many educable aspects, including independence of judgment, perspective taking, perceptiveness about what is ethically relevant in specific circumstances, moral understanding and sound convictions, imagining and evaluating relevant alternatives, fruitful reflection on experience, and diligence in fact-finding and thinking through what to do.

In circumstances that present notable obstacles to acting well, the overcoming of those obstacles is as a fourth notable aspect of acting well. Such notable obstacles include apprehension of danger, temptations, anger, self-doubt, pain, exhaustion, and discouragement arising from prior failures. We of course have names for virtues that enable people to overcome such obstacles: courage, moderation, cool headedness, self-confidence, endurance, perseverance, patience, diligence, conscientiousness and resilience. Psychologically, it may be most accurate to regard good character as simply having three components – a motivational component, an intellectual component that leads to good decisions, and a self-control component (often referred to as self-regulation) that ensures decisions are acted on and obstacles are overcome (McGrath, 2017). Nevertheless, the identification of distinct virtues that equip people for different kinds of situations and challenges remains significant for understanding and developing character.

Courage, generosity, loyalty and other such admirable qualities must all be guided by good judgment in order to qualify as real virtues

Specific human virtues are often thought of as dispositions to handle specific kinds of situations well, situations that are enduring aspects of the human condition. A familiar example is that situations that are painful or dangerous call for *courage*, which is an ability and inclination to act well in the face of pain and danger. Whatever fear courageous people may experience, it does not prevent them from accurately perceiving what is at stake and acting as the situation requires a good person to act. Similarly, the virtue of generosity is called for in situations in which the withholding or sharing of what one possesses is at stake – a virtue which strengthens relationships and communities in a way that is appropriate to the circumstances.

These virtues are dispositions to do what is right or justified in the circumstances, not simply abilities to face pain and danger or to part with things of value. Loyalty is similarly a broadly admirable trait, yet some of the most reprehensible acts people commit are motivated by loyalty that considers too little of what is at stake. Courage, generosity,

loyalty and other such admirable qualities must all be guided by good judgment in order to qualify as real virtues. What is right or justified in the circumstances is sometimes self-evident to a person of good character, but in situations of any complexity it may be necessary to determine the best course of action through diligent fact-finding, deliberation, and judgment. Accurate perception of the relevant aspects of the circumstances is essential and understanding related aspects of how the world works may also be essential. Acting in ethically appropriate ways is in this respect no different from success in any endeavor, because good judgment is an aspect of competence in everything we do.

Where do perseverance ('application'), resilience, ability to defer gratification, and other such 'skills' or 'abilities' belong in the scheme of good character? What about grit? The term 'performance virtues' has been used to signify that these attributes are different in kind from such moral virtues as courage and moderation with respect to appetites or desires (e.g. Birdwell, Scott and Reynolds, 2015, 10). However, it is not clear that there is a fundamental difference of kind. If courage is a disposition to do the right thing in the face of pain and danger, why should perseverance, or a disposition to do the right thing by completing a worthy task in the face of distraction, deprivation and depletion, not also count as a moral virtue? Neither is a real virtue unless it is guided by good judgment and valuing what is genuinely valuable, and it is not clear why either should be denied the status of moral virtue if both of these are present. Courage is called for in some contexts and perseverance in others, and the same is true of generosity, compassion, fairness, and other virtues. So there is a place for perseverance, resilience, ability to defer gratification, and other such attributes in the scheme of good character, but only with the understanding that these are not true virtues except as part of a more comprehensive package that includes good judgment and valuing what is worthy of being valued.

The significance of this point is illustrated by the 'culture of sleepless machismo' that embraces expectations that engineers will routinely work eighty-four hour weeks, impairing their attention, discernment and judgment so severely that costly errors and accidents are unavoidable (Heffernan, 2011, 73). Persevering when one is too cognitively impaired to think clearly may be heroic in some circumstances, but it is scarcely virtuous in the context of computer game development or operating the controls at a petroleum refinery. The inherent value of what is at stake scarcely justifies the toll such perseverance takes in ill health, strained marriages, mistakes and catastrophic accidents. Similar remarks would apply with even greater force to the notions of courage,

self-sacrifice and discipline that induce student athletes in the US to endure up to 1800 violent blows to their heads each year in American football matches, causing perhaps a quarter of them ongoing cognitive impairment (Talvage *et al*., 2014). Willingness to risk brain injury for the glory of athletic victory is not a virtue, and declining cognitive capacity is not compatible with the good judgment essential to good character. In general, it is essential that sports programmes be scrutinized to determine that what they promote is actually good character and not conformity, aggression, reckless self-sacrifice and other qualities unregulated by good judgment.

Another word of caution regarding these virtues of self-regulation is that it is not clear how finely they should be parsed from a psychological point of view or in practices of socialization (McGrath, 2017). Patience and persistence may not be functionally distinct capacities, for instance, and for all we know there may be broad patterns of socialization that yield broad capacities or strategies of self-regulation (see, for example, Lamm *et al*., 2017).

Redundancy and confusion may also be introduced by the popular but ill-defined notion of 'grit', which has been described as a combination of resilience and persistence, but also as a combination of perseverance and passion (Tough, 2013; Duckworth, 2016; Arthur *et al*., 2016). 'Resilience' signifies the ability to recover from setbacks and trauma, 'persistence' signifies an ability to sustain effort, and 'passion' signifies the passionate interests that highly creative people typically pursue with singular devotion. If grit is a combination of resilience and persistence, then there is redundancy in Nicky Morgan's reference to 'persistence, resilience and grit skills' (HC, 2017, c 41WH). 'Grit' may be an attempt to name the totality of self-regulation or forms of self-regulation most essential to success, but if so it is highly selective and misconceived. Alternatively, if 'grit' refers to a combination of passion and perseverance, then it is not a skill or virtue and it has no obvious educational implications (Arthur *et al*., 2016). It is not a virtue because it does not equip people to act well in recurring situations for which human beings must be prepared. It may, as Duckworth's research suggests, be a characteristic of Nobel Prize winners, but the prospect of being a Nobel Prize winner is scarcely a situation for which we must all be prepared.

Paul Tough has promoted KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Programme) schools in the US as models of character education focused on the development of grit (Tough, 2013; Birdwell, Scott and Reynolds, 2015, 19; Kristjánsson, 2015, 1-8), but close observers of these schools have argued that what they provide is not character education but a form of

'totalizing' behavioural control that is imposed with a singular focus on rote learning and test scores (Ben-Porath, 2013; Lamboy and Lu, 2017). Resilience would presumably be promoted by enabling children to process and overcome disabling emotions associated with trauma, but the 'coordinated, institutionalized response to expressions of grief, anger, sadness, or frustration' in KIPP and related forms of 'No Excuses' schools has been to reprimand teachers for sacrificing instructional time to find out why children as young as 4 and 5 years old are crying (Lamboy and Lu, 2017, 222). Many parents and teachers accept the harsh discipline of these schools as providing children of disadvantaged backgrounds with the hope of escape from poverty, but students are not engaged in the kinds of deep and self-directed learning that would prepare them to succeed in college when they get there. Nor is there discussion or examination of issues of the kinds that would be conducive to civic education, moral reflection, or the development of judgment (Ben-Porath, 2013). In sum, it would be premature to claim that 'grit' provides an actionable focus for character education, let alone one that has a proven track record.

3. Motivation and well-being

The motivational heart of good character is valuing people and their well-being and responding to them accordingly. How does such a state of motivation arise? How is the acquisition and possession of such motivation related to a person's own well-being? The satisfaction of basic psychological needs plays a key role in the acquisition of good character and the possession of good character enhances personal well-being. An implication of this is that the promotion of good character can be most successful in a needs-supportive learning environment.

The previous section explained that the heart of virtuous motivation is being appropriately responsive to the value of persons, their well-being, and what is conducive to their well-being. Virtuous motivation involves valuing persons for themselves and valuing various other things because they are valuable, and it involves responding to their value in a balanced way. Such valuing is *autonomous* or one's own, not something externally imposed, and it is an integral part of the motivational makeup of a person of good character. The acquisition of such a state of *integrated motivation* begins in innate human tendencies to form relationships and coherent selves, and it is mediated by reason-giving and the satisfaction of basic needs for autonomy, competence, and mutually affirming relationships. The satisfaction of these needs is essential to personal well-being, and the most important connection between good character and personal well-being is that valuing other people for themselves is essential to happiness because it is a prerequisite for satisfying the universal human need for mutually affirming relationships. More generally, it is in fulfilling our social, intellectual, and productive potential *well* that we find happiness.

A well-established finding about moral motivation and the internalization of values is that people tend to internalize the norms of caregivers or social groups they perceive as acting to protect their interests. This implies that a social group, institution or society that is serious about inducing all of its members to accept the values it espouses must espouse *and adhere to* norms of justice or equal respect for all its members. Groups, institutions and societies that do not protect the interests of their members equally are likely to encounter difficulty in earning the respect and adherence of those who are not accorded equal respect or who experience tension and conflict associated with failures of equal respect.

A similarly well-established finding is that motivation to sustain effort, achieve mastery and attain goals is regulated by a need for self-efficacy or competence. This widely applied finding implies that learning tasks should be structured to provide students with manageable challenges that build their capabilities and confidence while allowing them to experience themselves as competent much of the time.

learning tasks should be structured to provide students with manageable challenges that build their capabilities and confidence while allowing them to experience themselves as competent much of the time

Both of these findings have been absorbed into the most comprehensive body of theory and research on motivation currently on offer. Known as self-determination theory (SDT), it incorporates needs for positive social connection and self-efficacy and it has accumulated a large body of evidence supporting the addition of a need for autonomy or self-determination as one of three basic psychological needs that are universal across cultures and life stages (Chirkov, Ryan and Sheldon, 2011; Deci and Ryan, 2012; Ryan and Deci, 2017). It offers a fuller picture of the nature and acquisition of virtuous motivation than earlier approaches based on care, belonging or positive social connection alone. It also supports the ancient idea that good character is a prerequisite for happiness.

SDT conceives of human beings as having innate propensities and potentials whose 'positive' expression and fulfillment is the key to happiness. The linkage between well-being and fulfilling basic human potentials in 'positive' ways is explained through the needs for *relatedness* (a supportive social climate and affirming relationships), *autonomy* (self-directedness congruent with personal values and sense of self), and *competence* (experiencing oneself as capable); and the related potentialities can be categorized as social, intellectual and productive (Ryan, Curren and Deci, 2013; Curren, 2013). An important finding, which is well established cross-culturally and across the life-span, is that

the satisfaction of all three of these basic psychological needs through fulfillment of related potentialities is essential to psychological well-being (Chirkov, Ryan and Sheldon, 2011; Deci and Ryan, 2012; Ryan and Deci, 2017). The ethical prerequisites for fulfilling social potential well and satisfying one's relational need imply that human beings are not able to experience psychological well-being or live happy lives unless they care about other people and exhibit basic social virtues (Besser-Jones, 2014, 33-48; Curren, 2013; Walker, Curren and Jones, 2016). Most research has focused on the benefits of being a recipient of others' care and concern, but some recent SDT studies have found that the inherent psychic rewards of being a provider of unreciprocated altruism are even greater than the psychic rewards of being a recipient of it (Weinstein and Ryan, 2010). The ancient Greek ideal of eudaimonia or human flourishing assumes an internal psychic dependency of happiness on virtue, and this finding goes a long way toward empirically confirming that assumption.

SDT distinguishes four grades of internalization or adoption of motivating values and goals that are not innate: *controlled, introjected, identified, and integrated* (Deci and Ryan, 2012). Acts owing to *controlled* motivation are externally induced by a superior's direct orders, threat of punishment, or offer of a reward. Motivation is *introjected* when threats of such punishment, shaming or other external sanctions are internalized and agents act to avoid these internalized threats without accepting the value or goal as their own. These are non-autonomous forms of motivation and they yield conflicted and error-prone engagement in tasks. Action arising from *identified* motivation is attributable to values or goals one identifies with or accepts as one's own. Such acceptance arises from a perception that one is free to embrace or reject the values or goals as one thinks best on the basis of reasons (Deci, Eghari, Patrick and Leone, 1994). Such autonomous acceptance of values makes them one's own; the resulting motivation is autonomous. SDT posits a natural propensity to self-integrate, or fashion one's values, goals, and motivation into a fully coherent whole, and identified motivation requires some degree of self-integration to see that a value coheres with core commitments of one's identity. Acceptance of a value can nevertheless fall short of integrating it into an identified system of values that is well-ordered and relatively free of internal tensions and conflict. *Integrated* motivation is the product of more fully integrating identified values and goals into a coherent and well-ordered 'self-system'. This requires examining the relationships between one's own values and goals and working to make one's commitments and actions more coherent. Such efforts of self-integration reduce the tensions and potential conflict between values that may become apparent in situations

one has not faced before. They allow one's values to be more seamlessly deployed in response to the complex particulars of situations.

Good character requires autonomous valuing of what is valuable and it is often evident in spontaneous and wholehearted compassion, generosity, honesty, fairness and the like. It fits the pattern of *integrated motivation* organized around the right values, with the right priorities, and based on understanding the value of things. SDT research suggests that a value orientation of this kind is a predictable outcome for people nurtured in a needs-supportive social environment that *models* valuing of persons and their flourishing, promotes ethical insight, reflection and action, and provides sufficient opportunity for the satisfaction of autonomy, competence and relatedness needs as children begin to explore and make their way in the world.

Good character is formed in part through guided practice in making decisions and engaging other people in admirable ways, and the success of such practice depends on the learner having an autonomous *aspiration* to get better (Annas, 2011). Modeling, understanding, and the satisfaction of relational, competence and autonomy needs are crucial to the formation of such aspiration and striving. The guidance that practice requires must be reasoned, drawing the learner's attention to the relevant factors she must attend to and care about, while being nurturing and needs-supportive in the way SDT understands this (Annas, 2011; Curren, 2014c). In this way, the learner may be induced to notice and care about what it is important to notice and care about in order to make progress. Sound guidance of ethical practice also provides the cognitive tools – the vocabulary, concepts and understanding – the learner needs to take ownership of her practice and practise productively. It involves an autonomy-supportive articulation of reasons and one aspect of this is that educators must be prepared for reasoned give-and-take with students, give-and-take that is both foundational to students' autonomous motivation and to their development of ethical competence.

A virtuous state of character begins in innate human tendencies to socialize, experience rewarding attachment to other people, and self-integrate. Its development also depends on the formation of autonomous motivation focused on valuing other people and their well-being and efforts to *integrate* identified goals and values into a coherent self. One can picture this integration as progressing in a way that is linked to the activities of a life through which virtues, understanding and capabilities are acquired – activities through which a person attempts to shape her life and self in a desirable and feasible direction.

4. Educational necessities

If we were asked in the abstract, 'What is the point of belonging to a cooperative society?', our answers would converge on the idea that the value of belonging is to be able to live better lives than we could on our own. We would agree that the point is to be able to live *well*. Asked similarly what the aims of various institutions should be, our answers would converge on the idea that institutions should collectively provide the necessities for living well that individuals cannot provide themselves. High on the list of such institutions would be ones devoted to promoting forms of personal development foundational for living well – educational institutions, in other words (Curren, 2014a). A fundamental question for educational policy and practice is thus, 'What are the forms of personal development foundational for living well?'. Whatever they are, sound policy would dictate that all children be provided with institutional settings that promote all of these forms of development, unless there are compelling reasons not to.

Knowledge and skills are often mentioned as formative goals of education, but a wider and more complete list of basic formative goals would be *understanding*, *capabilities*, and *virtues* that are important to living well in the world youths will transition into upon graduation. The need for all three of these forms of development is a reflection of the structure of human action. No life can qualify as well lived unless it is successful in relevant respects, and a person's success in undertaking any action requires that she be well-equipped and disposed with respect to *all* of the fundamental dimensions of action. There are three broad categories of potentials fundamental to action – intellectual, social, and creative or productive – and all three must be fulfilled substantially in order for a person to act in ways that will be both admirable and

satisfy psychological needs for self-determination, relatedness, and competence. One's intellectual and social potential must be competently fulfilled in deciding what to do in light of an accurate *understanding* of the world and in accordance with the valuing of persons and what is good for them characteristic of a *virtuous* state of character. One must also competently deploy (social, intellectual and creative) *capabilities* in order to carry out what one decides to do and thereby satisfy one's needs for self-determination, mutually affirming relatedness and competence.

Just societies would provide all of their members with educational institutions whose basic function is to promote these forms of development conducive to living well. They would do this by promoting the acquisition of understanding, virtues of intellect and character, and capabilities, and they would do so in circumstances favourable to students expressing these developing attributes in rewarding activity. Engagement in such activity provides students with the inherent rewards of their progress in fulfilling their potential well, and these rewards motivate further progress.

Schools must foster a nurturing, cooperative and just community of learning, in order to model good character and inspire it in all students

Many people would question this reference to rewarding activity, imagining that the acquisition of good attributes could be motivationally sustained without the inherent rewards of expressing those attributes in action, but this is developmentally and motivationally all but impossible. Time spent in settings which do not permit engagement in inherently rewarding activity is also time without opportunity to engage in activities that make for a flourishing life. Schools must foster a nurturing, cooperative, and just community of learning, in order to model good character and inspire it in all students. They must also structure learning and the learning environment in ways that promote ethical reflection and allow students to develop and exercise their own judgment, meet attainable challenges, and experience a rewarding growth of competence. Without such needs support, there is little prospect of students accepting a school's goals and values as their own or making the efforts essential to meaningful learning. They need to be able to experience progress in living well.

Educational institutions can best promote forms of development conducive to living well in a needs-supportive setting by coaching students in structured activities through which understanding, capabilities, virtues and appreciation of the value of things develop, together with students forming interests and finding meaning and

direction in life. There are many things of value to which students are introduced in schools in the realms of ideas, cultures, artistry, craftsmanship, civic and professional practices, and aspects of the natural world. An introduction to these things of value expands a student's understanding of value and opportunities for self-directed activity, while offering resources and standards for critical thinking and judgment. Finding the activities of one's life meaningful is an essential aspect of living well, and one respect in which such learning offers opportunities to live well is by expanding access to things of value that can lend meaning to a life, while nurturing associated capabilities through which students can relate to those goods in significant and productive ways. This is an aspect of good character education, broadly conceived.

Initiation into practices of inquiry, evaluation, and self-examination are essential to the cultivation of both intellectual and moral virtues, inasmuch as good judgment is a defining aspect of true virtue and is essential to competent self-determination in life. The cultivation of good judgment can begin with exercises that orient children to thinking things through before acting. It involves instruction in critical thinking and guided practice in analyzing case studies in judgment and choice, and it requires integrated curricula and cross-curricular inquiry-based learning that provides experience in bringing the resources of diverse disciplinary and analytical frameworks to bear on matters of importance to students' present and future lives (Curren, 2014b).

5. Whose values?

This section will address the contentious matter of which values, if any, can be legitimately taught to everyone. Critics of character education sometimes ask, 'Whose values will be taught?'. The implication is that people vary widely in their basic value commitments and there is no objective basis for choosing some values over others. This section will explain why this is a socially, philosophically and psychologically untenable view, and it will argue that 'British values' can be taught and learned as providing a sound basis for a cooperative society whose members may adhere to different faiths and traditions.

It is important to begin by acknowledging that there are advocates of character education who advance moral agendas that could never be widely acceptable in a multicultural and open society. These might pertain to debatable norms concerning gender roles, sexual mores, or other matters specific to a particular religion or culture, or they may reinforce existing social relations in ways that inhibit moral inquiry and progress (see Curren, 2014c). By contrast, the conception of character education being advanced in this pamphlet is one focused on basic respect for and valuing of other persons and it emphasizes ethical reasoning, autonomous self-integration and the exercise of judgment as essential to true virtue. The cultivation of mere habits of loyalty, gratitude, courage, or other such virtues would be rightly objected to as preparation for compliant subjection to the will of others, but true virtues guided by one's own educated understanding and judgment cannot be objected to on any such grounds.

There are, of course, differences of cultural norms and practices in multicultural societies, including different ideas about how to live well, but a common morality of equal respect and concern for everyone is exactly what is needed in such societies. Good character exhibits such respect and concern. It exhibits tolerance. It embraces the rights and

liberties of equal citizenship, a rule of law that protects equal rights and liberties, and democratic processes and institutions.

The social role of the basic ethic of mutual respect and concern embodied in good character is to make a cooperative society possible. Ideals of equal respect and concern are already embodied in common morality and the common law of England, and they have obvious value as a basis for the members of a society living well together. Indeed, the enforcement of law that protects individuals' vital interests and rights was long predicated on the idea that the underlying principles of common morality – of 'right and wrong' – are intuitively known to everyone of sound mind who has reached the 'age of reason'. Given this, it is puzzling how anyone could object to young people being educated in a social ethic of mutual respect. Character education that holds children to the same underlying values in a needs-supportive setting is surely a less restrictive and more effective approach to achieving widespread respect for the underlying values than brute enforcement. Relying primarily on education and only as a last resort on force and penalties arguably shows greater respect for each other as free and equal citizens (Curren, 2002, 2014a).

The social role of a basic ethic of mutual respect and concern embodied in good character is to make a cooperative society possible

Philosophically, the ethic of respect embodied in the character education being proposed is one on which diverse moral theories converge. Philosophers have debated normative ethical theories that vary in what they hypothesize are the most basic forms of moral considerations, some holding that it is the rules embodied in acts that are fundamental, others giving priority to the consequences of acts, and still others focusing on ideals of character or virtue. These theories are attempts to map the relationships between the different kinds of moral considerations that come into play in everyday morality, however. They are *theories* answerable to the *data* of common morality. Their goal has normally been to understand morality, and the existence of theoretical disagreements of these kinds should not undermine confidence that the norms of common morality are justified.

Philosophers have also debated conflicting theories of metaethics, which concern the nature of moral judgments, what justifies them, and whether any can be known to be true. Here too there are theoretical disagreements, but once again they are not of a nature to undermine confidence that the norms of common morality are justified. Moral naturalism is the view that there are knowable moral truths and these include, or consist of, truths about what is naturally good or bad for

human beings. SDT research seems to reveal important facts about what is good and bad for people and to bolster a form of moral naturalism focused on universal human needs or necessities of well-being entailed by human nature. Whether or not one accepts this specific scientific view of well-being, the idea that there are things naturally good and bad for human beings is hard to dispute. Common morality presents itself as a system of norms of human conduct that promote what is good for us and limit what is bad for us. An alternative metaethical approach, known as moral constructivism, holds that common morality is a system of norms that it is rational for creatures like us to accept as authoritative, given our limited capacities and the obvious advantages of cooperation. While there are hybrids of these approaches and other spheres of metaethical inquiry, the dominant philosophical views of the justification of morality reject moral relativism and find a rational basis for common morality in the requirements of human nature, general aspects of the human condition, and human rationality.

The psychological argument prefigured in previous sections of this pamphlet is that treating others with the respect that common morality demands is essential to satisfying at least one basic psychological need that must be satisfied in order for a person to experience happiness. What is required in order to fulfill the need for positive relatedness is not simply outward manifestations of such respect, moreover, but actually valuing other people and expressing that valuing autonomously. This is the motivational heart of good character and it is an important foundation for finding happiness in relating positively to other people. Without it, the need to experience competence will also be frustrated in the sphere of relationships and every other sphere of activity to which relationships matter. The significance of good character for satisfying one's own need for competence is even broader than this, moreover, since caring about the quality of one's work and possessing the performance virtues essential to doing good work are also aspects of character. Frustration of these needs to fulfill personal potential is manifested in depressed affect, deficits of energy and sense of purpose in engaging tasks, frequent errors, and symptoms of stress and psychic conflict, such as headaches and sleep disturbances. There is a continuum of related forms of psychological and somatic wellness to which good character is foundational. From a psychological standpoint, the response to value at the heart of good character is thus far from arbitrary. It is human nature itself that dictates a dependence of happiness on good character.

What then of the promotion of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance as 'British values'? Are these values too debatable to be promoted as an aspect of character education

or can they only be promoted *as* British or because they are 'ours'? Are they uniquely British? On the contrary, these aspects of constitutional democracy are widely embraced in other countries and they can be defended both on moral grounds and as the best constitutional system that the diverse members of a multicultural cooperative society could reasonably hope for. No one can expect more than an equal share of rights and liberties or claim the privilege of denying anyone else an equal share without due process of law. Tolerance of diverse cultural practices that do not threaten the constitutional order is an aspect of respecting these rights and liberties. Because such respect is not universal, a rule of law is vital to protecting them. This means a rule of law *above which no one stands*, and it applies with special force to state and corporate actors. Such a rule of law is essential to a rights-respecting democracy that ensures everyone a political voice and a stake in working within a just constitutional system.

Civic education and character education are natural allies. Overcoming children's lived experience of injustice is beyond education's capacity and legitimate role, but the recommendations outlined in the DfE's Prevent duty advice and guidance on promoting British values are on the right track: schools should provide pupils 'a safe environment for debating controversial issues' and allow pupils to 'explore political and social issues critically'. They should promote 'critical thinking skills', help pupils 'understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making' including through school-based participation in democratic processes, teach them 'about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom', and promote acceptance and toleration of people of 'different faiths and beliefs' (DfE, 2015, 2014b). Enabling wider inter-cultural participation in National Citizen Service, as a valuable socializing bridge from school to adult life, also makes sense.[2]

Three important additions to these recommendations are in order. First, schools should not simply teach 'the need for mutual respect and understanding'. So far as they are able, they should enroll a mix of pupils with different identities and nurture friendships through cooperative, project-based learning, extracurricular activities, and free play – an important and underappreciated sphere of moral learning (Walker, Curren and Jones, 2016; Curren and Dorn, 2018). Second, the debating

2. National Citizen Service is a two-to-four week youth development and public service programme involving: team-building; leadership, confidence, and communication training; connecting with organizations and community leaders; and completion of a social action project. It is designed to promote 'capable, connected, and compassionate' citizenship and provide an institutional bridge from school to work. A family fee of £50 is matched by £1000 in government funding (NCS, 2017).

of controversial issues in schools should be combined with instruction in norms of 'public reason' (Rawls, 2001). These include respect for relevant forms of evidence and scientific expertise, a matter of great importance in the present era. Such respect is best cultivated through a curriculum that is oriented to the way serious inquiry and evidence work and to the intellectual virtues involved. These virtues are foundational to the judgment that is part of good character.

Third, a defence of 'British values' in the present era must be attuned to the 'rise of populism' referred to by Lucy Powell in the parliamentary debate of 11 July 2017 (HC, 2017, c 39WH). Teachers must be prepared to address the relationships between democracy and a rule of law in a context in which authoritarian populist movements are undermining democracy in many countries around the world. It is vitally important that young people understand the patterns of populism through which autocratic 'strong' leaders claim to be the one true voice of a select 'true' people, seek to discredit and destroy the 'undemocratic' courts, independent press, universities and other institutions essential to public reason and a democratic rule of law, and thereby place themselves and the pervasive corruption they engender above the law (Müller, 2016).

Convincing native Brexit supporters of the merits of 'British values' may be harder than convincing newly arriving immigrants of them, given the fading hopes of the former, high hopes with which immigrants typically arrive, and evidence that Muslim immigrants have 'increasingly accepted the consultative and procedural norms of western democracies' (Sanders, 2012; Laurence, 2012, 270). The evidence suggests that in both cases a societal commitment to equal economic opportunity will be essential, in the latter case to social and political integration and in the former case to economic reintegration and being convinced that democracy has not already failed (Vigdor, 2011; Adida *et al.*, 2016; Kazemipur, 2014). Schools can nevertheless play a role and a first step would be to revise Prevent duty advice on teaching resistance to radicalization, to reflect the threat to democratic values posed by the growing authoritarian sentiments cultivated by populist movements.

6. Educating character

The central question posed in the introduction of this pamphlet was whether the various rationales for character education on offer support a coherent and comprehensive approach that incorporates fundamental moral and civic values. The rationales at play in policy discussion pertain to a growing opportunity gap, youths lost in transition to responsible adulthood, the threat of homegrown terrorism, and defence of British values. These are all weighty and urgent concerns, but addressing them through character education is best predicated on a deeper understanding of why character and virtues would be a fundamental aspect of education even in the best of circumstances. The intervening sections aimed to provide the basics of such an understanding and in doing so provide the basis for a coherent and comprehensive approach.

A central conclusion reached is that character education can be justified as one of the three basic developmental aspects of sound education that equips children to live well as members of a cooperative society. This is true, however, only if character education is focused on the cultivation of genuine virtues in which good judgment plays a role.

Character education should therefore focus on enabling young people to acquire good judgment and govern themselves in accordance with it. This can begin in forms of character education that orient children to thinking things through before acting. It involves promotion of ethical understanding and reflection, instruction in critical thinking, and guided practice in analyzing case studies in judgment and choice. It involves cross-curricular inquiry-based learning that provides experience in bringing the resources of diverse disciplines to bear on matters of importance to students' lives, such as problems in their communities. Teachers play a role in nurturing good judgement when they promote a nuanced understanding of human character, lead students in analyzing and debating issues and case studies, and provide opportunities

and guidance for student engagement in individual and collective decision-making.

Perseverance, self-discipline, and other such 'performance' virtues are not true virtues unless their exercise is guided by good judgment, so these character attributes promoted as important to social mobility can only be properly taught as part of a more comprehensive and cognitively rich approach to character education.

Another key conclusion is that the promotion of good character can be most successful in a needs-supportive learning environment that enables children to experience progress in living well – progress in fulfilling their intellectual, social and creative potential in devotion to things whose value they come to appreciate. This requires nurturing and cooperative school and classroom environments in which children's relational needs are met and they are enabled to experience a growth of personal competence and structured self-determination that provides opportunities for choice and developing good judgment. It requires that educators understand the roles of personal aspiration and integrated motivation in character formation and that they respect pupils' autonomy by providing reasons for the values and goals they expect pupils to adopt. Teachers should engage pupils in ethical inquiry that allows them to think through the moral landscape of their experience without pressure to adopt views they do not find reason to accept as their own.

Teachers should engage pupils in ethical inquiry that allows them to think through the moral landscape of their experience

A further important conclusion is that 'British values' can be taught as providing a sound basis for a cooperative society of citizens and residents who may adhere to different faiths and traditions. This should be done in a way that communicates and explores the universality of these values of mutual respect and tolerance, equal rights and liberties, rule of law, and democracy. It should directly engage authoritarian threats to democratic values including those associated with populist movements.

Ethical and motivational considerations come together in the idea of just school communities that provide a lived experience of justice in which pupils feel valued and find reason to accept the school's norms of cooperation. An aspect of this is that students engage more readily with school missions that are not about individual competitive success, but are focused instead on things that have value independent of students' self-interest. As Joan Goodman has written, 'the mission of academic excellence can take on a more moral and collective texture when excellence is extended from self-serving attainments to valuing

deep exploration and articulation of issues, high standards in a range of endeavors, and personal attainments oriented to improvements outside the school doors' (Goodman, 2010, 241). The promotion of such a mission is best accomplished by enlisting staff, students, and parents to collaborate in its pursuit.

A whole school, just community approach is further enhanced by success in attracting diverse students and nurturing friendships and conversations that can have a wider civic value in promoting understanding, tolerance and norms of public reason.

All of this leads to some specific recommendations. Regarding character education generally:

- The DfE should develop a comprehensive framework for character education based on a sound understanding of what good character encompasses.
- This comprehensive framework should include evidence-based standards for sound socialization practices in child care, parent education, and school settings.
- Investment in early childhood development in and out of institutional settings should be a priority. It should expand access to high-quality child care and to parent support and education programmes.
- Service-focused programmes, such as National Citizen Service, should be expanded to support the transition from school to work.
- Participation in sports should not be promoted in character education programmes without evaluation addressing all relevant dimensions, including development of self-regulation and good judgment.
- Guidance on promoting British values should be revised to respond to authoritarian populist threats to democratic values.

Regarding schools:

- The DfE and school leaders should adopt a whole school, just school community approach, incorporating inclusive admissions policies, need-support, cooperative project-based learning, service learning, student involvement in decision-making, and debating of issues.
- Each school should have a comprehensive approach to character education and a senior staff member responsible for it (Birdwell, Scott and Reynolds, 2015, 60).

- Schools should enlist staff, students and parents in advancing a common school mission that concerns things of value beyond self-serving achievement.
- Schools should be welcoming to diverse students and school programmes should be structured to nurture bonds of civic friendship between diverse students.

Regarding the content of character education:

- Schools should model and expect valuing of all students and staff and they should promote the motivational integration of sound values through autonomy-supportive give-and-take of reasons.
- Curricula and pedagogy should promote ethical insight and reflection, respect for sound reasoning and evidence, public reason and good judgment.
- PSHE should be made a statutory subject and civic and character education components of teacher education should be strengthened.
- 'Performance' virtues should not be promoted in isolation but as an aspect of well-rounded character education that develops good judgment.
- 'Grit' should not be promoted as an aspect of character education, absent future vindication as a valid and educable construct.

Regarding assessment:

- Ofsted assessment should be modified to ensure it does not 'hinder the development of the whole child' (Birdwell, Scott and Reynolds, 2015, 54). The current heavy reliance on attainment data is an obstacle to engaging pupils in character development activities, and this could be remedied by placing character development on a par with attainment measures in future assessments.

The success of character education programmes should be evaluated using methods that provide rich data concerning whole schools or collections of schools rather than individual students (Curren and Kotzee, 2014).

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Why character education?

Character education in schools has been high on the UK political agenda for the last few years. The government has invested millions in grants to support character education projects and declared its intention to make Britain a global leader in teaching character and resilience. But the policy has many critics: some question whether schools should be involved in the formation of character at all; others worry that the traits schools are being asked to cultivate are excessively competitive or military.

In this pamphlet Randall Curren sets out a robust defence of character education. He welcomes the political support it presently enjoys, but contends that greater clarity about the nature, benefits and acquisition of good character is essential. In particular, he argues that too narrow a focus on traits like perseverance and resilience is a serious mistake: these traits are only virtues when they are part of a wider set of moral and intellectual qualities, and when their exercise is guided by good judgment.

Curren offers us a compelling and coherent account of what good character is and how it might be cultivated in schools. He explains why schools must be needs-supporting environments that provide students with opportunities to engage in rewarding activity, and why cultivating good character implies promoting the 'fundamental British values' of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance. His groundbreaking pamphlet promises to expand the scope and strengthen the foundations of character education in British schools, and should go a long way towards allaying the fears of its detractors.

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