Rezensionen / recensions / recensioni

Veugelers, Wiel & Oser, Fritz K. (Ed.) (2003). *Teaching in Moral and Democratic Education.* Bern: Peter Lang. 216 pages.

Preparing students for participatory democratic decision-making rests on the ability and responsibility of public schools to foster moral development. But in a time of changing values and migrating populations, with increasing recognition of the reality of pluralism in western democracies, and the post-modern critique of models that privilege logic over feelings, individualism over collectivism, the abstract and reversible over the situated, and so on, the common moral core of public education has come under attack no less in social science than in popular discourse. The connection between moral education and democracy is not necessarily apparent. Moral development, for some, connotes maintaining traditional (religious or cultural) norms and behavior, while democracy mediates multiplicity. At a recent European conference on measurement in educational research, a respected colleague asked, provocatively: «What does moral education have to do with preparing children for democratic citizenship?» Fortunately, Wiel Veugelers and Fritz Oser have collected nine papers from Western European and North American researchers who address this critical and timely question.

Teaching in Moral and Democratic Education (Peter Lang, 2003) is a bucket full of gems. Each chapter contains its own sparkle and depth, yet each is of different colors, shapes, degrees of polish, and orientations and each can be put to a different use. Each chapter looks at moral education — its definition, goals and practice in a slightly different way. Taken together, the chapters in Teaching in Moral and Democratic Education complicate, rather than simplify our search for answers, and thus promote the critical conversation about the moral meaning, viability and future of public education in the west. In this review I focus first on how the authors define moral education and how they see it as preparing students for democratic citizenship in various national contexts. Then I summarize some of the moral education projects presented, with special emphasis on those that focus on the developmental integrity of teachers as an end and means of moral education. Finally, in critiquing the volume, I raise questions that I hope will help people use this book to guide an ongoing conversation.

Moral education as a democratic enterprise; Democratic citizenship as a moral enterprise

Moral education, as it is used throughout this volume, clearly does not imply indoctrination into a particular set of values (although considerations of conveying community and family norms are specifically addressed by Narvaez, Endicott & Bock in chapter 2 and Klaasen in chapter 5). Rather, moral education seeks

to «integrate the cultures moral commonality» (Bergem, p. 97); with critical autonomous thinking (Veugelers & de Kat, p. 194) and the ability to resolve moral conflicts with others reasonably and fairly (e.g. through moral discourse) (Althof, p. 171). As Veugelers and de Kat write «promoting critical democratic citizenship in education means promoting critical thinking and critical behavior as well as developing solidarity.» Thinking for oneself, self-determination, taking others' perspectives, communicative action, moral sensitivity, learning from mistakes, solidarity, collective consciousness and community participation are each seen as important for both moral education and democratic citizenship, but how do we achieve them in public schools? What do we teach and how do we teach it? What structures support moral education at what ages? How do schools and school systems, parents, teachers and communities agree on and support goals of moral education? And how do we know whether what we're doing works?

Several chapters in this collection explicate the connection between moral education and democracy.

- Oser (chapter 1) sees negative moral knowledge as the key to maintaining fairness, caring and truthfulness. Negative moral knowledge, he argues, arises when people directly or indirectly experience injustice, uncaring or untruthfulness. Negative moral knowledge not only gives meaning to it's opposite, positive moral knowledge, but it is a motor of moral action because it is accompanied by moral indignation: Feelings associated with negative moral experience thus move us to participatory democracy. When we are appalled at our government's decision and we speak out, petition, protest, vote or stand for office, a moral spark has moved us to democratic action. The recognition of negative morality, learning from our mistakes (Oser & Spychiger, 2005) also moves us to professional and personal moral growth.
- Tirri suggests that moral education relies on the integrity of teachers, their own moral character, their ability and willingness to learn from their own mistakes, as central to the learning community that prepares young people for democratic responsibilities.
- Bergem, like Tirri, argues that teachers' professionalism is itself a moral enterprise, in his case, focusing on commitment as the core of ethical and educational competence
- Narvaez, Endicott & Bock associate moral education with helping young people address the dual questions: «What is the meaning of life?» and «What kind of community should we be?» Meaningful life and a sense of community are, for these authors, at the center of democratic citizenship in plural America.
- Oja succinctly says that «we expect pupils to be active participants in shaping their own identity and contributing to society,» and suggests that the same is true for teachers.
- Klaasen examines the theoretically «mutually exclusive» goals of moral education: conformity and self-determination. Democratic citizenship, he concludes, demands some balance, reconciliation, or integration.

- Althof, relying on Dewey's moral education creed, argues for self determination *in the context* of a Just Community.
- Veugelers reports that schools in the Netherlands are designed to achieve one (learning to work together) or the other (learning to think and work autonomously).
- Buxarrais and her colleagues see the goals of moral education as the developing of universal values through autonomous, rationality, conducive to living in an open and plural society.

In the end, as Veuglers and de Kat note: «A democratic society expects citizens to participate not just passively, but actively in society» (p. 194). The goal of moral education, in this context is reconciling the «seemingly contradictory aims, i.e. to convey the culture's moral commonality, with its concern for others, and at the same time to foster the ability to plot one's course.» (Bergen, p. 96)

Moral education praxis

One of the most valuable contributions of this volume is that it collects evaluated moral education programs from a range of countries and contexts (e.g. Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the American Midwest) in one slim volume.

Individual vs. social learning opportunities? Wiel Veugelers describes and evaluates secondary school moral education in the Netherlands. Here we find four types of schools (independent work oriented, independent learning, social group learning oriented, and traditional teacher directed) compared with respect to their achievement of nationally determined educational goals including, but not limited to, moral education. He lays out clear alternative approaches and their strengths and weaknesses in practice. Social programs, for instance, support empathy, social development and cooperative work, whereas independent self-guided programs support moral autonomy and individual responsibility. As both are necessary for democratic citizenship, the reader is left to wonder how to create programs that integrate both, or for whom program A compared to program B works better.

Ethical Expertise as moral education? Narvaez, Endicott & Bock describe an Ethical Expertise approach that derives «ethical processes and skills» through localized adaptations of «up to knowledge» and «common understandings.» The set of skills includes ethical sensitivity (e.g. responding to diversity), ethical judgment (e.g. understanding consequences, coping), ethical motivation (e.g acting responsibly, helping others, developing ethical identity and integrity) and ethical action (resolving conflicts and problems, cultivating courage). People of «good moral character» are said to be more expert in these skills, thus the training of ethical skills should lead to good character. Unfortunately, the authors fail to report the outcome of interventions using the ethical skills model, so we are left to question whether the teaching of skills without specific moral ends leads to democratic participation or idiosyncratic action. For instance «responding to

diversity» implies nothing about how one ought to respond to diversity — a major moral question for contemporary democracy. At its extreme we read that people can use knowledge of the properties of manure and the skills to drive a dumptruck to fertilize a cornfield or blow up a public building.

Just and Caring Communities. Althof reports on Just Community School interventions with primary school children in Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Using a model based on Dewey & Kohlberg, Just Community schools pay attention to the conditions for moral growth at the level of both individuals and moral atmosphere. The Just Community provides structures for moral discussion and decision-making as well as collective moral actions «saturating the child with the spirit of service» (Dewey in Althof, p. 157). One of the important outcomes of these projects is that the atmosphere sensitizes even very young students to the moral claims of the «least advantaged» — children with special needs who benefit from Just and Caring Communities by being less frequently mocked or scapegoated and more frequently heard and included. These primary school interventions seem so good for young people one wonders why they haven't been more widely adopted. So we are left to ask whether Just and Caring Communities can be developed and sustained «at random». It rahter seems that teachers, school administrators, and school communities have to make prior commitments to just and moral education.

The teacher–student learning context

Several chapters address the important relationship between teachers as the purveyors of moral education and students as active learners. In part they address the question of whether teachers, too, can grow morally and what is the relationship of teachers' moral development and professional standards.

Teachers learn from mistakes. Oser reports two classroom experiments on learning from mistakes. In one experiment «students changed completely within eight weeks to become respectful and treat each other fairly» (p. 38). Oser relates the new found moral atmosphere of respect to the teacher's recognition of his own moral mistakes in treating students cynically.

Teachers develop integrity. Kirsi Tirri's chapter on teachers' integrity shows how much the moral development of children and the moral atmosphere of the school rely on the integrity of the people who are directly responsible for children's education. By integrity Tirri refers to the characteristics of being uncorrupted, honest, true to oneself, an wholly responsible for ones own actions. She suggests that integrity can best be observed when it is threatened by difficult personal, professional and moral choices, such as those that emerge in the process of teaching. In order to examine teacher's integrity, therefore, she used a method that codified teachers' common moral mistakes — for instance misuse of authority, bias, and using impolite language (i.e. disrespect). How can teachers learn from these moral mistakes? Tirri reports three moral lessons learned from the research in primary and secondary schools in Finland: 1. Teachers

should be guided to *reflect* on their moral authority and develop clear *rules* and practices at the level of the school. 2. Pre-service training should include ways to deal with *collegial moral conflicts*. 3. Teachers need practice and support in *moral discourse* with colleagues, parents and the community that includes the ability to discuss negative incidents.

Teacher standards include commitment. In the same direction, Trygve Bergem reports on the importance of commitment in a time when respect for teachers is declining in Norway, at the same time teachers are expected to «do miracles». Bergem argues that «Professional standards» must go beyond teaching knowledge and skills, to include commitment to the «moral enterprise», which at the minimum should build character in the direction agreed on by the publicly adopted curriculum—-in the Norwegian case «education shall inspire the integrated development of the skills and qualities that allow one to behave morally, to create and act, and to work together and in harmony with nature.» Commitment is required to resolve such conflicts as: the needs of the individual child vs. academic standards; the body of collective knowledge vs. post-modern pluralism; effectiveness *and* responsibility; what teachers ought to do vs. what they are actually able to do. In contradiction to Narvaez, et.al. (or perhaps as a complement) Bergem argues that it is not the ethical skills that should be codified into professional standards, but rather the ethical commitment of teachers to their students.

Conformity or self-determination? Klaasen sees the moral responsibility of teachers and parents as similar, but questions whether they have similar moral goals. He divides moral orientations into those that promote obedience, conformity and adherence to tradition, with those that promote autonomous decision-making and sensitivity. Skilled teachers and parents included obedience and conformity as well as autonomous decision making as moral aims. Novice teachers were more likely to favor autonomous decision-making, as were more highly educated parents. This raises an interesting question of whether conformity is, in fact, more adaptive for children from working class families, or whether, alternately, promoting autonomous decision-making skills leads to (upward) social mobility. Klaasen's surprise finding — that all groups supported a certain amount of conformity — lead him to conclude that perhaps conformity as a goal of both moral education and democratic citizenship may have been inappropriately discarded in the last decades. Conformity may be a pre-requisite to self-determination and social sensitivity. This is a developmental and pedagogical question worth considering.

Teachers moral and ego development as an outcome of participatory action research. Oja takes an unusual approach to examining the collaborative democratic discourse skills that Tirri sees as critical to developing teacher integrity. She reports a series of experiments in which teachers were involved in collaborative action research. Her findings support the notion that teacher participation in action research leads to personal and professional growth, related to «increased

feelings of confidence, expertise, and understanding.» Participation also prompted moral and ego development at least in part because teachers had to address issues related to moral aims through a process that demanded the kinds of interpersonal conflict discussion which Tirri also recommends for teacher training. Some action research projects were more likely to stimulate personal and professional growth than others. Importantly, Oja measured the teachers moral and ego stage, and found, not surprisingly, that the way a teacher constructed her/his socio-moral self and socio-moral world affected both the way they approached the project, and what they got out of it developmentally. Thus, increasing opportunities for participatory practice creates opportunities for moral development of teachers as well as students.

Summary

How does Teaching in Moral and Democratic Education help answer the questions raised at first about the what and how of moral education? Taken together, the chapters agree on the list of ingredients necessary to bake a «zopf.» They all require a focus on, thinking critically about, and the discussion of moral issues, a focus on community membership and participation, and the practical experience of moral action. Some recipes call for more «feeling» in the kneading of the dough. Others call for attention to the room temperature where the dough is left to rise, or attention to the length of time in the oven. Some add salt (learning from negative experiences) others add sugar (involvement of families and community in developing location-specific moral goals). Most importantly, however, this collection of essays takes seriously the most fundamental aspect of moral education as it pertains to preparing young people for active democratic citizenship – which is: The engagement and development of the teacher in relation to the students in the context of a system that supports if not actively promotes collective discourse, participatory responsibility and the professional development of the teacher's integrity.

I found two things wanting in this collection. First, although several authors made reference to post modernism and raised the question of moral relativism vs. pluralism, none directly addressed this delicate and critical issue with respect to the actual pluralist democracies in which today's students are growing up. What if, in the next generation, the majority of citizens — or even a substantial minority — no longer see self determination or critical thinking — or even moral development — as important for public education to promote, or for democracy to value? Alternately, what if democracy, ceases to value solidarity or the collective? Second, because of the richness of the «jewels» in the bucket, the chapters might be rendered more useful by some focusing questions or short summaries that compare and contrast one with another. For example, several different approaches to evaluating educational interventions were described. A collective summary of approaches to evaluating moral education interventions might benefit researchers. Likewise, several chapters describe how the local core

curriculum or national constitution addresses the moral and democratic goals of public education. Norway, for instance, specifically includes environmental protection and respect for nature among its moral goals. Bringing some of these similarities and differences into relation would also prove useful. In the end, though, the reader is left with a bucket of jewels that, with a bit of care, can be arranged in any way that suits her or him — the collection is thus useful as a teacher training tool and has the potential to further a critical conversation among educators and educational scientists.

Ronnie Frankel Blakeney, University of Fribourg, Dept. of Education and Educational Psychology.