Atli Harðarson and Kostas Magos

# Learning through Life and the Ethics of Teaching: A Story Told in Fifteen Voices

This paper is based on interviews with fifteen experienced teachers, eight from Greece and seven from Iceland. We asked them to tell us how they learned to teach. When analysing the interviews, we focused on what they said about teaching as a moral work that requires character education, ethical virtues, and practical wisdom. Initially we assumed that teaching belongs to a type of occupation where good and successful work depends to some extent on moral character. We did, however, not expect our diverse group of teachers, from two countries with different traditions of schooling, to tell almost the same story about their ethical and professional development. Nevertheless, that is what they did.

## Recent publications on the ethical dimensions of teaching

Arguments for the primacy of ethics in teachers' practice can be found in publications from the latter half of last century by leading scholars in the field of education such as R.S. Peters (1966), Maxine Greene (1973, 1988), Philip W. Jackson, Robert E. Boostrom, and David T. Hansen (1993), and Joseph Dunne (1993). Since the turn of the century, the literature on teacher education and the professional development of teachers has generally become even more focused on ethics (Kristjánsson, 2011). In recent years, thinkers as diverse as Gert Biesta (2015), Elizabeth Campbell (2003, 2013a), David Carr (2003, 2006, 2007, 2011, 2014), Joseph Dunne (2011), Chris Higgins (2011, 2015), Kristján Kristjánsson (2011), and Hugh Sockett (2012) have argued for the importance of ethics in teacher education and professional practice.

Most of the works cited so far are philosophical rather than empirical. There is, however, a growing body of empirical research indicating that teachers and teacher candidates perceive teaching as a moral work and want to become teachers for reasons that are primarily altruistic (Matthew N. Sanger and Richard D. Osguthorpe, 2011; Osguthorpe and Sanger, 2013a, 2013b; Arthur, Kristjánsson, Cooke, Brown, and Carr, 2015).

In their introduction to a collection of papers on the ethical aspects of teaching and teacher education, Matthew N. Sanger, Richard D. Osguthorpe, and Gary D. Fenstermacher (2013) say that teaching is by its very nature a moral work in two conceptually distinct but overlapping ways: On the one hand, teachers ought to teach morally and, on the other hand, they must to some extent teach morality.

## Ethics and teacher education

In a paper based on interviews with 50 teachers in Israel, Orly Shapira-Lishchinsky concludes that teachers "struggle with difficult ethical dilemmas because they lack the knowledge as to how to deal with them" (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011, p. 655). In a similar vein, Sanger and Osguthorpe conclude from their research on preservice teachers' beliefs that they need ethical knowledge "to use in guiding their thought, planning, and practice" (Sanger and Osguthorpe, 2011, p. 570). In most teacher education programmes, however, ethics is not a mandatory subject. Bruce Maxwell et al. wrote about a survey of teacher education programmes in five countries: The United States, England, Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands. Only 24% of the 401 programmes surveyed contained a mandatory stand-alone ethics course. This, they say, raises the question whether teacher education has missed the "ethics boom" in higher education (Maxwell et al., 2016, pp. 135–6). In a similar vein, Campbell (2011, 2013b) and Bryan R. Warnick and Sarah K. Silverman (2011) have argued that professional ethics is a missing foundation in teacher education.

One strand of the academic discourse on the ethics of teaching is about the personal qualities one has to develop to become a good teacher. Carr argues for instance that the professional effectiveness of teachers is "enhanced by the possession and exercise of personal qualities and practical dispositions that are not entirely (if at all) reducible to academic knowledge or technical skills" (Carr, 2007, p. 369). This does not imply that being kind and fair-minded is all it takes to teach morally. As, for instance, Higgins (2011), Campbell (2003, 2013a), and Kristjánsson (2011) have pointed out, a kind disposition does not suffice to enable teachers to take the best course of action in all the complex situations that come up in schools. That ability requires both knowledge of local conditions and practical wisdom in addition to goodness of heart. Although professional morality is an extension of everyday morality, it is an extension that needs careful thought and discussion. Carr, Higgins, Campbell, and Kristjánsson, like some other scholars who work within a broadly Aristotelian framework, therefore argue that teachers' education and professional development should aim at practical wisdom (*phronesis*), the intellectual virtue Aristotle described in Book VI of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Dunne makes a similar point, saying that "a teacher may face a situation in which academic standards, psychological needs, considerations of safety, and the demands of social equality … pull in contrary directions – but in which one must make some judgement and decision" (Dunne, 2011, pp. 22–3).

## Learning practical wisdom

Most recent works on teachers' need for practical wisdom are inspired by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he described practical wisdom as the very pinnacle of moral development and said that bad people could not acquire this intellectual virtue – its development required some measure of moral goodness. Among the hardest questions about the interpretation

of Aristotle's moral philosophy are questions about the relation between goodness and wisdom, the ethical and the intellectual. These questions are with us still today. People still wonder to what extent wickedness precludes rationality. Some of the things Aristotle said about practical wisdom are hard to understand and scholars do not agree on how, exactly, it relates to the ethical virtues (Kristjánsson, 2020, p. 17). The educational and psychological ramifications of the concept are still uncharted, and more research is needed on how practical wisdom is acquired and how it supports virtuous conduct (Kristjánsson, Darnell, Fowers, Moller, Pollard, and Thoma, 2020).

Although practical wisdom both requires and supports the development of ethical virtues, it is, according to Aristotle, an intellectual virtue, i.e. an ability to find out what is true, not a disposition to act. It seems to involve both knowledge of what is generally good for people and the ability to read all sorts of circumstances and discern the values at stake. The ethical virtues are different. They are primarily dispositions to have the right longings and emotions, and to do what is right rather than to know what is true.

On Aristotle's view of moral development, it is a process that begins in early childhood and continues through adult life. Young children learn to be virtuous to some extent, mostly through habituation and imitation. Later in life, people learn to reason and deliberate about ethical and political questions. As they gradually gain practical wisdom, their ethical virtues reach greater perfection (Harðarson, 2019).

In the beginning of Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle says that just as people learn to play a musical instrument by playing, they also learn to be just and brave and temperate by doing what is just and brave and temperate. Likewise, he thought that people acquired practical wisdom by participating in deliberations on ethical and political issues (Harðarson, 2019). Arguably it follows that the development of practical wisdom requires autonomy to some degree (Stengel 2013). If Aristotle was right, it requires at least some opportunities to engage in such deliberations.

Notwithstanding some thorny conceptual issues, the publications cited above give us reasons to think that, although ethics is in most cases not a part of the formal education of teachers, their work is essentially a moral work that requires moral character and practical wisdom. Most of these works support a broadly Aristotelian notion of moral development that begins early in life and takes a long time, lasting into adulthood, where the latter stages require deliberation and autonomous exercise of practical wisdom. These works are, however, rather abstract and leave the reader with open questions about how teachers do acquire the ethical virtues and the ethical knowledge they need to become good professionals, and to what extent, if any, professional ethics or moral philosophy should be added to teacher education programmes.

These lacunae in current knowledge are recognized by scholars in the field, who have pointed out the uncertainties concerning what aspects of professional morality should be taught to

teacher candidates and which virtues are most important for teachers. Although some reports on empirical research highlight the importance of honesty, fairness and kindness (Arthur, Kristjánsson, Cooke, Brown, and Carr, 2015; Arthur, Earl, Thompson, and Ward, 2019) the role of character in teacher professionalism is still undertheorized and, as Sandra Cooke and David Carr said a few years ago, "there is as yet no agreed or settled view of concepts of practical wisdom, character and virtue or about their general place in … the particular professional practice of teaching" (Cooke and Carr, 2014, p. 92).

One way to start an exploration of how theoretical works on the ethics of teaching are relevant to teacher education and professional practice is to listen to what experienced teachers say about their own professional development.

## Methods and data – fifteen interviews

The data we collected are semi-structured interviews with eight teachers from the region of Thessaly in central Greece and seven teachers from West Iceland. Our subjects were all fully qualified teachers, eleven women and four men, six taught in kindergartens and nine in primary schools. They all had more than ten years of teaching experience. Five had been teaching school between 10 and 20 years, five between 20 and 25 years, and five for more than 25 years. We found them by asking around for experienced teachers who were seen by their principals and peers as successful. We did not in any way try to measure the quality of their work. Hence, our sample is simply 15 individuals who people in their local communities see as effective and experienced teachers.

Our subjects are listed in Table 1. The names are pseudonyms because our interviewees were promised anonymity.

**Table 1**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Anna (G, F, K, 16) | Freyja (I, F, P, 11) | Rannveig (I, F, K, 26) |
| Birkir (I, M, P, 29) | Kleri (G, F, P, 23) | Svala (I, F, P, 41) |
| Dimos (G, M, P, 40) | Meri (G, F, K, 25) | Unnur (I, F, K, 23) |
| Embla (I, F, P, 34) | Myrto (G, F, K, 19) | Valur (I, M, P, 19) |
| Fani (G, F, K, 12) | Panos (G, M, P, 25) | Zina (G, F, P, 23) |
| G = Greek, I = Icelandic; F = female, M = male, K = teacher in kindergarten/preschool, P = teacher in primary school. Numbers indicate years of work experience as a teacher. | | |

The interviews were all between 30 and 60 minutes in length. They were taken in February and March 2020 in the mother languages of the teachers, i.e. in Greek and in Icelandic. After we had typed the interviews and translated the Icelandic ones into English (since only one of us understands Icelandic) we searched for common themes relevant to the ethics of teaching and how it

is learned. In the interviews, however, we did not use much explicit moral language. Many moral terms are, as Doris A. Santorio has pointed out, "too loaded with approbation or disapproval and prescriptions or prohibitions to operate descriptively in this kind of encounter" (Santoro, 2015, pp. 173–4). We wanted our subjects to reflect on their own experiences rather than to give their assent to suggestions that are recognized as morally correct.

We did not begin with sharply formulated research questions. We believed that there are interesting questions to be asked about the moral education of teachers and we realized that there are gaps – unmapped territories – in the theoretical literature on the ethics of teaching and how it is learned. Under such conditions one of the questions to ask is: What should we search for?

Our methods were close to what is described as grounded theory in texts on qualitative research (e.g. Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). At the last stages of our data analyses, we read the interviews over and over, asking repeatedly which of the themes in our interviews were relevant to the theoretical accounts in the literature we had reviewed. At these later stages, we focused more on what the teachers had in common than on their differences, because it turned out that much of what they said about their own character education was more like different versions of the same account than fifteen entirely independent life stories.

## Findings

All the teachers we interviewed had three to five years of teacher education at a tertiary level. Reflecting on how they learned to teach, however, they all described a process of education that was much longer than their years in college or university.

> Valur: Teacher education is something ongoing. … I think that a teacher who ceases to learn, who is no longer searching for new knowledge, someone who thinks he has learned what he needs to know … I think that teacher is going to have problems.
>
> Panos: One needs self-initiated and in-service training, what we call lifelong learning.
>
> Kleri: Pedagogy is, after all, lifelong learning.
>
> Fani: A good teacher is a teacher who never stops learning.

The phrase used by the Greek teachers that we translate as "lifelong learning" is "διά βίου μάθηση" [dia viou mathisi]. It means, literally, learning throughout life. Most of the learning the teachers described in detail was informal. Five of the seven Icelanders also mentioned though university courses they had taken after they began working as fully qualified teachers.

Asked specifically about their formal teacher education, they all said that it was only a part of their professional education, for some of them only a small part.

> Zina: I think I learned to be a good teacher by myself. I am what they call an autodidact.

Dimos: I would not say that I learned anything of importance in Teachers College. Maybe, though, from some professors, especially those who had studied abroad and brought some new ideas about education. But they were not many.

Most of the teachers, did however see the teacher education programme as a useful part of a larger whole.

Meri: You get a good theoretical background from the University. To succeed in this job you need more, it requires a lot of in-service training and self-initiated work … the knowledge from the university is not enough.

Unnur: You ask about the college education … it was mostly theoretical and in everyday work one does not think much about theories, although one sometimes finds such knowledge useful.

Anna: From my studies I have only used a few things. It was first and foremost experience that helped me to learn how to teach. I became what I am through mistakes and successes. Also, through cooperation with my colleagues and books that I read.

Freyja: When I completed my preservice education then I felt that … I do not want to make little of what they were doing at that time … however, I felt that I was able to read through reports on complex research and books about this and that, but I did not know how to work in a classroom. … What I had learned when I graduated from teachers college was only a small part of what I needed to know. My first year as a teacher was a shock. Throughout the school year I kept asking why was I not prepared for this and that, why had no one told me?

Most of the positive remarks about the teacher education programmes were about the practical part, work placements, when our interviewees were sent as teacher candidates to work in schools. There were, however, some exceptions to this. Birkir for instance, responded positively to a question about what the teacher education program did for him.

Birkir: A lot. It taught me … it structured … taught me to set aims. The teacher education programme helped me to become more organised … put my thoughts in order.

Another exception is Svala who participated in student activities in the 1970s when she and her schoolmates tried to change the teacher education programme.

Svala: I was part of a very vigorous group of students there. We wanted to do something new and we tried to change the course of education offered at the Teachers College. At that time, the college was really a melting pot. … We were trying to change teacher education … and I even got a summer job working on proposals for a different teacher education curriculum.

Reflecting on their lifelong learning, more than half of the teachers mentioned role models from their own childhood.

> Embla: Everybody knows what a good teacher is like and what a bad teacher is like. I learned that through being a schoolkid myself, and of course, the good ones, I took them as role models.

> Panos: I was lucky, because in primary school I had a very good teacher. He motivated me to become a teacher too.

Some of them also mentioned experiences from their childhood and teenage years and, in our interviews, there are stories of growing up with people who cared about education or worked with disabled persons or minorities. There are also stories of participation in sports, coaching, and work with children.

The stories from the early years of our interviewees are very diverse. What they have in common is that they see their childhood experiences as a part of a long process of learning how to teach. When asked about what they had learned after they started working as teachers, the answers were not nearly as diverse. They all talked about the importance of learning from cooperation with other teachers. These four remarks are typical for the whole group of fifteen.

> Myrto: I learned how to teach mainly by following and observing my colleagues at school.

> Fani: I learned to teach mainly through discussions with colleagues. I was lucky because I had very good colleagues who were both experienced and interested in their work.

> Rannveig: The teachers teach each other. … We tell each other how best to approach the work, how to approach the children … how to choose your battles wisely.

> Dimos: I learned from my older colleagues at school. … They were experienced teachers, they knew how to keep order, so they were respected by students and by parents.

**Cultivation of humanity – "mannrækt" and "φιλότιμο"**

Most of our subjects expressed some opinions about what it takes to be a good teacher and they agreed that moral character is an essential condition. Some simply said that to be a good teacher one needs to be a good person. Others gave more complex accounts explaining what it takes to earn the respect of students.

> Meri: A bad person cannot be a good teacher. … Ethics and knowledge. That is what makes a good teacher.

> Zina: A teacher cannot be a bad person.

> Kleri: Good teachers are supportive. They support all their students and help them find their own way.

Myrto: The teachers' morality affects the way they work.

Valur: Successful teachers have some personal characteristics. … You need to read people and you need to be able reach them … I have mentioned the ability to communicate with people and one of the foundations of that ability is sincerity. You need to be sincere to earn their respect … and we need mutual respect.

One of the Greek teachers, Anna, used a beautifully succinct expression that is hard to translate literally.

Anna: I do not believe that a bad person can be a good teacher. "Βγαίνει ο χαρακτήρας στην δουλειά" [Vgainei o charaktiras stin douleia].

The Greek phrase may perhaps be best rendered: In this work your character comes out in the open.

Our subjects expressed different opinions about how moral character is acquired and some talked about it as inborn rather than learned, and some said it came through upbringing that antedated their teacher education. Notwithstanding these differences, much of the life-long informal education the teachers talked about, when they were asked how they learned to teach, was, broadly speaking, moral education. The content of it had to do with ethical virtues and practical wisdom.

Some mentioned virtues like patience, some talked about how they learned to care, or simply to become better persons. One of the Icelandic teachers, Rannveig, used the word "mannrækt" to describe the professional development of the teachers in the kindergarten where she worked. This word means literally cultivation of humanity, tending to the growth of the humane.

Zina: Little by little I learned to be patient. To listen to children and parents.

Valur: My character has changed quite a lot through my job. … I have become softer and learned to cultivate more personal relations and work towards personal development of students. I have also learned to pay more attention to how they feel, and care about their personal and social development.

Anna: I think that through this job I have become a better person. I learn new things every day. I learn to manage difficulties, to go beyond the traditional, to look for original ideas.

Rannveig: We, the teachers, we take care of ourselves. It is about how I can become a better person … it is about "mannrækt".

Some of the things the teachers said are hard to translate accurately because the moral vocabulary they used contains nuances and connotations that are peculiar to their languages. For instance, one of the Greek teachers, Dimos, used the word "φιλότιμο" [filotimo] which means

literally a friend of honour, but this word connotes simultaneously conscientiousness, honesty, and concern with one's reputation.

Dimos: The good teacher has "φιλότιμο".

Much of what the teachers said about their own moral education had to do with the ability to read all sorts of circumstances, to apprehend what is going on and what to expect of people.

Rannveig: One learns to read the situations. A big part of this work consists in reading situations.

Svala: Sometimes I also kept diaries on individual students … some of them were difficult, with behaviour problems … therefore, the last ten years, almost nothing has taken me by surprise … no matter what character types you come across, you've seen them before, and therefore they do not make you feel insecure. One gets to know what people can be like.

In the interviews, the teachers also talked about learning subject specific skills and other things that have little to do with professional ethics. Much of what they said about good teaching encompassed diverse elements, without any boundaries separating the ethical from the rest. Embla, for instance, emphasized the importance of knowing the subjects she taught. A little later, when reflecting on what she was doing in her classroom a few hours before the interview, it was clear that in her view successful teaching of mathematics required a combination of moral character and subject knowledge, patience and ability to explain.

Embla: Like this morning, we were doing equations and a girl said she could not understand, and I countered that we would not give up until she understood … we went through the problem again and again … They trust me to not give up.

**The need for deliberation – "I am too much alone"**

Talking about their professional development and how they learned to teach, the teachers often mentioned the importance of being trusted and granted freedom to experiment. Most of them said they had opportunities to innovate and to influence both school curriculum and school administration. It was obvious that they cherished their autonomy.

Myrto: My suggestions are heard. For example, I suggested organizing some afternoon workshops with parents and that was quite a success.

Meri: I have a very good relationship with both colleagues and superiors. I feel that they take my proposals into account.

Unnur: We have much freedom to do things our way, at least in my school. … If we want to emphasise classical music for one month then we just go ahead and do that.

Svala: The work of the teacher can be made a creative work and I always took it for granted that I was allowed to make changes … that I could try new things and that I should have the courage to change again if something did not work, and that I should always be searching.

Talking about their professional autonomy, some of the teachers emphasised the importance of opportunities to deliberate and engage in discussions with colleagues.

Embla: We need more discussion about the problems our students have. How to cooperate on making things better.

Panos: For me it is very important to have a good relationship with colleagues, to have a climate of trust. We all have our own perceptions, our own beliefs. It is not easy for a teacher body of twenty different individuals to agree. It takes effort. We need to give way and we need to step back so we can find a common solution.

Talking about the need for deliberation, one of the teachers, Freyja, drew a distinction between being a faultfinder and engaging in critical discussion. She used the Icelandic word "málefnalegir" that encompasses being candid, fair-minded, even-handed, and objective.

Freyja: A little more than one year ago I found myself to be one of the faultfinders, one of the negative voices. I was under too much pressure and slipped into this sullen and grumbling mood. … I had to work on this, remind myself that I did not want to be a faultfinder. Notwithstanding, neither do I want to just follow the stream, go along with everything. I want to be critical. … That is not easy. Still there are some teachers who are critical and "málefnalegir". I want to be like them … to discuss things professionally.

This need for deliberating together, developing their professional competence through discussions with colleagues is a conspicuous common theme in the fifteen interviews. We give the last word to Birkir who reflected on his experiments with outdoor education.

Birkir: In all this I do have quite a lot of freedom. Nevertheless, I would like to have someone with me. I am too much alone in this. I would like someone to cooperate with on developing outdoor education … and make it a part of schoolwork for all classes.

## Discussion

The review of recent publications on the ethical dimensions of teaching and teacher education raised questions about the ethics of teaching, how it is learned and to what extent it should be taught to teacher candidates.

Although our interviewees had much to say about the ethical dimensions of their work and their professional development, none of them talked about it as based on academic studies in moral philosophy or professional ethics. Possibly, they would have seen such studies as beneficial if

moral philosophy had been a part of their preservice education. We wanted our subjects to reflect on their own experiences, so we did not ask hypothetical questions about what types of ethics courses would have been, or could have been, useful. Our data has therefore little bearing on questions about whether ethics should be taught as a subject in teacher education programmes. What the teachers said is, nevertheless, highly relevant to questions about how teachers learn the ethics of teaching.

The narrative about professional development, that the teachers told to us in fifteen voices, is in accord with a broadly Aristotelian notion of moral development that begins early in life and takes a long time, where the latter stages, leading to practical wisdom, require autonomy and opportunities to engage in deliberations about human affairs.

The teachers we interviewed all saw their education as a long process, one that was mostly informal. They described this long course of education as constituted in part by moral development, beginning early in life, and continuing through years of work. They also referred, albeit in some cases obliquely, to the need for professional autonomy, and talked about the importance of being trusted, granted freedom to experiment, and opportunities to deliberate and engage in discussions with colleagues. Those who elaborated on the intellectual aspects of ethical character talked about the ability to read all sorts of circumstances that are at least reminiscent of how Aristotle described practical wisdom.

Our subjects also agreed that successful teaching requires ethical virtues, that the work of the teacher is a moral work. Although they had different notions of how these virtues were acquired, most of them seemed to think that at least some important elements of the requisite virtues were acquired long before their years in college, or university, where they had their formal teacher education. What they said about the need for basic moral goodness, acquired early in life, also fits into an Aristotelian framework.

Our teachers were all fully qualified in the sense that they had completed a teacher education programme that was acknowledged by the educational authorities in their countries. One of the interesting questions raised by the story they told is a question about what “fully qualified” amounts to, if learning to teach is something that takes much longer than their formal preservice education. How can we simultaneously think of teacher education as schooling that takes a few years in college or university, and as character formation that begins early in life and continues into adulthood or even old age?

If what our subjects said applies to teachers generally, or to a large part of the profession, then it seems doubtful that all parts of teacher education can be made formal and completed as preservice education. It is also, as Carr has pointed out, hard to make moral character a formal requirement in teacher education curricula. It is “something that we might at best hope to encourage rather than require” (Carr, 2007, p. 387).

Our subjects said that they learned through deliberation and discussions with colleagues, that their professional development depended on freedom to experiment, and on being trusted and allowed to innovate. The story they told suggests that, when thinking about the moral education of teachers, we ought to focus on more than just how to encourage ethical virtues through teacher education programmes. One of the things we should be searching for additionally is how to facilitate cooperation initiated by teachers, deliberation, and lifelong professional development in their workplace.

## References


Arthur, J., Earl, S. R., Thompson, A. P., and Ward, J. W. (2019). The Value of Character-Based Judgement in the Professional Domain. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04269-7

Arthur, J., Kristjánsson, K., Cooke, S., Brown, E., and Carr, D. (2015). *The Good Teacher: Understanding Virtues in Practice*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/33303636.pdf

Biesta, G.J.J. (2015). How Does a Competent Teacher Become a Good Teacher? On Judgement, Wisdom and Virtuosity in Teaching and Teacher Education. In R. Heilbronn and L. Foreman-Peck (Eds.), *Philosophical Perspectives on the Future of Teacher Education* (pp. 3–22). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Campbell, E. (2003). *The Ethical Teacher*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Campbell, E. (2011). Teacher Education as a Missed Opportunity in the Professional Preparation of Ethical Practitioners. In L. Bondi, D. Carr, C. Clark, and C. Clegg (Eds.), *Towards Professional Wisdom* (pp. 81–93). Farnham: Ashgate.

Campbell, E. (2013a). The Virtuous, Wise, and Knowledgeable Teacher: Living the Good Life as a Professional Practitioner. *Educational Theory*, *63*(4), 413–430. https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12031

Campbell, E. (2013b). Cultivating Moral and Ethical Professional Practice: Interdisciplinary Lessons and Teacher Education. In M.N. Sanger, and R. D. Osguthorpe (Eds.), *The Moral work of Teaching and Teacher Education. Preparing and Supporting Practitioners* (pp. 29–43). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Carr, D. (2003). *Making Sense of Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy and Theory of Education and Teaching*. London: Routledge.

Carr, D. (2006). Professional and Personal Values and Virtues in Education and Teaching. *Oxford Review of Education*, *32*(02), 171–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980600645354

Carr, D. (2007). Character in Teaching. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 55*(4), 369–389. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00386.x

Carr, D. (2011). Values, Virtues and Professional Development in Education and Teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research, 50*(3), 171–176. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2011.07.004

Carr, D. (2014). Professionalism, Profession and Professional Conduct: Towards a Basic Logical and Ethical Geography. In S. Billett, C. Harteis, and H. Gruber (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research in Professional and Practice-Based Learning* (pp. 5–27). Dordrecht: Springer.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage.

Cooke, S. and Carr, D. (2014). Virtue, Practical Wisdom and Character in Teaching. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 62*(2), 91–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2014.929632

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dunne, J. (1993). *Back to the Rough Ground: Practical Judgement and the Lure of Technique*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Dunne, J. (2011). 'Professional Wisdom' in 'Practice'. In L. Bondi, D. Carr, C. Clark, and C. Clegg (Eds.), *Towards Professional Wisdom* (pp. 13–26). Farnham: Ashgate.

Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as Stranger: Educational Philosophy for the Modern Age*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Greene, M. (1988). *The Dialectic of Freedom*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harðarson, A. (2019). Aristotle's Conception of Practical Wisdom and What it Means for Moral Education in Schools. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 51*(14)*, 1518–1527*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2019.1585240

Higgins, C. (2011). *The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. [Kindle version]. https://www.amazon.com

Higgins, C. (2015). Why We Need a Virtue Ethics of Teaching. In R. Heilbronn and L. Foreman-Pack (Eds.), *Philosophical Perspectives on Teacher Education* (pp. 57–75). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. [Kindle version]. https://www.amazon.com

Jackson, P.W., Boostrom, R.E., and Hansen, D.T. (1993). *The Moral Life of Schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kristjánsson, K. (2011). Some Aristotelian Reflections on Teachers' Professional Identities and the Emotional Practice of Teaching. In L. Bondi, D. Carr, C. Clark, and C. Clegg (Eds.), *Towards Professional Wisdom* (pp. 127–140). Farnham: Ashgate.

Kristjánsson, K. (2020). *Flourishing as the Aim of Education: A Neo-Aristotelian View.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Kristjánsson, K., Darnell, C., Fowers, B., Moller, F., Pollard, D., and Thoma, S. (2020). Phronesis: Developing a Conceptualisation and an Instrument. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk//userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/Phronesis_Report.pdf

Maxwell, B., Tremblay-Laprise, A.A., Filion, M., Boon, H., Daly, C., van den Hoven, M., Heilbronn, R. Lenselink, M., and Walters, S. (2016). A Five-Country Survey on Ethics Education in Preservice Teaching Programs. *Journal of Teacher Education, 67*(2), 135–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487115624490

Osguthorpe, R. and Sanger, M.N. (2013a). The Moral Nature of Teacher Candidate Beliefs About the Purposes of Schooling and their Reasons for Choosing Teaching as a Career. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *88*(2), 180–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2013.775871

Osguthorpe, R.D. and Sanger, M.N. (2013b). Teacher Candidate Beliefs about the Moral Work of Teaching. In M.N. Sanger, and R.D. Osguthorpe (Eds.), *The Moral Work of Teaching and Teacher Education. Preparing and Supporting Practitioners* (pp. 14–28). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Peters, R. S. (1966). *Ethics and Education*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Sanger, M.N. and Osguthorpe, R.D. (2011). Teacher Education, Preservice Teacher Beliefs, and the Moral Work of Teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(3), 569–578. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.10.011

Sanger, M.N., Osguthorpe, R.D., and Fenstermacher (2013). The Moral Work of Teaching in Teacher Education. In M.N. Sanger and R.D. Osguthorpe (Eds.), *The Moral Work of Teaching and Teacher Education. Preparing and Supporting Practitioners* (pp. 3–13). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Santoro, D. A. (2015). Philosophizing about Teacher Dissatisfaction: A Multidisciplinary Hermeneutic Approach. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 34*(2), 171-180. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-014-9409-4

Shapira-Lishchinsky, O. (2011). Teachers' Critical Incidents: Ethical Dilemmas in Teaching Practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*(3), 648–656. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.11.003

Sockett, H. (2012). *Knowledge and Virtue in Teaching and Learning: The Primacy of Dispositions*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Stengel, B.S. (2013). Teaching Moral Responsibility: Practical Reasoning in a Pedagogical "Wonderland". In M.N. Sanger and R.D. Osguthorpe (Eds.), *The Moral Work of Teaching and Teacher Education. Preparing and Supporting Practitioners* (pp. 44–59). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Warnick, B.R. and Silverman, S.K. (2011). A Framework for Professional Ethics Courses in Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 62*(3), 273–285. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487110398002

## Abstract

In recent years leading scholars in education have written about the primacy of ethics in teachers' practice. Many of these works are abstract and leave it open how the virtues of a good teacher are acquired.

Attempting to connect these theoretical works to real life experience we interviewed fifteen teachers, eight from Greece and seven from Iceland.

The stories told by our interviewees were surprisingly similar and in accord with a broadly Aristotelian notion of moral development. They saw their moral education as a long process that began early in life and continued through years of work, one where the latter stages, leading to practical wisdom, required opportunities to engage in deliberations about human affairs.

Our results suggest that, when thinking about the moral education of teachers, we should focus not only on teacher education programmes but also on how to facilitate deliberation and lifelong professional development through work.

## Keywords

Teacher education, teacher professionalism, moral education, practical wisdom, deliberation.