

# VALUES, ETHICS, AND CHARACTER IN EDUCATION AND TEACHING- A STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*This article presents the rationale and arguments for the presence of morals, values, ethics and character education in curriculum and teaching. The author examines how rapid science and technological advancements and globalization are contributing to the complexities of social life and underpinning the importance of morals, values and ethics. In order to help conceptualize and articulate a solid theoretical framework for the development of school programs, syntheses and analyses are presented to the philosophical and pedagogical questions related to morals, ethics and character education.*

*Various obstacles in teaching morals/ethics and implementing character education in the sciences are discussed. For universal acceptability, a comparative study between the philosophical and theoretical basis of modern moral education and the universal moral values and education is outlined that may be helpful for future educators and researchers. A range of teaching, learning and pedagogical techniques are proposed that may foster morals, values and ethics in students' minds and develop various skills and attributes necessary for success in the education.*

**Keywords:** - Education; teaching; values; morals/ethics; character education

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## INTRODUCTION

People do not live their lives in moral or ethical isolation but grow up within particular moral traditions (Reiss, 1999). Liberal democracy can only flourish if its citizens hold certain moral and civic values, and manifest certain virtues (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006).

In the modern era, technology is affecting society in ubiquitous fashion while maintaining its upright position, and both science and technology are also being influenced by society. The rapid advances in science and technology and increased societal complexities also underpin the importance of morals, values and ethics and their benefits to society. Morals refer to human behaviour where morality is the practical activity and, ethics describes the theoretical, systematic, and rational reflection upon that human behavior (Churchill, 1982). Values are linked to beliefs and attitudes and guide human behavior (Rennie, 2007). Morals, values, and ethics are strongly attached to society, spirituality and culture (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1991).

### **There are three meaning of ethics.**

Firstly, ethics is commonly taken as a synonym for morality, the universal values and standards of conduct that every rational person wants every other to follow.

Secondly, ethics is a well-established branch of philosophy that studies the sources of human values and standards, and struggle to locate them within theories of human individual and social condition.

Thirdly, professional ethics, and it is not universal nor is it ethical theory; it refers to the special codes of conduct adhered to by those who are engaged in a common pursuit. Professional ethics is an integral part of the concept of a profession (Kovac, 1996).

A wide range of misunderstandings and misconceptions surround morals, values and ethics (Churchill, 1982). Morals, values and ethics are sometime difficult to understand because the misunderstandings and misconceptions surrounding them hinder arrival at the correct explanation. The objective of moral education lies in the fact that it can develop shared feelings with others, and makes one committed to one's own personal responsibilities and actions (Campbell, 2008).

Moral agency is a dual state that encompasses the teacher as a moral person engaged in ethical teaching through professional conduct and, as a moral educator who teaches students with the same core values and principles that he or she strives to uphold in practice (Campbell, 2003). Ethical knowledge can best capture the essence of teaching professionalism as it enables the teachers to appreciate the complexities of their moral agency (Campbell, 2008).

Ethics is firmly connected to virtues of responsibility, trust and credibility. It should always be fair, honest, transparent, and respectful of the rights and privacy of others in society (Frank et al., 2011). Numerous sets of values exist in society. In the context of science, three particular domains of values are present in society: the values associated with education, values of science and values of science education. These three values remain in close proximity, and interact or overlap with one another (Hildebrand, 2007). Thus science cannot be isolated from society.

Values in science education include values associated with teaching science in schools, epistemic values of science, societal values and the personal values of scientists. The existence of value is not context specific.

For example, western science has different values from other indigenous science value sets (Corrigan, Cooper, Keast, & King, 2010). Morality, values and ethics are always connected and interrelated to society, and attached to societal culture, which are constantly influenced by politics (Unesco, 1991; Witz, 1996).

Since the 19th century there have been rapid science and technological advancements; recently, globalization is profoundly influencing society, education and teaching practices. Prior to the nineteenth century, science practices were centered on moral and religious values along with an appreciation of philosophical and metaphysical aspects of science education. At that time, societal activities were both supportive of, as well as supported by science practices.

The positive side was that it enabled the science to work such that it influenced individual moral and spiritual evolution, besides fostering morals and higher values. But compared to that system the present system is not very supportive of science practices and is found to be significantly deteriorated.

It was argued that the current science practicing ideology is strongly acting against the individual's inner moral and spiritual unfolding and fulfilment (Witz, 1996). Such opposing ideology may restrict an individual from appreciating the goodness and beauty of life and truth.

Thus it cannot provide proper orientation and bases for a sound mind in a sound body that upholds morals and values; which in fact, were historically provided by society, religion, traditional cultural values and moralities.

For more than 350 years education focused on the way that benefitted individuals and served society (Hurd, 2000). The landscape of education and science practices has significantly changed over the last 4-5 decades. During the 1980s and 1990s significant efforts have been made to identify social and higher order thinking skills associated with science-technology literacy that may serve as a framework for developing a lived curriculum. The lived curriculum may help students to cope with changes that influence human welfare (Hurd, 1998), and foster morals, values and ethics.

This article explains the necessity for embedding morals, values, ethics and character education in education and teaching. It presents the rationale and arguments, and emphasizes the nurturing of morals, values and ethics in students through an improved science education curriculum, and describes their benefits to society.

The author examines how rapid science and technological advancements as well as globalization are contributing to the complexities of social life and underpinning the importance of morals, values and ethics in science education and science teaching. Syntheses and analyses are presented to the philosophical and pedagogical questions related to morals, values, ethics and character education that may help conceptualize and articulate a solid theoretical framework for developing programs.

Obstacles in teaching morals/ethics and implementing character education in the sciences are discussed.

A comparative study between the philosophical and theoretical basis of modern Western moral education and the universal moral values and education is outlined to the extent of gaining benefit and developing an enriched theoretical framework of moral and character education that may increase the universal acceptability of the theoretical framework of moral and character education.

A range of teaching, learning and pedagogical techniques are proposed with emphases on the specific domain of education to foster morals, values and ethics in students' minds and develop various skills and attributes necessary for success in the sciences.

The proposed techniques and issues may help to improve students' moral and ethical understanding and reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. Successful implementation of the proposed techniques and issues may also help to reverse students' demotivation and disengagement in sciences, which are currently the most pressing needs to address.

Through the proposed changes students are able to grasp the social implications of their science studies, and understand the business consequences and control the environment; they can reflect on how science and technology considerations differ from personal and political values, find various limitations of science, and acquire scientific knowledge and relate them to real-life situations or other knowledge

### **Morals and Ethics**

Morals and Ethics Morality and ethics are part of a way of life and cannot be separated from all other aspects of life experiences (Kang & Glassman, 2010). Moral education aims at promoting students' moral development and character formation.

The theoretical framework of moral education is supported by moral philosophy, moral psychology and moral educational practices (Han, 2014). Beyond the scope of promoting rational pro-social skills or virtues, moral education of real human value should cultivate the meaningful and personally formative knowledge that significantly transcend or avoid natural and/or social scientific understanding and explanation (Carr, 2014). Moral education is about an inner change, which is a spiritual matter and comes through the internalization of universal Islamic values (Halstead, 2007).

Ethics is the branch of philosophy which tries to probe the reasoning behind our moral life. The critical examination and analysis through the concepts and principles of ethics help to justify our moral choices and actions (Reiss, 1999).

In real-life situation 'ethics' is frequently used as a more consensual word than 'morals' which is less favored. Many students and professionals cannot find the sharp distinction between these two terms (McGavin, 2013).

Recently moral thinking and moral action were explored using a Deweyan framework, and it was concluded that moral thinking or reasoning exists as social capital, and it is not a guide to moral action (Kang & Glassman, 2010).

The key philosophical question for the study and promotion of moral education relies on the epistemic status of moral reflection or understanding and moral agency (Carr, 2014)

### **Focus on Character Education**

In the past, when religions had great influence on society, the importance of character education was realized.

Over the period when science and technology started to flourish, the socio-economic and political landscape of society had started to change enormously with growing needs and expectations, and the importance of character education started to deteriorate. Thus it is important that educators emphasize character education to develop virtues, quality attributes, personality and leadership in students. Character education is mainly required in the early school years when young students are at the stages of developing their own world views

### **CONCLUSION**

Despite various obstacles in teaching morals/ethics and implementing character education, the majority of educators, teachers and society at large strongly support the presence of morals, values, ethics and character education in the curriculum which may provide a motivational context for learning science, and understanding the socialization and humanization aspects of science and technology.

Students can develop higher awareness of social implications of their science studies, become self-dependent individuals, and be able to recognize, accept and internalize their roles in decision-making. Such teaching will enhance students' judgement, critical thinking abilities and motivation besides encouraging engagement in the sciences. Students can handle various moral and ethical issues in society, take responsibility, and build a good character.

Technological advancements, globalization and emerging complexities in societal structure are influencing and changing the social dynamics with respect to economics, politics and environment, and the way science is organized and operated.

Such changing circumstances pose challenges to future science educators as to how morality, values, ethics and character education can be presented through curriculum development and implementations.

The current science education is lacking in providing adequate inner orientation and bases for students' unfolding and fulfilment of inner moral values and ideals which are essential for their development. Thus it necessitates emphasis on morals, values and ethics that can be reflected through an improved science education curriculum. Recent calls from educators and researchers for the re-emergence of values in education (Corrigan et al., 2007) attest to the validity of this statement.

This article presented rigorous syntheses and analyses of the philosophical and pedagogical questions related to morals, ethics and character education with a view to conceptualizing and articulating a solid theoretical framework to develop appropriate school programs and teaching instructions..

A student-centered and inquiry-based teaching approach is suggested to enhance students' motivation and engagement, and foster human values and connectedness with personal and societal issues. Research has proven science teaching and learning practices may be applied while fostering morals, values and ethics.

This article presented some important teaching techniques, methods and issues with examples based on research, and suggested views which may impact on fostering values, morality and ethics in students' minds, and enhance student motivation and engagement. While it is important to implement the teaching techniques and methods discussed, it is also necessary that teachers are well aware of and regularly informed about new emerging issues, instructional methods and techniques from upcoming research.

This may help teachers to develop conceptual tools in the context of teaching morals, values, ethics and character education in the sciences

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