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Schuitema, J.A.; ten Dam, G.T.M.; Veugelers, W.M.M.H.

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# **Teaching strategies for moral education: a review**

Jaap Schuitema, Geert ten Dam and Wiel Veugelers

Universiteit van Amsterdam  
Graduate School of Teaching and Learning  
Wibautstraat 2--4  
1091 GM Amsterdam  
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 20 525 1293

Fax: +31 20 525 1290

Email: [j.a.schuitema@uva.nl](mailto:j.a.schuitema@uva.nl)

### Biographical notes

Jaap Schuitema is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School of Teaching and Learning, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Wibautstraat 2--4 1091 GM Amsterdam, The Netherlands; email: j.a.schuitema@uva.nl

His areas of interest are moral education and curriculum development.

Geert ten Dam is professor of education at the Graduate School of Teaching and Learning, Universiteit van Amsterdam. Her research interests centre on learning processes, instruction, social inequality and citizenship education.

Wiel Veugelers is professor of education at the Universiteit voor Humanistiek in Utrecht and a teacher and researcher at the Graduate School of Teaching and Learning, Universiteit van Amsterdam. His research focuses on moral education, citizenship education, education from a humanistic perspective, educational change and networks of schools.

## **Teaching strategies for moral education: a review**

### Abstract

This article presents the results of a literature review of studies on teaching strategies for moral education in secondary schools (1995--2003). The majority of the studies focus on the 'what' and 'why', i.e. the objectives, of curriculum-oriented moral education. Attention to the instructional formats for enhancing the prosocial and moral development of students (the 'how') is relatively sparse. Most studies on teaching strategies for moral education recommend a problem-based approach to instruction, whereby students work in small groups. This approach gives room for dialogue and interaction between students, which is considered to be crucial for their moral and prosocial development. Other studies discuss more specific teaching methods, such as drama and service learning. We conclude that the theoretical discourses on moral education are not reflected in a solid empirical research domain on the practice of curriculum-oriented moral education and its effects on students' learning outcomes. Finally, we recommend that future research on curriculum-oriented moral education includes the subject areas encompassing moral issues and the social differences between students.

Keywords: Citizenship-Education; Curriculum-Development; Moral-Development; Secondary-Education; Social-Differences; Teaching-Methods.

## Introduction

The last decade has witnessed a continuing decline in formerly coherent value systems and an increasing individualization in modern Western society. The autonomous development of one's own value orientations and the ability to reflect on values are now more important (cf. Veugelers and Vedder 2003). Moreover, the tendency towards globalization has broadened the cultural spectrum in which many people live and society has become more diverse. This raises the question, 'How can schools prepare students to participate in the social and cultural practices of society and to make their own choices?'

Many aspects of school life are constitutive elements of moral education<sup>1</sup>. The school culture and the teacher as a moral person, for instance, are extremely significant in students' moral development. Kohlberg's Just Community approach to moral education (Power et al. 1989) has been very influential on research into the moral climate in schools. This approach focuses on how schools can be transformed into democratic, moral communities and on the effects of the moral atmosphere on students' moral development (see also Oser 1996). Besides school culture, teachers as moral exemplars and the interaction between teachers and students have a significant influence on students (Hansen 2001, Oser 1994, Pring 2001). Hansen makes a distinction between moral education and education as a moral endeavour. He suggests that although many moral implications of teaching are unintentional, teaching as an endeavour is inherently moral. In contrast, moral education refers to the deliberate teaching of particular values, attitudes and dispositions to stimulate the prosocial and moral development of students.

In this study we focus on curriculum-oriented approaches to moral education with the deliberate aim of enhancing students' prosocial and moral development. Looking at the curriculum means that we concentrate on teaching strategies and instructional designs at the classroom level and on the learning activities of students. This line of approach has received less attention than the school culture and the teacher as moral exemplar in relation to the moral development of students. A review in the Handbook of Research on Curriculum conducted by Sockett (1992) revealed only a few studies that focus on teaching strategies. Empirical research into the effectiveness of the proposed teaching strategies appeared to be

almost non-existent. A more recent study reviewing the literature on the prosocial and moral development of students up to the mid-1990s only changes this picture slightly. Solomon et al. (2001) discuss a number of school-based projects or curricula that focus mainly on primary education. They mention a few empirical studies regarding these projects. These often concern small-scale studies on, for instance, students' experiences. Most of the literature reviewed by Solomon and his colleagues, however, is prescriptive in nature and formulates guidelines for moral education based on theoretical analyses of the moral task of education.

Starting from the observation that there has clearly been a renewed interest in the prosocial and moral development of students since the mid 1990s, it is conceivable that considerably more curriculum-oriented empirical studies have been carried out during recent years. We have therefore conducted a review of the literature published from 1995 to 2003. Our review study on curriculum-oriented moral education was guided by the following question: What teaching strategies are appropriate for enhancing the social and moral development of students in secondary education? We first give a brief description of the literature search we made and then present the results of that search. After discussing the various goals of moral education, we give an overview of the proposed teaching strategies. In our view the issue of 'diversity' must be taken into account in a multicultural and pluralistic society. This is especially important in education and hence we will pay special attention to social differences between students. Finally, we address the empirical studies on the effects of the proposed teaching strategies on the learning experiences and learning results of students. In the discussion section we present a summary of our findings and formulate two issues for a future research agenda on curriculum-oriented moral education.

## Method

In our literature search 1995--2003, we identified studies on teaching strategies for enhancing the prosocial and moral development of students. Computerized reference databases (ERIC and ISI Web of Science) were searched for potentially relevant studies published since 1995. The literature search was conducted using two groups of descriptors (including synonyms and related terms). The first group of descriptors was: moral, values, ethical, citizenship and democratic. We combined these descriptors with curriculum related terms such as: secondary education, instruction, curriculum, teaching, intervention and learning. We limited ourselves to studies that were published in peer-reviewed/refereed journals (SSCI). The abstracts of the articles were checked to ascertain whether they actually focus on curriculum-oriented moral education. As a result articles that focus mainly on the school culture and school climate or articles dealing with moral development in general, without specifying objectives or strategies for education, were excluded from the review study. In addition to the search, we checked the abstracts of several journals for relevant material (e.g. Journal of Moral Education, Journal for Curriculum Studies) as well as the references in journal articles published since 1995 ('snowball method'). The final outcome was a total of 76 studies on which we conducted our review study. Given our method of selection, we believe these publications give a valuable overview of the studies published on teaching strategies for moral education in the international literature in the period 1995--2003.

A large part of the literature appeared to be theoretical in nature rather than empirical and, moreover, theoretically and methodologically diverse. A quantitative meta-analysis was therefore not possible, so we analysed the studies in a mainly narrative way. In the description of the empirical studies we restricted ourselves to an indication of the designs used and the statistically significant or qualitative results.

## Objectives of moral education

We encountered quite a number of articles that only give general guidelines for structuring the teaching-learning process and focus primarily on what moral education should be aimed at. Therefore, we will first present the objectives of curriculum-oriented moral education and the learning outcomes intended in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Focusing on how various authors legitimate moral education, two aspects can be distinguished. Firstly, the personal development and welfare of students is considered to be important. Education must endeavour to guide students towards adulthood and stimulate their identity development. Secondly, the importance of moral education is emphasized from the perspective of society. By enhancing the prosocial and moral development of students, moral education contributes to the quality of society. Both sides of the moral task of education are closely linked, even though an analytical differentiation can be made.

In the tradition of the cognitive developmental work of Kohlberg (Blatt and Kohlberg 1975, Kohlberg 1971), it is argued that moral education should be aimed at the moral development of the individual and at his or her ability to deal autonomously with moral dilemmas and ethical issues. Studies in this tradition focus especially on cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, moral decision making and moral reasoning (e.g. Barden et al. 1997, DeVries 1997, Murray 1999). Lopez and Lopez (1998) in particular have emphasized the importance of the cognitive element of moral development.

Whereas Kohlberg's theory is based on the ability to apply the moral principles of justice to moral dilemmas, Gilligan (1982) developed a theory of moral reasoning based on relationships and care. In line with her 'care orientation' to moral understanding, many authors focus on the affective and relational aspects of moral development (Basourakos 1999, Fallona 2000, Noddings 1995). According to them moral dilemmas should be placed in a context and the importance of emotional factors in moral decision making should be fully acknowledged. Examples of such emotional factors are empathizing with others, and caring and compassion for others (Ruiz and Vallejos 1999, Verducci 2000). More specifically,

Bouchard (2002) proposes a narrative perspective on moral development based on the cultural historical approach of Tappan (1998). He argues that an individual cannot reason and judge without being aware of his or her social relationships. The aim of moral development is therefore not moral autonomy but moral authority of individuals in their relations with others.

Under the heading of character education the moral-development tradition is primarily criticized for focusing too much on skills and thereby neglecting the moral content (Doyle 1997, Lickona 1999, Ryan 1996). The argument here is that students need to develop certain qualities, behaviours and dispositions (cf. Sockett 1992). By teaching a specific set of values, such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, honesty, justice and fairness, moral relativism can be avoided (Berreth and Berman 1997, Doyle 1997, Fenstermacher 2001, Lickona 1996). In particular the ‘direct approach’ of character education (see Solomon et al. 2001) is aimed at students’ internalization of those values inherent in the tradition and culture of society. Some authors in this tradition do acknowledge the importance of skills such as empathic skills (Estes and Vásquez-Levy 2001) or critical-thinking skills (Elkind and Sweet 1997). This does not alter the fact, however, that ‘being critical’, for example, should still result in previously defined outcomes such as obedience and conformity (Kohn 1997).

Generally speaking, the perspective of society is most strongly articulated in ‘citizenship education’ or ‘democratic education’. Both terms have increasingly been used in the past decade. The main focus here is to enhance engagement with democratic society and active participation in that society. Engagement and participation, however, can take different forms. They vary from ‘voting’ or ‘willingness to volunteer’ to ‘confidence in the ability to make a difference in the social environment’ or ‘willingness to protest against injustice’ (cf. Haste 2004, Torney-Purta 2004). Various authors in this field do indeed advocate a broad education embracing cognitive, social and moral-learning objectives to prepare students to participate in society in different forms. Students need to acquire skills as well as knowledge, attitudes and values.

Examples of skills mentioned in the literature on curriculum-oriented moral education include critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills, perspective taking and decision-making skills (e.g.

Battistoni 1997, Beane 2002, Clark et al. 1997). In addition, students need to develop communication skills such as writing skills, deliberation skills and listening skills (e.g. Davies and Evans 2002, Parker 1997). Finally, some authors emphasize ‘reflection’ as a basic skill for critical citizenship (e.g. Ten Dam and Volman 2003). With regard to knowledge, students need to gain insight into the way a democratic society functions (e.g. Hicks 2001, Hirsch 2001, Kerr 1999). More specifically, Print (1996) and Beane (2002) advocate knowledge about the government, the constitution and civil rights. Most proponents of citizenship education also stress the development of attitudes and values, such as responsibility and community involvement (e.g. Cogan and Morris 2001, Davies et al. 2001, Veugelers and De Kat 2003), tolerance and respect for others and appreciating differences (Grant 1996, Print 1996). In addition, students need to become autonomous and open-minded citizens and to develop a critical attitude (Saye 1998, Veugelers and De Kat 2003, Wardekker 2001). Last but not least, education should foster a positive attitude towards participation in a democratic society (Battistoni 1997, Clark et al. 1997, Davies and Evans 2002)

Some authors focus on the multicultural dimension of society. They argue that the main goal of moral education is to achieve equality between different groups and to prevent social exclusion. Ranson (2000) asserts that in a post-modern heterogeneous society, people need a ‘voice’ in order to be included and that education should therefore teach students communication skills. Other authors emphasize that doing justice to diversity in society means that the history and views of different social groups should be incorporated into the curriculum (e.g. Banks et al. 2001, Kumashiro 2000, Lawrence 1997). Finally, the task of education in preventing racism or oppression of social groups in general is stressed (Carrington and Short 1997, Kumashiro 2000, Santas 2000). Besides critical-thinking skills and knowledge about oppression mechanisms, these authors indicate the importance of fostering attitudes such as tolerance, respect for others and a desire to get to know and to understand others.

Relatively little research in this domain, however, deals with diversity. Parker (2001) observes a gap between citizenship education and multicultural education. He argues that in the field of citizenship

education, diversity is regarded as a threat to unity, while the issue of diversity is relegated to the multicultural-education field. In our view, a more differentiated concept of citizenship education should be used. Learning how to handle ambiguity and to value diversity are the central objectives of this concept (cf. Haste 2004)

Ultimately all the approaches to moral education described above aim to prepare students for participation in society. The main differences, however, concern the specific learning outcomes aspired to, for example, a specific set of values versus critical thinking and social autonomy. Underlying these differences are different perspectives, often implicit, on modern society: what are the main characteristics of society and what kind of citizenship do we want?

#### Curricula for moral education

The studies about teaching strategies we came across in the review vary from instructional elements for moral education to proposals for complete instructional designs, and detailed descriptions of teaching strategies or characteristics of learning environments. In this section we firstly present an overview of the various instructional elements which recur in the literature. We then discuss the studies which focus more specifically on certain teaching methods, namely classroom discussion, drama and literature, and service learning.

In most studies on teaching strategies for curriculum-oriented moral education we found the following elements: problem-based learning, working in groups, discussions, and using subject topics incorporating moral issues, dilemmas and values. Frequently, a problem-based instructional design is chosen. What has been learnt must be meaningful in the context of students' personal objectives and they must be able to connect the learning content with their prior knowledge. In order to make learning more meaningful to

students, several authors (e.g. Beane 2002, Clark et al. 1997, Saye 1998) recommend co-operative learning and stimulating students to direct their own learning process. Frequently, students can choose between a number of subjects to work on or they are allowed to put forward their own questions and concerns (e.g. Beane 2002). Some studies propose teaching strategies in which students are encouraged to investigate the subject by themselves, including collecting information (e.g. Saye 1998). Students can apply their own knowledge and interests to the subject in such an inquiry-oriented approach. When students actively develop knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, rather than receiving them passively, the effect is more lasting according to Tredway (1995).

A problem-based approach in which students can make their own choices about the curriculum is also assumed to contribute to an open and democratic classroom climate. Many authors stress the importance of involving students in the decision-making process (Berreth and Berman 1997, Boostrom 1998, Oser 1996, Ryan 1996). According to Battistoni (1997), democracy can only be taught in a democratic environment. In addition, authors stress the importance of a classroom climate in which students are encouraged to participate actively and express their opinions (Covell and Howe 2001, Torney-Purta 2002). Covell and Howe argue that a change in attitude is most likely when students are able to explore options and values in an egalitarian and open manner. Therefore teachers must use an egalitarian teaching style with opportunities for debate, exercises in self-selected small groups and some self-direction in activities. Moreover, such a classroom climate will enhance students' self-confidence and self-esteem. Here we see the influence of the Just Community approach which emphasizes the importance of involving students in the decision-making process (see Althof 2003, Oser 1996, Power et al. 1989). Oser argues that discussions about moral issues must be linked to moral action if they are to foster responsibility in students. Joint decision making by teachers and students is the most concrete way of doing this.

In many of the proposed curricula, students have to work in small groups. The main argument in favour of co-operative learning is that it stimulates students' critical-thinking skills and enhances perspective taking. While working together, students have to think about social issues in an active way

and must consider other students' opinions (Tredway 1995). Murray's study (1999) is an example of this. He discusses a curriculum on ethical dilemmas in biology in which groups of four students choose an issue and work together on a presentation. Two members of the group have to consider a stance in favour of the issue and the two others a stance against it. Furthermore, it is assumed that working in groups benefits the interaction between students and helps them to practise communication skills, to resolve differences of opinion, and to tolerate disagreement (e.g. Hicks 2001, McQuaide et al. 1999).

Although group work figures prominently in studies regarding the prosocial and moral development of students, few authors actually pay attention to 'learning to work together'. In their case-study project on social competence, Ten Dam and Volman (2003) describe a few projects in which teachers explicitly attempt to enhance the quality of group work in the first stage of secondary education. Guided assignments put students in situations in which they have to work together. Afterwards, explicit attention is paid to reflection on the group process and the quality of the collaborative work done. Bergmann Drewe (2000) argues that physical education in particular provides opportunities for students to learn to co-operate with each other in an appropriate way. As moral rules need to be applied in sport, physical education represents a real-life situation in which students can practise moral behaviour.

Some authors propose enhancing teamwork by using multimedia technology. In a project about social issues from 1960s, Saye (1998) asks students to use a computer database to find information for their presentation. McQuaide et al. (1999) discuss a computer simulation programme in which students can put themselves in the shoes of a bank's vice-president. This change of perspective confronts them with ethical decisions such as how to deal with an embezzler.

Another instructional element that is frequently mentioned in studies on moral education is classroom discussion or discussions in small groups. Most authors consider dialogue and interaction to be essential for enhancing the prosocial and moral development of students. The argumentation for this, however, differs. Kohlberg's work has inspired many studies focusing on discussions about moral dilemmas. His early work concentrated on such discussions in the classroom (Blatt and Kohlberg 1975). The need to solve conflicts and to consider the perspectives of others is assumed to stimulate cognitive

moral growth. Murray (1999) and Barden et al. (1997), for instance, focus on discussions on ethical dilemmas in science to stimulate critical-thinking skills and moral reasoning. For most authors, however, the importance of dialogue and interaction goes beyond the teaching of cognitive skills. It is particularly argued that citizenship in a democratic society requires being able to communicate with different social groups with different points of view. Discussing moral issues in the classroom provides an excellent opportunity to practise communication skills (e.g. Parker 1997, Preskill 1997). Moreover, it stimulates the development of attitudes such as tolerance, respect, 'open-mindedness' and autonomy (Grant 1996, Saye 1998). From a cultural historical point of view, moral development is inherently social. Students not only have to learn how to reason about morality, but morality itself is considered to be a cultural practice in which students must learn how to participate (Tappan 1998). Although classroom discussion is considered to be an essential element in curriculum-oriented moral education, relatively few studies elaborate on the question of how to engage students in discussion. With a few exceptions (see below), they go no further than the claim that 'discussion' makes a difference.

In our review study we encountered a recurrent plea for using subject topics with a moral dimension. One example is the study by Schultz et al. (2001) regarding the Facing History and Ourselves programme. Readings, films, and literature about history play a central role in this programme. It particularly highlights the holocaust. This is considered to be an important topic that can prompt questions on attitudes such as prejudice, moral choices, respect and tolerance (see also Brown and Davies 1998, Carrington and Short 1997). Saye (1998) also argues that using historical topics, especially themes from the 1960s such as Vietnam, the civil-rights movement or the counterculture, can help students to develop critical-thinking skills and stimulate them to consider social issues from different perspectives.

Other authors propose using issues and problems that students actually encounter or will encounter as citizens in a democratic society (Beane 2002, Clark et al. 1997, Davies et al. 1998, Hicks 2001). According to them, issues such as environmental pollution and distribution of wealth help students to gain knowledge and understanding about the world around them and about a democratic way of life. These insights are crucial for thinking critically and developing attitudes such as a sense of community

and responsibility for society. Covell and Howe (2001) use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as subject matter for moral education. In their opinion, the best way to develop a more supportive attitude towards the rights of others and to foster respect for children from minority groups is to teach children about their own rights with regard to 'basic needs', 'equality', 'juvenile justice', 'sexuality' and 'education'. Students learn about these rights through analysing popular songs, for instance, or case studies on runaways and street children.

Besides social studies (e.g. history), other subject areas are considered to be significant to moral education. Firstly, ethical issues related to science are examined. Murray (1999) proposes topics such as human cloning, growth hormones in the bio-industry, and birth control. Others suggest more general themes such as laboratory safety, working with others, reporting results in an ethical way and scientist's gender. Researchers argue that while discussing these topics and writing about them, students develop critical-thinking skills and ethical decision-making skills (e.g. Barden, et al. 1997, Nichols 1995). Secondly, we came across language teaching as a relevant subject domain for moral education. The accent here lies primarily on stimulating the personal development of students. Fairbanks (1998), for example, describes projects in which students are asked to write about issues in their own lives (e.g. divorce or a parent's alcohol abuse). Finally, Ryan (1996) includes literature in his curriculum to counter 'the influence of cultural narcissism' in our society. According to him, moral education often puts too much emphasis on the autonomy of individuals and by doing so is in danger of promoting egocentrism. Thinking about and discussing narcissistic characters in American literature--- 'How could these characters have behaved differently?' ---can help students to understand narcissism and to relate it to antisocial behaviour. Ryan aims primarily at the development of values such as courtesy, trustworthiness and responsibility.

### Classroom discussion

Although the importance of classroom discussion seems to be almost self-evident in studies on curriculum-oriented moral education, only a few authors elaborate on the specific teaching strategies it requires. Most suggested formats for discussion take the form of a dialogue. Grant (1996) characterizes a dialogue being aimed at the critical evaluation of different opinions in order to reach consensus, while a debate focuses primarily on persuading an audience (cf Preskill 1997). According to her, a dialogue facilitates the development of critical thinking and independency of mind in particular, as well as attitudes such as tolerance, respect and responsibility.

Most proposals centred on classroom discussion that we encountered in the review study make use of the Socratic method derived from Plato. The teacher leads the students through a series of questions to a ‘conclusion’, which may be predetermined. It is a relatively teacher-centred method and calls on the skills and beliefs of teachers. Several variations, however, can be found in the literature under the heading Socratic method. We discuss a few exemplary studies below.

In line with the ‘direct approach’ within character education, the Socratic method is used to reach a moral conclusion predetermined by the teacher. Elkind and Sweet (1997), for example, argue that students’ responses to the teacher’s questions are either right or wrong (in the words of the authors: ‘bad’). In the case of a ‘bad answer’ the teacher must continue asking questions until the student realizes that he or she is wrong. According to Elkind and Sweet this method helps students to make ‘good’ choices and teaches them to think critically. This definition of critical thinking, however, can be disputed. It is plausible that they will quickly understand what the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers are, without learning to form, evaluate and discuss their own opinions.

Saye (1998) and Tredway (1995) suggest an alternative approach. Their ‘indirect approach’ focuses on fostering skills and attitudes without committing oneself to a specific conclusion. By asking questions teachers can stimulate students to evaluate options and guide them to a deeper understanding of ideas and to a thoughtful conclusion. Tredway argues that in this way students not only learn to think critically and independently, but also develop more respectful, tactful and kinder attitudes and behaviour.

## Drama and literature

The main argument for using literature and drama is that they provide a stimulating context for students in which they can think and reason about moral dilemmas. From the perspective of character education Estes and Vásquez-Levy (2001) recommend the use of literature because it confronts students with moral values and ethical issues. Doyle (1997) argues that this can help to avoid moral relativism. He argues that ‘solving’ moral dilemmas is not a matter of presenting the right arguments but of placing values in a historical and cultural context. Students can learn the values of their cultural inheritance through literature. Doyle in particular suggests reading the ancients (e.g. The Odyssey and The Bible) and what he calls ‘the great documents of citizenship’ (e.g. Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights)

We have already seen that Kohlberg’s developmental approach has been criticized for focusing too much on the cognitive aspects of moral development (e.g. Noddings 1992). In line with this critique, drama has been put forward because of its potential to involve individuals emotionally (Basourakos 1999, Winston 1999). Students can identify with the moral agents in the story and internalize the emotional content of complex, ‘real life’, moral dilemmas. The capacity of dramatic narratives to heighten the moral experience is assumed to be much stronger than that of written narratives (Winston 1999). Pre-performance and post-performance discussions are considered necessary to stimulate students to reflect on the moral dilemmas the characters encounter. Basourakos (1999) suggests guiding questions such as ‘what are the circumstances that determine each moral conflict in this play?’ or ‘what other options could have been available for the moral agents to resolve their moral conflicts?’.

Other authors argue that students will be even more able to empathize with the characters in the play if they act in it themselves (Bouchard 2002, Day 2002). Moreover, by acting as a moral agent within a specific context, students are able to develop moral authority and skills for empathic caring (Verducci 2000). In the Forum theatre workshop (Day 2002), for example, the aim was to increase students’ empathy with refugees and homeless people and to encourage them to become moral agents in their own lives. In

the tradition of the Forum theatre, students could not only influence the script of the play but also perform in it themselves.

From a cultural historical point of view, Bourchard (2002) argues that a moral issue that has emerged from a learning experience with drama must be re-introduced in a personal dialogue with the teacher. By doing so, students must assert their authority and take responsibility for what they think and feel.

### Service learning

In our review we came across several studies on citizenship education involving community service learning (e.g. Battistoni 1997, Billig 2000, Butin 2003, Clark et al. 1997, Leming 2001, Riedel 2002). Service learning is a method which enables students to learn by actively participating in society. In line with Dewey's pedagogical discourse, Battistoni (1997) argues that the best way to learn something is by doing it. There are, however, different views on the objectives and basic principles of service learning (Butin 2003). The objectives aspired to vary from stimulating political engagement (e.g. Riedel 2002), critical thinking, and the encouragement of altruism and caring (e.g. Billig 2000) to fostering respect for social differences (e.g. Weah et al. 2000). Moreover, service learning includes a variety of activities ranging from working in a car wash for charity, tutoring peers, to helping in a soup kitchen or nursing home (see McLellan and Youniss 2003).

An important debate is on whether community service is valuable in itself or should be explicitly linked to the school curriculum. Many authors argue that it must be integrated into classroom practices (see Niemi et al. 2000). In this approach the term 'service learning' is used to refer to community service that is linked to the academic curriculum. Structural time for reflection on the service experience is, in particular, considered to be a key element in service learning (Billig 2000, McLellan and Youniss 2003). Clark et al. (1997) argue that students need to develop knowledge about the issues involved. In the

service-learning programme proposed by these authors, students should learn to identify problems in their own community and explore the various strategies for dealing with these problems. By doing so, they will develop problem-solving skills and communication skills. To achieve these learning outcomes, the programme proposed by Clark et al. includes guided discussions, simulations and role playing, interview assignments with local residents and presentations by students.

### Social group differences

The multicultural dimension of contemporary society is reiterated again and again in the studies reviewed. Most authors argue that one of the objectives of moral education is to teach students how to cope with cultural diversity. However, teaching strategies that take social differences between students in the classroom into account are sparse. It is striking that most of the studies depict students as a more or less homogeneous group in terms of values, prior knowledge, learning strategies, and so on. As a consequence, little attention has been paid to the differential learning outcomes of a specific moral-education curriculum.

One of the few studies in which the educational implications of students' different social and cultural backgrounds are explored is by Banks and his colleagues (2001). They argue that teachers require knowledge about the cultural backgrounds of their students to be able to teach in a culturally responsive way. In addition, the authors assert that teachers should use multiple methods to teach and to assess complex cognitive and social skills. Different teaching methods probably attract different groups of students. Narvaez (2001), however, points out that differential learning outcomes are also related to the content. Students of different ages might not understand the moral content of a story in the same way. Ten Dam and Volman (2003) elaborate on the different educational goals set for different social groups. In their case study they show that developing a reflexive and changeable identity and being able to participate in society as a critical citizen are characteristic of the projects investigated in the higher levels

of secondary education. For students in the lower, more vocationally oriented levels of education, however, the emphasis is on learning how to behave in an appropriate manner. Ten Dam and Volman conclude that projects aimed at the prosocial and moral development of students are in danger of reproducing social inequality because relatively large numbers of students in the lower stream of secondary education are from a disadvantaged background (low SES, ethnic minorities).

### Effective teaching strategies for moral education

We found relatively little empirical research on the effectiveness of teaching strategies for moral education. The empirical studies we did find vary from interview studies and case studies (e.g. Bouchard 2002, Carrington and Short 1997, Davies et al. 1998, Hahn 1999, Ten Dam and Volman 2003, Williams et al. 2003) to studies using a quasi-experimental (pre-test post-test control group) design (e.g. Covell and Howe 2001, Lopez and Lopez 1998, McQuaide et al. 1999, Narvaez 2001, Riedel 2002, Schultz et al. 2001). This variety leads some authors to conclude that the quality of the empirical-research domain of moral education is questionable (e.g. Solomon et al. 2001, Wade and Saxe 1996, Wilson 2000).

Furthermore, the outcomes vary according to the perspective---often implicit---on the objectives of moral education, which makes it difficult to compare different studies. For example, McLellan and Youniss (2003) state that there is little evidence that community service is effective. Research on the effects of community service has produced mixed results (see Leming 2001, Niemi et al. 2000, Seitsinger 2005, Yates and Youniss 1999). A possible reason is the variety of programmes ‘service learning’ encompasses (see also Riedel 2002). In this section we first discuss three examples of studies using retrospective analyses. We then move on to discuss a number of exemplary experimental studies.

In a study on holocaust education, Carrington and Short (1997) investigated the learning experiences of students who had studied the holocaust ( $n=43$ , age 14--16) from six schools in Southeast England. Half of

them belonged to an ethnic minority group, with 17 having a Southern Asian background. The authors did not elaborate on the specific features of the instructional design used. In their opinion studying the holocaust promotes citizenship by its very nature. Students said that the lessons had increased their awareness of racism. When they were asked to elaborate on the concepts of ‘stereotyping’ and ‘scapegoating’, however, they did not show a deep understanding of these concepts. According to the authors, insight into these mechanisms is important in order to curb racism.

Day (2002) investigated the effects of a Forum theatre workshop aimed at increasing students’ empathy with refugees and homeless people and encouraging them to become autonomous moral agents. Three ethnically diverse schools in London participated in the workshop. The data were obtained by descriptive observations and semi-structured interviews with students ( $n=20$ , age 11--15), before and immediately after the workshop and again two months later. The data were analysed qualitatively. The results show that students’ perceptions of refugees and homeless people had changed. Moreover, the workshop evoked enthusiasm for action. After two months, however, the initial enthusiasm had been replaced by frustration, mainly because students had no idea how to take further action. Day concludes that the workshop did enable students to identify emotionally with refugees and homeless people. Explicit reflection and guidance from teachers, however, is needed to be able to cope with and respond to moral issues in real life situations.

Williams et al. (2003) retrospectively analysed the effects of a moral-education programme (Unified Studies) over a period of 20 years. Students who had participated in the programme (when they were 15--16 years old) were interviewed ( $n=106$ ) and/or filled in a questionnaire ( $n=204$ ). The authors relate Unified Studies to value development because of the emphasis on working in small groups, co-operative learning and ‘real-life experiences’, both in and outside the classroom. Students participating in the programme met every other day for the whole day. They therefore had time to examine a wide variety of topics (e.g. environmental, ecology, scientific writing and practising listening techniques) and to reflect on their experiences of one-day field trips and classroom sessions. The students perceived the programme

as contributing to a respectful attitude towards others and to a responsible attitude towards themselves and their environment.

Schultz et al. (2001) reported on one of the few examples of experimental research on the relationship between a specific, theoretically substantiated teaching method and the development of skills and attitudes. A quasi-experimental study with a pre-test post-test design ( $n=346$  22 classes, age 14, 62% Caucasian students, 38% students from ethnic-minority groups) was conducted to examine a ten-week or semester programme called Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO). The programme is based on constructivist and community-oriented programmes such as the Just Community approach (Power et al. 1989). The overall goal of the programme, to foster human and responsible citizenship, was particularized in teaching students specific skills (critical-thinking skills and perspective taking). Explicit attention was paid to intergroup relationships and social-justice issues. The results showed that FHAO students scored significantly higher on interpersonal development<sup>2</sup> in general. There were no significant differences, however, with regard to perspective taking which the authors consider to be one of the main goals of the programme. FHAO students did show a decrease in the level of racism<sup>3</sup> compared to students in the control group. Finally, the results did not reveal any differences between the experimental and control group in relation to moral development<sup>4</sup>.

The study of Schultz et al. (2001) showed some differential effects of the FHAO programme on the learning outcomes of different groups of students. Girls scored significantly higher on interpersonal development, civic attitudes and participation than boys, whereas the latter reported more aggressive behaviour and racist attitudes. With regard to ethnic identity<sup>5</sup>, the FHAO programme did not have a different effect on minority students in comparison to non-minority students. Some non-significant tendencies were identified, however, such as a general increase in awareness of ethnic identity in students in the control group.

Another example of empirical research with a quasi-experimental design is Covell and Hove's study (2001) on the learning outcomes of their children's-rights curriculum (see also the section on

curricula for moral education) ( $n=180$ , age 13--14 10 schools). The results showed that students following the children's-rights curriculum scored significantly higher on self-esteem<sup>6</sup> than students in the control group. Furthermore, students in the programme showed significantly more support for human rights<sup>7</sup>. In addition, Covell and Hove interviewed all the students about the frequency of teasing and bullying in the classroom and about their understanding of human rights. Students in the experimental classes appeared to have a better understanding of human rights. Finally, they examined the possible differential effects of the curriculum. In general, boys scored significantly higher on self-esteem than girls, whereas girls scored higher on peer support and support for adults' rights.

Lopez and Lopez (1998) combine a cognitive approach to moral development (Kohlberg) with an accent on problem-solving skills and metacognitive skills. In the experimental programme consisting of exercises selected from the PIAAR training programme (Gargallo 1993 in: Lopez and Lopez 1998), educational techniques were used such as forcing students ( $n=61$ , age 13--15) to take a minimum amount of time to do the exercises and teaching students self-instruction by internal speech. The results show a significant increase in the moral development<sup>8</sup> of the students in the experimental condition.

McQuaide et al. (1999) investigated the effects of a computer simulation programme on ethical reasoning. Students worked in pairs and were asked to make moral decisions ( $n = 26$ , age 17--18). Those using the program became less self-protective and less self-interested and more willing to take responsibility, which McQuaide et al. consider to be indications of 'better' reasoning. The authors, however, did not report whether these results were significant.

Riedel (2002) conducted a study ( $n = 294$ , age 17--18) that compares different types of service-learning programmes. He investigated the impact of three service-learning programmes on students' feelings of civic obligation. Two of the programmes were integrated into a social-studies course, a third service-learning programme formed part of civic and religious instruction. Based on observations and interviews with teachers, Riedel concluded that the first two service-learning programmes focus on students' self-development. The last programme fits in with the tradition of 'participatory citizenship' because of its focus on local civic involvement and political participation. A fourth school was used as a

control group. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted to assess students' feelings of civic obligation, which Riedel considers an important component of political engagement. The results show that only the participatory programme fostered a sense of civic obligation in students. Riedel concludes that programmes must frame service in a wide political context and offer opportunities for public action if they are to stimulate political engagement.

### Discussion

In this article we have reviewed studies on teaching strategies for enhancing the prosocial and moral development of students in the period 1995-2003. We focused on curriculum-oriented moral education in secondary schools. The results of our review study show that around half of the studies in this field are restricted to the objectives of curriculum-oriented education. In one way or another, all these studies aim to prepare students for participation in society. Some studies accentuate the importance of stimulating skills like critical thinking, moral decision making and moral reasoning. A number of these also emphasize the affective and relational aspects of moral development. Other studies focus in particular on a specific set of values, such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, honesty, justice and fairness, as the main goal of moral education. Only 39 of the 76 studies we reviewed discuss specific proposals for teaching strategies for moral education. A problem-based approach to instruction, co-operative learning and dialogic learning (discussion) are the most commonly suggested teaching strategies. Underlying these strategies is the assumption that learning must be made meaningful to students. Moreover, students should be able to direct their own learning process and be actively involved in knowledge building. More specifically, we encountered teaching methods involving the use of drama and literature, and service learning. Although one of the objectives of moral education frequently mentioned in the literature is to

teach students how to deal with cultural diversity, studies that take social differences between students into account are scarce.

As in the earlier reviews by Sockett (1992) and Solomon et al. (2001), we found a relatively small number of empirical studies (15 out of 76) on curriculum-oriented moral education. Most of the studies we encountered did not evaluate the effectiveness of moral-education curricula, neither in terms of students' learning experiences nor in terms of their learning results. It is not possible to draw unequivocal conclusions from the studies owing to their incomparability. The studies not only aspire to various objectives of moral education (ranging from perspective taking or critical thinking to self-esteem or anti-racism), the instructional designs they suggest are often very general and lack a solid theoretical foundation from an educational psychological point of view.

All in all, we conclude that a solid research domain on curriculum-oriented moral education is still lacking, despite the growing attention to the prosocial and moral development of students. This is not only due to the relatively small number of empirical studies. From an instructional point of view, we think that some of the central issues of curriculum-oriented moral education have not been sufficiently elaborated conceptually. For this reason the results of the studies are difficult to interpret. We give three examples concerning the objectives of curriculum-oriented education. Firstly, several authors refer to critical-thinking skills as one of the learning outcomes intended, without considering such a goal in more detail. The complexity of the concept of critical thinking is generally neglected. Critical thinking can be regarded not only as a higher-order cognitive skill but also as a competence for critical participation in modern society. Depending on how critical thinking is approached, different teaching strategies and ways of measuring the learning outcomes are used (Ten Dam and Volman 2004). The same holds true for 'responsibility' as a goal of a moral-education curriculum. Most authors argue that students must become responsible citizens. Haste (2004), however, points out that responsibility is by no means an unproblematic concept and can have different meanings that are implicitly conflicting. It can mean, for example, duty and obligation (i.e. conformity to social expectations) or, on the other hand, acting on your

own moral judgement (e.g. in the case of injustice). Finally, we have seen that although value development features prominently in most studies, none of them explain how values can be taught in education (see Veugelers 2000 and 2001).

The same criticism can be made with regard to the proposed instructional formats. Many studies consider collaborative learning and dialogic learning to be effective teaching methods. These studies do not, however, elaborate on the conditions in which students can work together effectively and participate in meaningful interactions (e.g. Van der Linden et al. 2000). With one or two exceptions, attention is not paid to either the specific skills and attitudes students need for collaboration and discussion or to the teaching strategies these require. Another instructional element that is frequently proposed is a problem-based approach to learning in which students can direct their own learning process. Again, such an instructional format demands specific qualities from students. Explicating and discussing the teaching strategies aimed at enhancing students' ability to reflect on their own learning process, i.e. metacognitive knowledge and self-regulatory skills, however, appear to be 'a stranger' in the domain of curriculum-oriented moral education. If we want curriculum-oriented moral education to develop into a fully fledged research domain, researchers must take the instructional dimension of moral education into account.

We conclude this article by formulating two specific issues for a future research agenda on curriculum-oriented moral education. Firstly, from the perspective of social constructivist approaches to learning (see Salomon and Perkins 1998, Cobb and Bowles 1999), it can be argued that values must be discussed in the framework of a specific subject area and that enhancing students' critical-thinking skills should be taught in the context of meaningful, rich, domain-specific subject matter (cf. Brown 1997, Nucci 2001). Until now, however, moral education has predominantly been included in the extra-curricular domain. Most studies make use of special projects like drama or subject topics that are not part of the regular curriculum (e.g. the holocaust, Vietnam etc.). Increasing students' content knowledge, for example their understanding of historical phenomena, is not an explicit objective, which could result in the gap between 'neutral' subject knowledge and values widening. We are strongly in favour of developing instructional designs for curriculum-oriented moral education in which fostering the prosocial and moral

development of students goes hand in hand with subject matter in a specific learning domain. The focus should be on knowledge that makes sense to students in relation to their own position in the world and helps them to become a member of a community of practice (cf. Holland et al. 1998). Education that fosters students' identity development and teaches them how to participate in society in a moral way, with the help of domain-specific knowledge and skills, is moral education in the true sense of the word.

Secondly, future research should pay more attention to social differences between students. Although studies on moral education increasingly mention the multicultural nature of society, this focus needs to be integrated into the design of the teaching-learning process in the classroom. Reflection on the social positions that influence the way students develop their relationship with moral issues is a prerequisite for meaningful learning (cf. Litowitz 1993, Ten Dam et al. 2004). All learning content refers to social identities (structured by race, gender and class) and has particular cultural meanings. Moral education is no exception. Identity building is implicit in the acquisition of knowledge and skills and hence social differences are by definition present in the way students develop their relationship with moral education. At the same time, social differences not only have an effect on attitudes towards school and school subjects, but also on attitudes towards the moral practices we want schools to prepare students for. How do the knowledge, skills and identities that students are supposed to acquire in moral-education programmes correlate or conflict with the identities they have already developed and reflect their social positions?

Above all, our review shows that moral education is not limited to school culture and the moral role of the teacher. Many authors argue that curriculum-oriented goals and teaching-learning processes are just as important in moral education. Given the many social and political arguments for reinforcing the moral and civil task of education, more research into specific classroom practices is necessary.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Many different terms are used to describe the research domain of moral education, including character education, citizenship education and value education. Sometimes different terms are used for almost the same approach but in some cases different terms do pertain to different perspectives of moral education (cf. Solomon, Watson & Battistich 2001). We use the term moral education as a general term to refer to all education that aims to stimulate the prosocial and moral development of students.

<sup>2</sup> The GSID Relationship Questionnaire was used to assess children's level (0--3) of interpersonal development in five scales: perspective taking, interpersonal understanding, hypothetical negotiation, real-life negotiation and personal meaning. An overall relationship maturity scale is computed by averaging the 5 scales ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ). It comprises 24 multiple-choice questions. The children are asked to evaluate each answer and choose the best one.

<sup>3</sup> The authors used the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay 1986 in Schulz et al. 2001). This scale consists of 12 items which subjects rate on a 5-point scale and measures racial attitudes ( $\alpha = 0.79--0.86$ )

<sup>4</sup> The Defining Issues Test (Rest 1979 in Schulz et al. 2001) was designed to measure Kohlberg's moral development stages. Subjects read 4 moral dilemmas followed by 12 statements. These statements correspond with the different developmental stages, and subjects have to rate the statements on a five-point scale and rank them.

<sup>5</sup> To measure ethnic identity the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney 1989 1992 in Schulz et al. 2001) was used. This scale consists of 14 items and measures three aspects of ethnic identity: positive ethnic attitudes; ethnic identity achievement; and ethnic behaviour or practices ( $\alpha = 0.70--0.90$ )

<sup>6</sup> The authors used The Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg 1965 in: Covell & Howe 2001) to measure how adolescents feel about themselves. It consists of 10 statements, each of which is accompanied by a nine-point scale.

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<sup>7</sup> The Rights Values Survey (Covell & Howe 1996 in: Covell & Howe 2001) was used, which consists of two scales. The first scale (15 items ) measures support for the adults' rights and the second scale (15 items) measures support for children's rights. Each item is a statement followed by a five-point scale.

<sup>8</sup> The Defining Issues Test was used, see note 4.