

Editorial

Ethical and moral matters in teaching and teacher education

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Abstract

The author reviews a set of articles on ethical and moral matters in teaching and teacher education previously published by *Teaching and Teacher Education*. Comparisons are made and a summary of findings offered.

Keywords: Teaching; The moral nature of ethics and teaching; Teacher education

Introduction

“Ethics deals, amongst other things, with right and wrong, ought and ought not, good and evil” (Mahoney, 2009, p. 983)

Over the past twenty or so years, TATE has published numerous articles exploring one or another aspect of the ethical or moral nature of teaching. Using a variety of descriptors – ethics and teaching, teacher values, teacher beliefs, ethical issues in teaching, teaching and moral development among several others – some 92 articles were located that in one or another way attend to the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching. By carefully reading the abstracts of these articles seeking to identify those centrally concerned with ethical and moral issues, this number was reduced to 22, each of which was read, outlined, then re-read. While most of the 22 articles will find a place in this review, only ten will be highlighted, however. These ten articles were selected for three reasons: (1) they represent what appear to be the dominant albeit evolving concerns of researchers writing for TATE; (2) when brought together they reveal some of the possibilities and challenges associated with studying ethical and moral matters in teaching; and (3) they include research conducted by an international group of scholars.

Reviews of each of the ten articles will be organized around three categories: (1) area of concern or central issue; (2) mode of inquiry; and (3) central conclusions and commentary. While it was tempting to present the articles chronologically as a means for suggesting something about how the scholarly discourse has developed and evolved across the pages of TATE, such an organization ultimately proved unsatisfactory. The scholarly conversations about teaching, ethics and morality, are multiple and here and there contending. Hence, a more focused and dialogical organization was sought, one that would facilitate engagement and enable comparison. To this end, an effort will be made to make links across articles. Hopefully, the logic of the organization will become readily apparent and prove useful. I begin with a general, orienting, question, that each of the authors either explicitly or implicitly address: “In what sense is teaching an ethical and moral enterprise.” A second question quickly follows: “What is the nature of the moral and ethical conflicts teachers face?” Other questions will follow in turn and as noted.

1. In what sense is teaching an ethical and moral enterprise?

Buzzelli, C. & Johnston, B. (2001). Authority, power, and morality in classroom discourse. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 873–884.

Concern: The authors' intention in this paper "is to examine the relationship between authority, power, and morality, and specifically to suggest how this relationship plays out at the micro-level of classroom interaction" (p. 874). This concern is grounded in a set of basic assumptions drawn from the wider research literature of what the authors believe is a "general agreement" among scholars: "teaching itself involves moral action... Teachers are moral agents, and education as a whole, and thus classroom interaction in particular, is fundamentally and inevitably moral in nature" (p. 876). The authors' are especially concerned with the issue of teacher authority, and in two senses: Being *an* authority in the classroom and being *in* authority – "The former refers to the teacher's ability to direct actions within the classroom, the latter to her status as the possessor and transmitter of sanctioned forms of knowledge" (p. 874). Morality, for Buzzelli and Johnston (2001), "constitutes the set of a person's beliefs and understandings which are evaluative in nature: that is, which distinguish, whether consciously or unconsciously, between what is right and wrong, good and bad" (p. 876). Using Bernstein's concepts of *pedagogic*, *instructional*, and *regulative* discourses, the authors argue that the instructional discourse is embedded in the regulative discourse so that "the teacher is inevitably using her authority both for purposes of regulating power relations and for moral ends: she is both a political and a moral agent in the classroom" (p. 881); moreover, they note, there always is tension between power and morality.

Mode of inquiry: The authors make their case based upon a close textual analysis of what they characterize as "The beer dialogue" that took place in a third-grade classroom during a "chair activity", a time when children read their stories to the class which were then discussed. Robbie read his story: "If we are going to jammin gym, we have got to go now. I have rented a limo to take us there. OK. Let's go. The limo is here. We are on our way. Joey said, 'Hey guy, up in the front, where's the beer?'" (p. 878). Robbie's story presents a dilemma for his teacher who wants to support the "students' competence as writers while also nurturing an awareness of how their writing may influence others" forcing her to face a dilemma "of how to exercise her authority for moral ends" (p. 880).

Conclusions and commentary:

There is no single right or wrong way to handle situations such as the one described here; we only wish to argue that they can be best conceptualized in terms of the tensions of morality and power that are unavoidably inherent in the exercise of authority. These tensions can never be resolved; they present constant difficult choices to the teachers, and each time they arise they must be dealt with afresh in complex and ambiguous moral contexts in which decisions are rarely easy or straightforward (p. 882).

To more effectively address issues of this kind, dilemmas arising because teaching inevitably involves the exercise of authority and power, the authors suggest "continual reflection" on how power and authority operate in the classroom. How they would do this is uncertain.

Of the 22 papers read for this view, all but two wholeheartedly agree with Buzzelli and Johnston's contention that teaching is inherently, perhaps primarily, a moral enterprise. One partial exception, to be discussed more fully later, is offered by Strike (1990) in his discussion of what can reasonably be taught in teacher education programs about ethics; a second and more clearly contrary position is represented by Barrow (1992) in her essay review of *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching* (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990). Critical of Goodlad and his colleagues' position, Barrow (1992) writes: "The problem [with the book] lies in [its] framework... which is grounded in the belief that

teaching is essentially a moral enterprise. That, of course, is a widely held belief, but it seems to me highly questionable" (p. 105). While Barrow admits there is a "moral component to teaching" she notes that this is true of most human endeavors: "the fact remains that education is no more about morality than many other human activities; it is about developing minds" (p. 107). Moreover, she argues, "neither good teachers nor educated people are necessarily particularly moral" (p. 105). Holding a transmission view of teaching that draws rather sharp fact/value distinctions, Barrow suggests that it is the teacher's ability "to communicate worthwhile understanding rather than his or her moral integrity or the nature of his or her personal interactions that lies at the heart [of teaching]" (p. 108).

While I would argue against Barrow and with Goodlad that teaching is inherently a moral enterprise and that the kind and quality of relationship that obtains between teachers and students profoundly influences what is learned and how it is learned especially by young people, the questions she poses are worthy of careful consideration: In particular, What roles ought a *proper* teacher seek to enact within schools?; What is the appropriate and moral teacher–student relationship?; and, What connections are there among subject matter, instructional competence and teacher goodness?

The next article speaks to one aspect of Barrow's criticism, arguing that there is necessarily a moral aspect endemic to what and how teachers know.

Elbaz, F. (1992). Hope, attentiveness, and caring for difference: The moral voice in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 8(5/6), 421–432.

Concern: "The concern of this article is with the moral dimension of teachers' knowledge" (p. 421). Comparing mothering and what mothers must know when caring for their children to teaching and what teachers must know when caring for their pupils, Elbaz (1992) argues that to teach is to be concerned with the "preservation, growth, and the shaping of an acceptable child" (p. 422). Each of these responsibilities brings with it a claim or need to know, and to know a great deal about children and how they learn and grow, culture, ethics, as well as curricular content. Knowledge of this kind, representing a teacher's personal philosophy, including how teachers think about children, teaching, and learning, Elbaz argues, is the foundation of teaching practice, grounding what teachers do when teaching. Such knowledge helps define the teacher's moral commitment to care.

Mode of inquiry: Analysis of three student stories written to capture their search within a graduate course for the "underlying values that guide [their] practice [and identify] what these values were based on" (p. 423). Elbaz reports that she: "read the teachers' stories over and over, and at the same time I explored theoretical avenues [for making sense of the stories that led to identifying] three broad characteristics which were strongly present both in the teachers' stories and in the theoretical work" (p. 425): Hope, attentiveness, and caring for difference.

Conclusions and commentary: Teacher *hope* is grounded in teachers' "real and concrete knowledge of the children with whom they interact, as well as a personal understanding of how they themselves got through childhood, and of many other children previously encountered in both personal and professional situations" (p. 426).

Attentiveness, which refers to being attuned to children, to being ever watchful of them, finds its "moral importance... in the recognition of immeasurable value in the everyday details of children's lives... The quality of attentiveness is what keeps teachers oriented in the present lives of children and prevents them from forgetting that those lives are of value in their own right" (p. 426). *Caring for difference* speaks to issues of fairness and justice. As Elbaz argues, teachers learn a great deal from living and working with children, knowledge that shapes and grounds them morally, encouraging them in their hopefulness, attentiveness and caring for difference. Lacking these qualities – falling into despair, inattentiveness, and becoming indifferent to questions of fairness and equity – undermines the work of teachers. Elbaz concludes with two points, the second of particular significance for our own time, a time characterized

by signs of growing teacher vulnerability in the face of aggressive accountability measures (see [Kelchtermans, 2007](#)): “these qualities seem to lie at some distance outside of the technocratic mind-set of western culture... The homogenization, belief in certainty and emotional flattening that technological progress brings with it are only some of the relevant features of the technological mindset that seriously require notice and questioning... [o]ne of our most important tasks as researchers may be to provide a forum within which [the moral voice] of teaching may be heard” (pp. 430–431).

Elbaz’s views find support from [Webb and Blond \(1995\)](#) who explore what they describe as “relational knowing,” knowledge that arises from caring for and being with others, in this instance a teacher and her students. Such knowledge, influences “pedagogy and the curriculum constructed and enacted with each student” (p. 612). [Bauml \(2009\)](#) makes a similar point in a study of preservice teachers’ beliefs about teaching concluding that “teachers who get to know their students personally are better able to choose appropriate pedagogical methods for instruction and can relate the material to students’ interests” (p. 907). Caring for students is not, however, unproblematic; “conflict is an inescapable risk of caring” ([Webb & Blond, 1995](#), p. 620). Choices must be made between values – goods – in tension – and between long and short term aims – “a teacher’s knowing [is] dynamic and interactive with the knowing of students with whom the teacher is in-relation” (p. 624). There are limits to how and to what degree a teacher may care for a student and expressions of caring may conflict: on one hand a teacher is expected to be kind and considerate but also, for the sake of the child’s future, demanding and insistent.

2. What is the nature of the ethical and moral conflicts confronting teachers and how do they think about them?

Colnerud, G. (1997). Ethical conflicts in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13(6), 627–635.

Concern: “Based on the assumption that there are moral and ethical conflicts in the teaching profession, [this article] explores ethical problems, dilemmas and conflicts as teachers themselves experience and describe them” (p. 627). Specific research questions include: “What professional ethical conflicts do teachers experience and deal with in their work?”; “What are the characteristics of these conflicts?”; “Which of the different norms conflict?”; “In what situations do they occur?”; and, “In what specific conditions and circumstances do the conflicts arise?” (p. 628).

Mode of inquiry: The author invited Swedish teachers teaching in comprehensive schools to respond in writing to the following item: “*Briefly describe a situation or a kind of situation when you find it difficult to know what is the right or wrong thing to do from a moral/ethical point of view in relation to pupils, parents or colleagues*” (p. 629). One-hundred eighty nine teachers responded generating 223 examples of ethical conflicts. A constant comparative method of analysis was used that resulted in identification of five different norm categories: “Ethical interpersonal norms”; “Internal professional norms emanating from the task” (norms associated with the goals of education, and principles of teaching and raising children); “Institutional norms”; “Social conformity norms” (“norms prescribing what is important and suitable” within the work context including loyalty to one’s colleagues); and “Self-protecting norms” (norms associated with promoting one’s own well being) (p. 630). The conflicts are “categorized according to which norms and values are at stake and in conflict with each other” (p. 630) in the teachers’ relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues.

Conclusions and commentary: From the analysis of the teacher conflicts, Colnerud identifies five underlying values: protection against harm, respect for integrity, respect for autonomy, fairness, veracity. The most essential of these is *protection against physical or mental harm*, a value found most frequently to be in conflict with the other values and norms. The author gives the following example: “when the teacher wants to protect pupils from harm and

at the same time feels obliged to respect the parents' integrity (the second value)... They want to act in order to protect the pupil from possible ill-treatment but are held back by their respect for privacy and family integrity" (p. 630). A second example, again pitting child interests against parental interests, is offered, this between "the duty to *tell the truth and to protect the pupils from potential harm*" (p. 631). Shifting to teacher/colleague relationships, the author describes conflicts that arise between the first value, protecting pupils—a surrogate for "care" – and the fourth norm, social conformity, or in this instance, collegial loyalty: "Teachers sometimes witness, or are informed by others, that a colleague is treating the pupils in a harmful way... Although the teacher regards the colleague's treatment as harmful and although he or she cares about the pupils it is difficult to confront the colleague" (p. 631). Respecting this finding, Colnerud writes: "The abandonment of caring should not be seen as a considered choice, it is more of an unwanted consequence of the unconscious conformity to unreflected traditions. An explicit articulation of the alternatives in such an ethical conflict would probably result in another outcome" (p. 634). Hence, Colnerud, like virtually all of the authors of the pieces under review, argues that teacher reflection is key to better ethical and moral results in teaching. I shall return to this conclusion shortly.

Surveying the findings, including the range of conflicts identified, the author notes a set of six structural conditions specific to teaching (e.g., teachers meet pupils in large groups) that are "decisive for the emergence of ethical conflicts in teaching" (p. 632). These are important because they underscore how some kinds of ethical and moral conflicts are inevitable in teaching as it is currently understood and organized but also because they reveal points of potential action, how altering one or another aspect of the work of teaching may open new ethical and moral possibilities and new ways of life, for teachers and students.

Husu, J. & Tirri, K. (2003). A case study approach to study one teachers' moral reflection. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19, 345–357.

Concern: "Our goal is to determine what moral issues mean to a teacher in practice" (Husu & Tirri, 2003, p. 345).

Mode of inquiry: Husu and Tirri engage in what they describe as a "multifocal" analysis of a single, teacher generated, ethical dilemma. The dilemma was selected from among a set produced by 33 lower secondary Finnish teachers. In interviews the teachers were asked to "describe one particular case of a moral dilemma they had experienced during their teaching career and the principles they used in the solving process" (p. 348). This particular case, a case of student smoking, was selected for analysis because the teacher "could not find a single ethical framework that would support her in her decision-making process" (p. 348). Rather, she chose to do nothing, to manage and live with the dilemma rather than risk causing additional harm.

The case centers on student smoking, an act against Finnish law and school policy. The teacher introduces her dilemma in these words:

I have been very concerned about the smoking policy in our school. I think a great number of our students smoke and many of the teachers smoke as well. This is an acute and frequent problem that I have to consider every single day in my work. Everybody knows that students smoke under the bridge that is located next to the school. However, the law forbids smoking during school hours... (p. 351)

To illuminate how this dilemma is understood by the teacher – "to uncover the web of educational decisions and actions in [this] particular [case]" (p. 351) – the authors interpret it through three frames of reference: The ethic of purpose; the ethic of rules and principles; and the ethic of probability. Each ethic represents a different but interrelated lens for thinking about and coming to understand a moral dilemma and, importantly, each offers a kind of

moral language. The first framework seeks to reveal fundamental purposes and driving assumptions informing teacher action. The second is intended to expose the implicit and explicit principles, rules, and duties underlying a teacher's reasoning. The third, the ethic of probability, opens for consideration the teacher's calculation of consequences, their cost/benefit analysis of teacher actions.

Each author read the case three consecutive times through each of the three interpretative frameworks. After each reading a worksheet was completed substantiating with supporting quotes the interpretations made. Summaries were compared and coding disagreements resolved.

Conclusions and commentary. Through their analysis, the authors demonstrate the fruitfulness of the three frameworks for illuminating different aspects of how the case was understood by the teacher and why she chose not to act. Here I should note that the frameworks used do not exhaust the range of interpretative possibilities. What is demonstrated is how in "real-life pedagogical dilemmas, teachers need the capability to hold together several perspectives simultaneously. They need the capacity to synthesize and analyze, to integrate under a general idea, and to break things down into their separate particulars" (p. 355). By implication, the claim is that these abilities are necessary for increasingly teacher moral action, most particularly to the generation of compelling justifications for the actions undertaken. More generally, and this appears to be a second although implicit purpose of the study, the analysis offers a potential model for analyzing moral dilemmas that has the virtue of providing multiple moral languages. As will noted in the next section, the generation and analysis of cases like the "smoking" case is an approach to teaching ethics and developing teacher moral sensibility that enjoys considerable support.

3. What must teacher educators do?

Mahoney, P. (2009). Should 'ought' be taught? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 983–989.

Concern: Noting the domination of all things educational by economic assumptions including free market values, the rise of performativity, and the diminishment of foundational studies in teacher education, Mahoney (2009) argues that "teachers' ethical understanding is [in]adequate for our times" (p. 985). He wonders why in research ethical matters are taken so very seriously while in teaching they are not. Presenting a set of three reasons that demonstrate that by its "very nature educating people is a moral enterprise" (p. 985) Mahoney asserts "there is good reason to suppose that increasing levels of ethical understanding might yield a number of benefits [in education]" (p. 984). What is needed is creation within teacher education of a "reflective critical space" (p. 984) where teachers might develop "ethical literacy." His intent is not only to make a case for ethical literacy in teacher education but to begin describing what a "reflective critical space" might be.

Mode of inquiry: Primarily philosophical while drawing examples from research interviews of teachers.

Conclusions and commentary: Mahoney demonstrates that not all educational decisions are moral or ethical and that many are relational:

if I say 'this book is good', I could be making an aesthetic judgement by referring to the quality of the writing. Alternatively, I might be indicating that it contains information (epistemic value) on a subject in which you have an interest (instrumental value). Or perhaps I mean that it will show you how to check your roof so that it does not leak (prudential value). Or perhaps I mean all of them. (p. 987)

Knowing what is at stake in a decision, what sort of values are of concern, is, Mahoney argues, an important element of ethical literacy. Some judgments are matters of opinion, but a good many are not. Recognizing the potential to do harm, knowing what is at stake in a decision, Mahoney believes, "might help teachers to feel more confident, less confused, more focused in how they articulate their dilemmas and clear about what is involved in

teaching value perspectives to children” (p. 988). The author gives as an example of the importance for teachers of listening to children before making crucial judgments that of a girl pushing a down boy. On the face of it, such actions are morally wrong. But what if Jane pushed John to “remove him from the flight path of a stray javelin”? (p. 988). According to Mahoney, wise moral decisions involving judgments of others’ actions require considering: “the action itself; a person’s intended purposes or ends; and the person’s beliefs about the consequences of the action” (p. 988). While scant on details, Mahoney’s position finds general support in [Strike \(1990\)](#).

Strike, K.A. (1990). Teaching ethics to teachers: What the curriculum should be about. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 6(1), 47–53.

Concern: [Strike \(1990\)](#), among a few of the other authors, is concerned about *professional* ethics which may be expressed in an ethical code or, more likely, “is thought of as a product of training” (p. 47). Thus, he writes for the purpose of considering how professional ethics might best be taught to teachers, and more specifically, “what a curriculum in professional ethics for teachers in a program of teacher education might be like” (p. 47). He delimits his range of concern by noting that it is “simply naive to suppose that instruction in ethics in teacher education programs can significantly form or reform character” (p. 48). Hence, for this author professional ethics in teaching is emphatically *not* a form of moral education, a distinction seldom appreciated in current debates about the formation of teacher dispositions as program outcomes. Nevertheless, teachers can learn a good deal about the essential values internal to the practice of teaching *indirectly* through the implicit or hidden curriculum and *directly* through the study of “a set of moral concepts that are highly important to the practice of teaching and that are unlikely currently to be adequately represented in the curriculum of teachers” (p. 48). The aim of such a curriculum is to encourage development of more ethical teacher decision making, not moral character, such that teachers can give good reasons for the decisions made.

Mode of inquiry: Philosophical.

Conclusions and commentary:

It is possible for teachers to be reasonable in their ethical decisions. There are commonplace moral concepts according to which conduct may be judged. Teachers should be expected to know them, understand them, and to be able to apply them to cases in plausible ways. (p. 49)

The challenge is cognitive, not moral: teachers need to well understand and be able to usefully apply in sorting out a range of complex ethical issues in a variety of indeterminate situations several concepts, including due process, legitimate authority, intellectual honesty, privacy, and equity. Each of these concepts are teachable and have cognitive content and, Strike argues, are *unlikely* to be learned through the implicit curriculum.

Strike concludes with three recommendations:

First, we must ensure that students are initiated into the values and forms of inquiry that are internal to what they teach. This is a necessary condition of teaching subject matter with integrity. Second, we must examine and make appropriate the implicit curriculum that will pervade instruction in teacher education programs.

Finally, we must explicitly teach a set of concepts that are central to the professional and institutional lives of teachers. (p. 53).

Here, it is worth noting that Strike’s first conclusion speaks directly to [Barrow’s \(1992\)](#) concern discussed above, suggesting there are values and moral concepts internal to subject matter and that these, as he states, “are best acquired in the process of learning subject matter. Such concepts as respect for truth, intellectual honesty, and respect for the forms of argument of a discipline apply broadly to a variety of disciplines” (p. 51).

Strike's article is singular in its cautionary warning about the limits of the influence of teaching and teacher education on student moral development. Reporting on results of participation in a two-year part-time master's level graduate program explicitly centered on a moral view of teacher professional development, [Sockett and LePage \(2002\)](#) amplify and extend Strike's warning while proposing possible venues for remediation.

Sockett, H. & LePage, P. (2002). The missing language of the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 159–171.

Concern: The context of the [Sockett and LePage \(2002\)](#) study is a school-based masters degree program “which aims to end the gulf between degree programs and the teachers’ work through setting it in the context of moral professionalism” (p. 160). Teachers are recruited to the program in school teams which continue and encourage relationship building, intimacy, and mutual support among participants. Researching their own practice with the support of university coaches is a central component of the program, a practice that encourages reflection, opens opportunities for moral discourse and facilitates instructional improvement. A range of readings introduce students to a variety of approaches to ethics, including of principles, virtue, democratic citizenship and the ethics of care. The authors’ central concern is to examine “the teachers [sic] use of moral language” (p. 161).

Mode of inquiry: Products developed by the graduate students over a three year period were analyzed including exit portfolios, reflective essays, admission essays, and copies of interactions through on-line conferences. That these products were developed over time allowed consideration of changes in language usage.

Analysis revealed that the teachers consistently struggled with three “moral dimensions of their work” (p. 162). These are used to organize the presentation of data and the discussion of results. They include: “(1) moral autonomy and moral agency, (2) critical self-reflection, and (3) collaboration and community” (p. 162). The teacher’s writings about moral autonomy and agency were organized under three categories representing elements of how the teachers experienced the program, including (1) egocentric view of learning, (2) rejection of authority and anti-intellectualism, (3) consciousness and full agency. Critical self-reflection and collaboration and community were similarly subdivided. While there is considerable discussion in the article about teacher change, no data are presented that indicate the prevalence or degree of change nor the representativeness of supporting quotes.

Conclusions and commentary: Re: moral autonomy and moral agency. The authors note that while many of the teachers were productively focused on program content, for some this focus was rather narrow and egocentric: “At the beginning of the program... we found some teachers with an apparent inability to receive insights and different viewpoints, including cultural perspectives” (p. 162). Some of the teachers experienced the program as representing an “alternative authority to the conventions, dogmas and rules of the school system” (p. 162) concluding that the program challenged the “rightful” authority of their workplaces leading to questioning of the faculty and rejecting of some of the content. Finally, some of the teachers doubted program relevance. Each of these conclusions served to undermine the development of a moral language among the teachers. The authors note, however, that “Many teachers became self-aware of what they thought of as progress in the areas of autonomy and agency over the two years” (p. 164).

Re: critical self-reflection. “Moral agency and autonomy demands critical self-reflection, which is... an unfamiliar practice to some teachers in their professional lives” (p. 164). In their written work, the teachers seemed to move through three levels of reflection, from description to self-justification and finally to “productive self-criticism.” Initially, they lacked experience with self-reflection as well as the vocabulary self-reflection requires. Productive self-criticism, “where a teacher has had the experience of reflecting, taking risks and experimenting” (pp. 165–166) strongly places teachers in the vocabulary needed for discussing moral and ethical issues. Productively self-critical

teachers are able to “re-envision the moral context of teaching” (p. 166) and are engaged in the continuous improvement of their relationships with children.

Lastly, respecting collaboration and community culture: “The data shows [sic] that teachers started to value collegial relationships, develop reciprocal growth relationships between teachers, children and college faculty, understand what it means to be citizens in a democracy by developing productive discourse/dialog procedures, and recognize when school cultures supported or hindered instructional progress” (pp. 166–167).

Despite the difficulty program participants had developing a moral vocabulary – as the authors say, “moral sophistication is a profound struggle” (p. 170) – they became “accustomed to using moral language” when discussing their work and relationships (p. 169). For some, this ability opened new and fresh ways of thinking about their work and re-imagining themselves as teachers. However, recognizing a range of work-related practices and structures that inhibit teacher moral development, including profound isolation, the authors state that they are “not confident that teachers’ use of judgment goes much beyond the intuitive” (p. 170). What is needed, they assert, is development of a moral case-law for teaching that “could offer both a guide to the moral development of the individual teacher and to communal protection” (p. 170). But lacking a powerful and responsive theory of adult learning and development, it is difficult to imagine how creation of a moral case-law with its presumed emphasis on rules and principles for teaching could possibly overcome the obstacles and impediments noted by the authors. While recognizing the complexity of moral development and how adults often are resistant to change, such theoretical work has long been underway, providing the possibility of helpfully situating several of Sockett and LePage’s conclusions. A study by [Johnson and Reiman \(2007\)](#) provides one valuable example.

Johnson, L.E. & Reiman, A.J. (2007). Beginning teacher disposition: examining the moral/ethical domain. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 676–687.

Concern: In this study Johnson and Reiman, building on an extensive program of research in adult development and employing a “Neo-Kohlbergian framework,” investigate “disposition in the context of beginning teacher judgment and action” (p. 677). The underlying assumption of the study is that “moral judgments are made through schema that are developed in conjunction with other principles such as those based in religion or culture. It is through these schemas that questions of social justice and fairness are addressed” and these can be empirically studied (p. 678).

Specific research questions are:

1. As constructs of disposition, how does the professional judgment of beginning teachers correspond to their professional action as they address the needs of diverse learners?
2. How do these professional judgments and actions influence interactions with diverse learners?

Noting the pervasive confusion over the meaning of the concept “disposition,” which the authors attribute to the lack of adequate guiding theoretical frameworks, the following definition is offered:

dispositions are attributed characteristics of a teacher that represent a trend of a teacher’s judgments and actions in ill-structured contexts (situations in which there is more than one way to solve a dilemma; even experts disagree on which way is best). Further it is assumed that these dispositions, trends in teacher judgments and actions, develop over time when teachers participate in deliberate professional education programs. (p. 677)

Mode of inquiry: Drawn from a pool of 12 beginning teachers, three case studies were conducted. These teachers, along with their 12 mentors, participated in an “innovative” program of beginning teacher support involving extensive weekly mentor training. The intention of the program was to increase teacher retention in a rural

Southeastern area of the US facing high teacher attrition, high unemployment and high student dropout rates. Quantitative measures included scores on the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2), a measure of moral/ethical judgment, and use of a form of the Flander's Interaction Analysis System to analyze three lessons taught by each beginning teacher noting amounts of direct and indirect teacher interaction and student talk. Qualitative data included analysis of artifacts, lesson observations, observations of mentor and beginning teacher conferences, and beginning teacher interviews which were transcribed and coded for judgments made and actions undertaken. Hence, the intention was to capture how the students thought about moral and ethical issues – questions of social justice and fairness – and to determine whether or not and to what degree their actions were congruent with their thinking.

Conclusions and commentary: The authors determined that for each of the three teachers "*Maintaining Norms*" served as the primary judgment schema, while in varying degrees the other two schemas (*Personal Interest Schema* and the *Postconventional Schema*) were present. Here it should be noted that the Maintaining Norms Schema is closely related to the authority and anti-intellectualism category of [Sockett and LePage \(2002\)](#) while the Personal Interests Schema is linked to their egocentric view of learning category and to the self-protecting norms noted by [Colnerud \(1997\)](#). In the first schema level, the Personal Interest Schema, the dominating concern is what is personally at stake for the decision-maker in the decision made; at the second level, Maintaining Norms, emphasis is placed on rules that are consistent, concise, and uniformly applicable; at the third level, Postconventional, concern centers on moral criteria, norms are flexible, there are ideal ways for humans to interrelate that can be shared and justified, and there "is recognition of full reciprocity of social norms" (p. 678). The authors conclude that over time the three teachers became more analytical and reflective about teaching and demonstrated more complex levels of judgment although still primarily operating through a level two schema. With "increased percentages of postconventional reasoning, the teachers became more open to the learner perspective and engaged in more indirect interactions such as prompting inquiry and accepting and using student ideas" (p. 685). Also, they were "able to acknowledge the perspective of their learners, consider varying instructional methods, and self-assess the impact of their instruction" (p. 685).

For the purpose of this review, three conclusions from this study are of most consequence: (1) The authors noted signs of increasingly ethical behavior on the part of the three teachers; (2) there was evidence of congruence between teacher thought and action; and (3) the methods used proved relatively reliable for study purposes. The challenges associated with the last point – of producing research methods useful for studying the moral and ethical lives of teachers – are well portrayed by [Van Kan, Ponte, and Verloop \(2010\)](#) as they sought to uncover and make sense of the ethically "bumpy moments" of teaching. In a foundational piece to the [Johnson and Reiman \(2007\)](#) study, [Reiman \(1999\)](#), drawing on [Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall \(1983\)](#), lays out five conditions for adult development in the moral, conceptual, and ego domains that support change, conditions likely obtaining in the program discussed by Johnson and Reiman and that suggest perhaps Strike underestimates the potential power of teacher education to effect dispositions. These include: Roletaking (not role playing); Reflection; Balance ("It is important that action (new role) and reflection remain in balance", p. 603); Continuity ("a continuous interplay of action and reflection is needed", p. 603); and Support (encouragement) and Challenge (new learning). On this view, new work situations involving the anxiety associated with assuming a new role providing a rich opportunity for learning and growth, calling for both guided reflection that encourages perspective taking and consistent discussion of and feedback on teacher action. Importantly, [Reiman \(1999\)](#) observes, "complex new experiences that are devoid of reflection make no impact on the cognitive-structural level of the adult learner." Reflection, he argues, must be guided. This said, "educators cannot assume a sophisticated ability to reflect. Rather, development in reflection requires educating" (p. 603).

4. Reflection on what, for what?

Husu, J. & Tirri, K. (2007). Developing whole school pedagogical values – a case of going through the ethos of ‘good schooling’. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 390–401.

Concern: Husu and Tirri (2007) present a Finnish study using a form of values clarification as a means for assisting an urban elementary school faculty composed of 24 teachers and two administrators to “recognize and articulate their own values and beliefs related to their professional morality and to their school community” (p. 391). The intent of the authors is to help a faculty get clear on what is believed and valued. The studies thus far considered in this review primarily have been concerned with individual teacher ethics or ethical and moral issues that play out within a classroom. This study is concerned with the ethical commitments of an entire school, recognizing with Strike (1990) and others, that a good deal of ethical teaching is indirect and informal, sometimes hidden, a matter of living within a shared institutional context. Every aspect of a school is, in some sense, involved in teaching values, a point too little appreciated and too often forgotten (Bode, 1937).

Mode of inquiry: Various described as a collaborative action research project and a case study, by invitation the authors joined the school faculty in three hour meetings spaced across six months where they guided them in a process of identifying then exploring their values and beliefs – also described as “visions” – for the school. First teachers produced a set of “educational theses” which were then refined by the researchers and reduced to “three main coding categories as *meta school values*” (p. 396) representing “what the teachers saw as characteristics of a good and effective school – or community at large” (p. 397). These were social and communal values (represented by service and inclusion, justice and care); relational values (represented by co-operation and autonomy and consideration); and individual values (excellence and self-esteem).

Conclusions and commentary: Clarifying values was the intent of the study, not teacher action on those values. Value clarification is portrayed as an “opportunity to take the first step on the road of getting to know [teacher values in order to] live with them” (p. 400). Based upon their findings the authors suggest that “schools should have awareness of the importance of values, bring them fore and give students and teachers time to reflect on and discuss such issues” (p. 400). One problem with the study, as the authors note, is that the concept of “value” proved almost hopelessly confused: “A closer look at the value statements [written by the teachers] reveals that the notion of school values among teachers is diverse and vague. Confusion surrounding the concept of value is evident” (p. 397). What seems to have happened is that in the analysis of the data the researchers imposed a view of what the school faculty most valued and believed. No evidence is provided that, as the authors claim, the values were “prized” by the teachers nor that they were powerful enough to inspire action. Additionally, as Mahoney (2009) argues in his criticism of both subjectivist/relativist and moral absolutist positions on ethics, the authors’ understanding of moral values as “personal values, not right or wrong, true or false” (Husu & Tirri, 2007, p. 394) enables a side-stepping of a teacher’s ethical responsibilities to the young, so the inevitable conflict that arises with moral deliberation is avoided but at a high cost—that of creating a fiction and losing opportunities of the sort Reiman (1999) asserts are essential for teacher ethical and moral growth. Nevertheless, recognition of the importance of the entire school community to enhancing the quality of the ethical and moral lives lived by teachers and students within schools is an important insight, one central to the work done in the 1930s by the Progressive Education Association in the US in the Eight-Year Study (Kridel & Bullough, 2007). Along this line, the notion of the school as a “moral sphere,” to borrow a concept developed by Kane (1996), would be potentially very illuminating.

Fallona, C. (2000). Manner in teaching: a study in observing and interpreting teachers’ moral virtues. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16, 681–695.

Concern: “The purpose of this article is to call attention to the moral virtues (i.e., the manner) a teacher expresses in her relations with students” (p. 682). Working from an Aristotelian virtue ethics framework, the notion is that when teaching the teacher represents a moral exemplar. The challenge, then, presented by [Fallona \(2000\)](#) is the ambitious one of how to assist teachers to live lives of virtue, excellent lives. Three questions guide the inquiry: (1) what is manner in teaching? (2) how may one engage in the examination of manner in teaching? And (3) how may one observe and describe manner in terms of moral virtue? By manner, Fallona means “the way a teacher expresses Aristotelian moral virtues. Those virtues include bravery, friendliness, wit, mildness, magnificence, magnanimity, honor, generosity, temperance, truthfulness, and justice” (p. 684). “Manner encompasses those traits and dispositions that reveal a teacher’s moral and intellectual character” (p. 684). The assumption is that manner effects virtually every aspect of teaching, and is a strong element in the informal ethical and moral curriculum of the school.

Mode of inquiry: To examine teacher manner, Fallona “constructed a framework that applies the Aristotelian moral virtues to teaching” (p. 685). The virtues were defined in terms of teacher actions. Bravery, for example, is defined as present in teaching “when a teacher exhibits practical reasoning in difficult, turbulent or troubled circumstances in pursuit of long-term commitments that are morally desirable” (p. 685). Data were gathered from three Arizona middle school reading specialists each of whom taught approximately 300 students reaching every student in the school. The specialists were interviewed to obtain background information, to gain insight into how each thought about virtue in teaching, and their manner when teaching, completed a card sort to understand how the teachers thought about specific virtues and their relationship to teaching, and were observed. Observations were of three kinds: descriptive, focused, and selective. Relying on the virtue framework for guidance, the intent here was to identify and record the specialists’ expressions of one or another virtue. Seeking to make sense of the data, three case studies were written, one for each reading specialist, then compared.

Conclusions and commentary: Fallona begins by noting that some virtues associated with teacher manner are observable while others are not. Friendliness, wit, bravery, honor, mildness, generosity and magnificence are observable but magnanimity, temperance, truthfulness, and justice are not, and thus require high degrees of inference. Speaking of justice, Fallona writes: “Justice is not readily observable; yet, it pervades all aspects of classroom life. In fact, the pervasiveness of justice makes its presence difficult to observe” (p. 691).

Considering the implications for teacher education, Fallona asserts that the focus on teacher manner “can draw attention to teaching as a moral endeavor grounded in the relationship between student and teacher” (p. 692). Then, she makes a strong claim: “For a quality relationship between a teacher and a student to ensure, a teacher must have a manner expressive of virtue.” A more cautionary note follows, one reminiscent of [Strike’s \(1990\)](#) position: “While teacher educators cannot ensure that a preservice teacher’s manner will be exemplary of virtue... they can ask her to reflect upon attributes of her... manner and to think about what these attributes suggest with regard to who she will be as a teacher and how she will interact with students” (pp. 692–693). In addition, “teacher educators can ask a preservice teacher to attend to the manner of the teachers she observes in her field placements [seeking to identify] whether and how teachers convey virtue as they interact with their students...” (p. 693). In turn, inservice teachers are encouraged to engage in “deep reflection to understand [their] beliefs, knowledge, and practical reasoning” (p. 693). In contrast to [Husu and Tirri \(2007\)](#), teachers are to reflect deeply on their teaching manner – how they actually enact virtue when teaching – not their idealized values.

5. Concluding comments

Returning to the questions used to organize this review, what can be said based on analysis of these few studies published in TATE? (1) *In what sense is teaching an ethical and moral enterprise?* Nearly all the authors

assume that teaching is essentially and fundamentally a moral enterprise, a few noting that the nature and quality of the teacher/student relationship informs virtually all that the teachers does, including how they organize and present lessons. How a teacher cares for students is thought to be among the most important of all professional matters. Moreover, authors also note that ethics are at the heart of the teacher's disciplinary knowledge, that knowing a discipline is not merely a matter of cognitive attainment but an ethical achievement, a matter of having embraced a set of values characteristic of preferred modes of inquiry. To teach, these authors argue, is to be embedded in a world of uncertainty and of hard choices, where what a teacher does and how he or she thinks is morally laden. (2) *What is the nature of the ethical and moral conflicts confronting teachers and how do they think about them?* Conflicts among values, norms, and beliefs, pervade teaching, some originating in the way in which teaching is structured and in how authority is understood and enacted and in the sometimes competing interests of teachers, students, and their parents. Teachers understand and respond to these conflicts differently. Based upon a wide range of life experience, patterns are apparent in how teachers respond to moral dilemmas, indicating differences in levels of moral and ethical sensitivity and understanding. Some respond by prioritizing ego needs, others give priority to social and institutional norms thereby shoring up established expectations, and yet still others hold a more flexible and sensitive view attentive to a wide range of moral claims. (3) *What must teacher educators do?* Generally, there is agreement that while limited, both pre- and inservice teacher education can facilitate development of moral understanding and ethical sensitivity among teachers. To this end, a set of promising programmatic conditions have been identified and tested. Case methods appear to be an especially promising means of promoting ethical and moral development among teachers, although how a case is understood varies. To facilitate case analysis teachers need to be taught and understand a set of specific concepts like due process and develop a rich moral vocabulary, which too few possess. Moreover, they need to be coached so that their reflection on moral matters gains in power; teachers educators must not assume their students have highly developed reflective skills or, for that matter, possess the disposition to reflect deeply. This said, there is strong agreement that ethical and moral development among teachers is hard won. Old habits of thinking and feeling supported by established ways of working encourage resistance. (4) *Reflection on what, for what?* As noted, mostly case analysis appears to be the preferred means for enhancing ethical understanding and moral development among teachers. However, the authors argue for the value of reflection directed toward a range of teaching practices and teacher qualities, from "manner" to their values. Also, while most of the studies focused on how individual teachers understand and confront moral dilemmas, there is awareness of the importance of attending to how the informal or hidden curriculum of a school, not just a classroom, shapes moral understanding and of the need to build and sustain schools as moral spheres.

Viewing these studies as a whole, and recognizing they represent a rather limited slice of the entire literature related to the ethical and moral issues associated with teaching, it seems inappropriate to speak about gaps. However, it might not be inappropriate to locate one particular theoretical orientation from the wider literature that deserves consideration but is absent from these studies. The need is illustrated by the study of [Husu and Tirri \(2003\)](#). As noted, in this case analysis three interpretative frameworks were used: An ethic of purpose, an ethic of rules and principles, and an ethic of probability. When discussing this study, I commented that "the frameworks do not exhaust the range of interpretive possibilities." Clearly, these three frames fail in multiple ways: The first fails because humans only rarely act planfully when encountering moral dilemmas, rather purposes are implicit and embedded in metaphors and narratives; the second fails because rules and principles inevitably fail to speak sensitively to non-prototypical moral cases, the tough cases over which teachers fret and that disallow easy solution; and the third fails by requiring a non-controversial greater social good. Another frame is needed, one that cuts between the sort of relativism present in [Husu and Tirri \(2007\)](#) and the kind of absolutism that seems to follow the quest for ethical rules of the sort

promised by case-law (Socket & LePage, 2002). In this regard, with its emphasis on the metaphoric and narrative embeddedness of morality, the cultivation of moral imagination and empathy, and of how ethics and morality are wrapped up in identity, in the “experientialist self”, making change difficult, the work of Johnson (1993) seems especially promising. As Johnson writes, much is at stake in our ability to cultivate moral imagination:

Moral imagination is our capacity to see and to realize in some actual or contemplated experience possibilities for enhancing the quality of experience, both for ourselves and for the communities of which we are a part, both for the present and for future generations, both for our existing practices and institutions as well as for those we can imagine as potentially realizable. (1993, p. 209)

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