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The role of teachers in inculcating moral values: operationalisation of concepts

Abstract

Dealing with values and moral issues is recognised as integral part of teachers' roles. Especially in culturally heterogeneous societies teachers face multiple values that students and their families may hold. The study reported in this paper explores different conceptions of teachers' moral roles aiming to develop an instrument for assessing teacher beliefs about those roles that could be used in teacher development. Paternalist, liberal and social-relativist conceptions of teachers' moral roles were operationalised using data collected in three focus groups with teachers from Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia discussing cases of school practices involving value-laden issues. Initial items for construction of a questionnaire for teachers were generated from teachers' utterances to ensure ecological validity. Implications for teacher development and future research are discussed.

Keywords: values, value education, moral education, teacher roles, teacher education, the Balkans.

Introduction and aims

A number of authors (Arthur, Davison & Lewis, 2005; Carr, 1993; Hansen, 2001; Sanger, 2008; Bergem, 1990) claim that education is essentially an ethical, normative activity. It presupposes that something of value is to be taught and it is concerned with improving people (Arthur et al., 2005). As such, education, and teaching, is bound to encounter problems that are not susceptible to resolution in value-neutral, technical terms. Hansen (2001) argues that moral values described as 'notions of good & bad, better & worst' (p. 828) can be expressed in any action a teacher undertakes, for example in what curricular content they focus on, who they pay attention to, where they stand while talking with students, and so on (p. 826), with or without teachers being aware of such expressions.

The view of teaching as an ethical and value-laden activity seems to be widespread among the policy makers, teacher educators and teachers themselves. The

development of professional ethical standards for teachers has lately received an increasing attention internationally, for example in Scandinavian countries (Bergem, 1990), the Netherlands and UK (Willemse et al. 2008) to name but a few. Veugelers and Vedder (2003) attribute this revived attention to a shift from a technical-instrumental focus on education in the 1980s and early 1990s towards a much more 'moral' focus in the years since. However, they argue that the change concerned more the discourse itself than the actual practices of teachers, perhaps not the least due to the lack of a clear theoretical framework and sparse empirical evidence about the 'moral' part of teachers' roles and competences (Cummings et al., 2007; Willemse et al., 2008).

The absence of a substantial focus in teacher education on moral values and teachers' roles in inculcating them, has been reported internationally. An in-depth study at a teacher education institute in the Netherlands (Willemse et al. 2005) for example revealed hardly any evidence that curricula designers used any systematic, critical analysis of relationships between goals, objectives, content and methods of the programme and its specific moral aspects. Cross-country studies from Southeast European countries (Pantić, 2008; Zgaga, 2006) showed that values and dealing with ethical issues are almost never explicitly addressed in teacher preparation programmes despite teachers and teacher educators strongly adhering to the view of teaching as a normative profession (Pantić, 2008). Husu and Tirri (2003) investigated cases of Finnish teachers' moral dilemmas through different ethical perspectives, and advocated bringing together philosophical and empirical modes of inquiry to gain a better understanding of teachers' moral reasoning and decision-making. In the USA Sanger (2008) argued for a deep, well-developed study of the moral aspects of teaching in relation to practice that would help student teachers develop 'a clear and systematic understanding of what is moral about teaching' (p. 170).

In this paper we pursue the aim of clarifying the possible grounds for teachers' roles in inculcating moral value by outlining David Carr's theoretical distinction between paternalist and liberal conceptions of teachers' moral roles, and introducing a possibility of a third social-relativist conception. We then report on an empirical study in which we aim to operationalise these conceptions and generate items for an ecologically valid instrument for the assessment of teachers' beliefs about them. We interpret the data collected in focus group discussions with teachers as manifestations in schools and educational practices of the paternalist, liberal and social relativist

conceptions of teachers' roles in inculcating moral values. We use this data to generate initial pools of questionnaire items for each of the conceptions.

The rationale for studying teachers' own beliefs can be found in abundant literature about the nature of teacher knowledge, teacher identity and professionalism, suggesting that teacher practices and the success of attempts to change those practices critically depend on the extent to which they are congruent with teachers' own beliefs about what is worthwhile in education, and that teachers themselves should be the main source of information for defining their roles and competences (Beijaard et al., 2000; Day, 2002; Day et al., 2007; Fives & Buehl, 2008). Teacher competence is often defined as a dynamic combination of knowledge, abilities and values (Gonzales & Wagenaar, 2003; Pantić & Wubbels, 2010). While various frameworks have been developed for examining teachers' beliefs about teaching knowledge and teaching ability (see e.g., Fives and Buehl, 2008) values are by and large left out of such frameworks despite the strong consensus in the educational literature that they are integral to teaching as a moral activity (Sanger, 2008).

The data for the study reported in this paper has been collected in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia. Cultural, political and recent historical, as well as educational contexts of these countries represent a very complex setting for public education (Closs, 1995; Džihic & Wieser, 2008; Glanzer, 2008; Morgan, 2005) and bring in a great deal of confusion about the underlying values that parents, and teachers, may hold (Radó, 2001; 2010) while teachers remain unprepared for dealing with the diversity of values involved with public schooling in ethically, religiously and otherwise diverse environments (Pantić, Closs & Ivošević, 2011). A study of teacher educators' perceptions of desired change in teacher education in Serbia (Pantić & Wubbels, 2012) showed that views about appropriate approaches to dealing with values in teacher preparation vary from the prevailing views aligned with a *Didaktik* culture placing values and up-bringing in the centre of education process, to those inherent a Curriculum culture that tries to take a more neutral stand towards values in education (Westbury, Hopmann & Riquarts, 2000).

Considering the normative nature of teaching, evidence that policy makers, teacher educators and teachers themselves assign high importance to their moral roles, and arguments that the present preparation of teachers to deal with moral values is inadequate, the findings of the study presented in this paper could be useful in teacher

education and development programmes for helping teachers understand various, possibly competing conceptions of their moral roles.

Theoretical framework

One of the most influential contemporary social theorists Alasdair MacIntyre called teachers ‘the forlorn hope of the culture of western modernity’, but also observed that ‘the mission with which...[they] are entrusted is both essential and impossible’ (Dunne & MacIntyre, 2002). It has long been taken for granted that part of teachers’ authority is to positively influence learners by imparting knowledge and virtues and acting as a role model. Liberal-progressive theories brought this common perception under suspicion for fear of an authoritarianism of the past. The role of a teacher as a positive model was downgraded in the name of an individual’s basic right to liberty of thought and action without too coercive influences (Carr, 2003). Indeed, there seems to exist a paradox in the position of teachers in the contexts of growing diversity of values in many societies in which education has come to be seen as initiation of the young into certain forms of thinking and behaviour, yet without undue coercion into any particular modes of *good* thinking and behaviour.

The question of values in education and teachers’ roles in inculcating them is a highly contested one in contemporary education with a number of perspectives on the justifiability and appropriate approaches to teaching values (Campbell, 2004; Halstead & Taylor, 1996; Oser, 1986). Willemse *et al.* (2005) identify in the literature three different strands that concern the questions of whether teachers have a moral role at all; how to define their moral task; and how moral education should be carried out. The study reported in this paper focused on the teachers’ beliefs about the first question of the justifiability of teachers’ moral roles.

David Carr (2003, p. 221) outlines three major epistemological stances about the nature of moral claims and judgments from which we departed in an attempt to make clear the links between these distinctive grounds for normative involvement in education and teaching, and the related implications they have for the roles of teachers in inculcating moral values:

- 1.) Moral claims and judgements are (in principle) absolutely and/or objectively true or false, right or wrong - or, at any rate, they are not merely products of individual *choice* or local social *consensus*.

2.) Moral claims and judgements are essentially humanly constructed *social codes* or conventions: as such they are largely a function of local social consensus, and to that extent have only local or *relative* authority.

3.) Moral claims and judgements are little more than non-rational expressions of personal predilection, preference or taste: as such they are *subjective*, and have therefore at best *personal* or private authority.

Other sources (see for example Halstead & Taylor, 1996) suggest a similar continuum between an objectivist view of values as absolute and universal at one extreme, and a subjectivist view of values as merely expressions of personal opinion at the other, with somewhere in between a view of values as socially constructed and relative to social agreements that vary over time and across groups or societies. These different perspectives imply different, sometimes rivalling, conceptions of teachers' roles in inculcating moral and other values. According to Carr (1993) there are at least two such conceptions: paternalism and liberalism. Below we discuss the differences between these two conceptions of teachers' roles in relation to the issues such as right to free choice in matters of values in education, and the question of a need for teachers to personally exemplify values. We also consider a possibility of a distinctive third social-relativist conception to be envisioned somewhere on the middle of the continuum and aligned with Carr's second stance.

Paternalism

According to Carr (1993) paternalism is generally understood as a view that it is the right or responsibility of some, in virtue of their superior, insight, wisdom or knowledge, to decide what is good for others, in their alleged best interest. Since in this view values are seen as objectively true or false, education is primarily a matter of transmitting the *true, right, or good* values. Moral development of children and the young is one of the main aims of education, and teachers may be justified in opposing the values of parents or of local social consensus in the name of some *higher* moral authority (Carr, 2003).

Carr suggests that a paternalist conception of teachers' moral roles is inherent in traditional approaches to education in which teachers are regarded as authoritative custodians of that higher wisdom, virtues and appropriate values, and that this

conception tends to be characteristic of more traditional or culturally homogenous societies or communities (Carr, 1993).

Since values are inherent in character and conduct, appropriate values can be transmitted effectively only by those who possess and exemplify them (Carr, 1993). Thus, Carr argues that in this conception of teachers' moral roles professional values cannot be separated from their personal conduct, forms of expression and attitudes, and even appearance.

Liberalism

There are number of important differences between various conceptions of liberalism, for example between those adopting Mill's (1972) utilitarianism and that of egalitarians like John Rawls (1999). For the purpose of this paper we adopt Carr's (1993) broad definition of liberalism as the view that individuals have an inalienable moral right, short of unacceptable intrusion in the affairs of others, to freely choose their conduct, attitudes and values. According to Carr, liberal-progressive educators would be suspicious towards the role of teachers as moral custodians and their engagement in moral betterment of their pupils.

Liberalism makes an important distinction between the private and public domains (Hampshire, 1978). In this conception values are a matter of personal choice and teachers, as everyone else, are entitled to privately hold whatever views they prefer as long as they do not violate basic standards of professional ethics. Teachers could not claim significant moral authority over the values of parents and pupils since their individual values cannot carry much greater weight than those of any other person (Carr, 2003). Thus, inculcation of moral values is primarily the responsibility of the home, while teachers should be primarily concerned with children's literacy and numeracy or achievements in the subject areas they teach.

A liberal conception of teachers' role has been associated with the moves towards a highly regulated, value-neutral and impersonal quality of teaching, attempting to define educational professionalism minimally as a code of practice and ethics that acknowledge the rights of others. It is, therefore important to distinguish between the moral values and judgments in terms of what a teacher sees as *right* or *appropriate*, and the ethical judgment in terms of discussing principles or codes of professional conduct concerned with how values are upheld in the practical functioning of public schools (Carr, 1993, Colnerud, 2006; Hansen, 2001). Yet,

Halstead (1996b) importantly reminds that such ethical debate is based on the fundamental liberal values such as equality, respect of difference, parallel concerns for individual liberties and social justice, and consistent rationality. Thus, in the contexts of culturally pluralist societies, teachers with a liberal view of their role in values inculcation would be concerned with equipping the young with the qualities of rational autonomy and chart a reasonably impartial route through a variety of different competing values (Carr, 2003).

Social relativism

If we try to associate the paternalist and liberal views about teachers' roles in inculcating values with the above outlined epistemological stances about the nature of moral values and judgements, at first glance it would appear that paternalism is aligned with the objectivism, and liberalism with the subjectivism, leaving the question of whether a distinctive relativist conception of teachers' moral roles could be articulated? Theoretically, such a conception would adopt the perspective of the basis for moral authority as relative to social agreements and recognise vital contribution of culture and tradition in matters of values. Teachers would be morally accountable mainly to the socially agreed values of the relevant local community (Carr, 2003).

However, Carr himself (1993) and others (e.g. Campbell, 2004) point out that the views of teachers' moral roles might not straightforwardly link with the epistemological question of the objectivism or subjectivism of the nature of moral values. For example, while it would be hard to imagine a teacher who would try to justify a paternalist view on the subjectivist ground, it is perfectly possible to imagine that a teacher who believes moral values are relative to social or professional agreements could hold a paternalist view that regardless of their source such moral values should be inculcated in the next generations. Halstead (1996a) contends that in monocultural societies children would be introduced to the values and practices of their own society as objective reality.

It is also possible to imagine that a teacher with the same relativist belief about the nature of moral values could take a more liberal 'live and let-live' view allowing communities traditions and cultures to pursue their own vision of good as they choose, either inside or outside of the common school (Halstead, 1996b). Such a teacher could also be imagined to hold views aligned to the critiques of liberal views

offered from a communitarian perspective (MacIntyre, 1981) in which values are to be appraised in terms of the ways in which they contribute to the personal, moral and social improvement of the human condition in practical terms, which can also change over time and across social and cultural contexts (Carr, 1993).

Methodology

Objectives and design

The objective of the study reported in this paper was to elicit teachers' judgments about concrete cases of school and classroom practices which could be used to generate questionnaire items for the above presented conceptions of teachers' moral roles. In this way we sought to make teachers' voices prevalent in the development of an ecologically valid instrument for exploration of their beliefs.

With this objective in mind we conducted focus groups with teachers to discuss five cases involving values to which school and classroom practices may give rise. The case have been designed by selecting and adapting contents from similar studies conducted in other contexts (Carr & Landon, 1998) and the articles from newspapers in the region reporting actual instances of teachers' conduct laden with moral issues. These cases are reproduced in full here:

CASE 1: A young teacher is inclined to come to school casually dressed, carries a nose piercing, and uses informal forms of speech. The teacher is popular with pupils and they begin to imitate her.

CASE 2: A teacher whose pupils achieve good results, including at competitions, is given to the use of sarcasm and ridicule towards pupils. The pupils show fear and humiliation in the presence of this teacher.

CASE 3: A headteacher of a school (regarded as a good school) does not believe much in democratic decision-making. She manages the school autocratically and disregards opinions of teachers, parents or pupils.

CASE 4: In a school that set the aim of promoting pupils' critical thinking as its priority, it has been noticed that a teacher is promoting the teaching of his

own faith in a way that does not help the children think for themselves. However, this teacher meets the approval and sympathy from the parents belonging to the same religious community.

CASE 5: A teacher widely respected among colleagues, parents and pupils, is locally known to be given to drinking and company of younger men in her private life. When in school, she acts decently and professionally. However, a gossip starts to circulate amongst pupils and school staff about the private life of this teacher.

Participants

28 teachers from three different public schools in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia participated in the focus group discussions. First, the schools varied with respect to the type and level; two schools were primary schools, and one was a mixed secondary school (*gimnazija* and vocational curricula). Secondly, the schools differed in size (from 600 to 1200 pupils). Thirdly, the schools showed variety with respect to social class and ethnic diversity; one school was conspicuously multi-ethnic with the majority of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the other one as well had the majority of its intake from the lower socio-economic status, but was ethnically homogeneous, as was the third one with the mixture of students' socio-economic backgrounds. Finally, one school was an inner city school in Sarajevo (Bosnia & Herzegovina), one was a school in a small town in north-eastern Bosnia & Herzegovina on the border with Serbia, and the third school was located on the outskirts of Belgrade (Serbia).

The teachers were predominantly female (23), 18 were younger than 40 years, 7 were class teachers and 21 were the teachers of different subjects (mother tongue and foreign language, geography, biology, physics, chemistry, music, psychology, arts, religious education, technical education, information technologies and economics). 20 teachers described themselves as religious (4 affiliated to Islam and 16 to Orthodox Christianity), 6 non-religious and 2 undeclared.

Procedures and analysis

In each school around 10 teachers discussed the above cases of value-laden situations in their school context. For each case, a strip of paper describing the case was distributed to each teacher followed by an invitation to the group to identify what they would take to be ethically problematic issues and possible strategies for their resolution. In the end of each focus group teachers were also asked to identify any ethically problematic issues that arose in their own school and/or classrooms.

The focus group discussions have been recorded and the data was analysed with the view of identifying content for questionnaire items illustrative of the paternalist, liberal and social-relativist conceptions of teachers' moral roles. The frame for interpretation and classification of contents (Berg, 2007) combined the levels of concepts clustered around paternalistic, liberal and social-relativist conceptions of teachers' moral roles, and of the themes discussed in relation to these concepts, such as: teachers' personal exemplification of values, school achievement and values in education, authority and openness to parents' requests, religion in public schools and allegiance to professional standards. In the process of item formulation we tried to mirror the language used by the teachers participating in the focus groups in order to make sure teachers' voices were prevalent in the development of the questionnaire.

Findings and interpretation

It is not possible to do full justice to the range and detail of the focus group discussions here, neither is it a purpose of this paper to discuss the prevailing teacher beliefs about their roles in inculcating moral values. Rather, our aim here was to generate questionnaire items from the discussions of ethical issues by teachers themselves in order to ensure ecological validity of the questionnaire. Thus, in the presentation of results we focus on the most significant issues emerging from the discussions illustrating how we interpreted teachers' utterances and used them to develop the questionnaire items for each of the three conceptions.

Paternalism

In the discussions about the cases involving teachers' personal dress, expression and conduct, we interpreted teachers' attitudes as paternalist when they

suggested that moral personification should be required to reach into teachers' private lives. The participants who expressed such views took the position that teachers should wear decent dress and use standard forms of expressions, and exemplify *proper* models of behaviour at all times. Here is how one teacher put it:

‘Since our profession is a public profession, we are in any case constantly under the eyes of environment, parents, and our pupils...what we do, how we dress...I think we need to take care also in private life and always bear in mind that we are a moral model’.

Next, we interpreted teachers’ attitudes as paternalist when they expressed opinions suggesting that moral values should be regarded as important as, if not more important than school achievement, for example in the discussions that ensued around the case involving a teacher whose pupils achieve good results, who, however, is given to the use of sarcasm and ridicule towards pupils.

With regard to issues of authority and openness to parents’ requests, we identified paternalist stances in claims that some parental views can just simply be wrong on a given issue and should therefore be overridden in the best interest of a child, suggesting that teachers should take parents’ requests into account only when they are *legitimate*.

The issue of allegiance to professional standards was discussed in relation to the case of a teacher privately given to drinking, but behaving professionally in school. The views regarding such behaviour as principally morally flawed were characterised as paternalist. For example, one teacher pointing to the problem of hypocrisy of the teacher described in the case in question:

‘What is problematic here is the personality of this teacher. She is pretending...how can she be good if she is given to drinking. Even if students do not see this it is problematic’.

Examples of items selected for the paternalist scale are:

1. Teachers should exemplify proper models of behaviour at all times.
2. Teachers should wear decent dress.

Liberalism

Liberal attitudes were noted when participants expressed views about the ethical danger of viewing the potentially conservative majority of a given society as the chief custodians of moral order and rectitude. As one teacher pronounced:

‘The children will live in a different world, the generations ahead will have different perspectives... we need to consider that fact...and adjust to the new times.’

Participants were regarded as holding the liberal position when they expressed sympathy for allowing teachers the freedom of choosing their dress, way of expression and conduct. For example, one teacher questioned a requirement for teachers to wear certain dress on the ground that this would deny their basic human rights. Some participants felt that, perhaps, art teachers should be given more freedom than others in this regard, as this teacher:

‘I know a music teacher who also plays in a popular rock band and carries an earring, but when he enters a classroom, his attitude, the way he communicates and leads the lesson, what he can play, has nothing to do with his outlook...he captivates attention with his attitude and what he has to offer as a musician.’

In the discussions on the authority liberal attitudes were mainly noted when teachers expressed support for a kind of ethics of professional consent. Such positions were often argued on the basis of pragmatic considerations for effective institutional functioning. For example, some teachers expressed a view that the case of the good autocratic head teacher was implausible:

‘How can a school be good if everyone feels bad in it? People work under pressure, in a blind obedience, they burst out, and the authority is lost’.

or:

‘Give me one example where autocratic behaviour gave results anywhere. Staff cannot be successful in a school unless everyone’s voice is considered when decisions are made’.

With regard to the question of openness to parents’ requests an example of a view interpreted as liberal is a view that parents should entrust their child’s upbringing to teachers in line with a professional consensus to be reached at school

level about some basic rules of acceptable in-school conduct which would then apply equally for teaching staff and students.

In the discussions of the case of a teacher promoting his own faith liberal attitudes were noted when the participants identified as problematic the uncritical approach to the teaching of a religion, and raised the question of diversity of pupils' backgrounds. These teachers expressed sympathy for promotion of critical rationality emphasizing the importance of the way a religion is taught even by a teacher of religion who enjoys the support of all parents. A liberal stance was identified in the expressions to the effect that pupils should have enough information to be able to evaluate critically all religions, including their own, as well as a scientific perspective. For example, one teacher pronounced the following opinion:

‘Even if all the parents subscribe to the same faith, this does not mean that the children should follow the same faith. They need to be given enough material and information to be able think for themselves what is good and what is not’.

Teachers' responses were also interpreted as liberal when they supported an idea that pupils should be introduced to a variety of religious traditions as well as when they recognised that this approach might not be favoured by parents from either religious community who prefer that their children be brought up in the spirit of their own faith. These teachers suggested absence of religion from the public schools as the best strategy for ensuring that the school is equally good for all children, under the justification that those parents who wish a particular religious education for their children should be able to seek it in specialised schools. As one teacher put it:

‘At least now we can choose where to enrol our children. Public schools should not deal in religions. There are schools based on religious foundations and those parents who would like their child to be brought up that way can enrol their children there’.

With regard to the allegiance to professional standards liberal views were noted when participants saw no moral issue with the teacher's private conduct as long as it was hidden from the pupils, as the following view illustrates:

‘We cannot judge the teachers' conduct unless it happens in school...until they do something that would not be good for the profession’.

Examples of items selected for the liberal scale include:

1. We can only evaluate teachers' conduct based on the professional standards.
2. Values are a matter of personal choice.
3. Teachers should be free to choose their conduct.

Social-relativism

In relation to teachers' personal exemplification of values, social-relativist views were noted when teachers raised questions about the relevance of *traditional values* in a given context. For example, some teachers questioned whether the case involving teacher's conduct in private life would provoke different reactions depending on whether the teacher in question was a male or a female teacher. We also interpreted as social-relativist suggestions that some kind of reconciliation between local and universal values should be aimed at, yet with the primacy of the sense of universal justice when local social customs do not uphold the principles of human equality as in the case of different treatment of male and female teachers. One teacher put forward the following view:

'We live where we live and cannot change overnight...we should tell children: this [gender inequality] is present in our environment, but it is wrong'.

Similarly, social-relativist views in relation to the case of an autocratic headteacher were noted when the participants raised an issue of whether the headteacher in question was a male or a female suggesting that it would be perceived differently in the Balkans. In relation to the issues of authority and openness to parents' requests, we also interpreted teachers' utterances as social-relativist when the participants called for a need to apply discretionary judgment and a *sense of what is appropriate* by following the socially agreed norms:

'We live in a society where norms are such and such and we should stick to them'.

In relation to the issue of religion in public schools we interpreted as social-relativist teachers' utterances about moral values to be promoted by a public school when they referred to those as *traditional* values as opposed to *sects* that are to be condemned. For example, one teacher said:

‘The values of traditional religions be it Christianity, Judaism or Islam, are better and less painful than if children abandon the traditional values completely...and come under influence of different sects. After all, they [traditional religions] promote basic moral values that are similar.’

With regard to the issue of allegiance to professional standards we marked utterances as reflecting social-relativist beliefs when teachers elaborated that a professional consensus needed to be based on the ideas about the *good* as just, child’s rights, social and legal agreements.

Examples of the items selected for the social-relativist scale are:

1. We should stick to the norms of a society we live in.
2. What is good for a child is a matter of social and legal agreements and professional consensus.

Conclusions and implications

The aim of this study was to generate items for a questionnaire that could be used for an exploration of teachers’ beliefs about their roles in inculcating moral values. Although here we were not concerned with identifying the prevailing positions taken on the ethical dilemmas discussed in this study, it is nonetheless important to note that the expressed teachers’ attitudes as interpreted by the researchers did range from the more paternalist side of the spectrum extending to the liberal end, although it seemed that participants sought to avoid the extremes of authoritarianism or permissiveness of personal preferences. A social-relativist position has also been identified in the focus group discussions when participants related ethical dilemmas and strategies for their resolution to socially, culturally or otherwise embedded traditions and practices in a given context.

The studies presented in this paper have implications for teacher education and development and offers a tool for further research.

With regard to the implications for teacher education and development, a need for linking teachers’ moral judgments in practice with the complexities of moral inquiry is confirmed by a number of conceptual pitfalls that can be noticed when we compare teachers’ attitudes on different dilemmas. For example, there seems to exist among teachers a great deal of sympathy for promotion of critical rationality and

independence of thought, yet hardly any dissent from the view that in school teachers should exemplify *good* conduct, despite the doubt about whether there exists much popular agreement about what this might mean. In this regard, the study offers concepts and contents that could help teachers link their beliefs about their moral roles to the epistemological questions about the nature of moral claims and judgments. An exploration of those links seems worthwhile both in pre-service and in-service teacher education and development considering what was said earlier about inadequate addressing of moral values in teacher education, parallel to teachers' assigning high importance to those values. Considering the widespread calls for teachers' reflectivity and ability to consider moral dimensions, especially in culturally diverse societies, the absence of ethical discussions in teacher education programmes is striking (Cummings *et al.*, 2007). Intervention studies with students in various other programmes showed that directly taught logical and philosophical concepts applied to discussions of challenging cases and moral problem solving are among components critical to the development of principled moral reasoning (Cummings *et al.*, 2007). Some participants in this study as well suggested it was critical that teachers be familiarised with all the different perspectives underpinning their moral roles before they can adequately assume them.

With regard to future research, the study offers some indications of what variations in teachers beliefs about their moral roles could be sought by way of conventional social scientific research. The biggest variance in opinions expressed in the focus groups appeared on the issue of the extent of moral exemplification to the teachers' private life, between teachers from bigger cities who most often did not see this as a necessity, and those from a small town who expressed the opposite view. Also, larger within-group divergences of attitudes occurred between teachers from cities than among the teachers in the small town school. Further research could explore the relationships between teachers' beliefs about their roles in inculcating moral values and other elements of teacher competence which such beliefs could underpin, such as intercultural competence and/or interpersonal relationships with their pupils.

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Appendix: All items chosen to operationalise the constructs

PATERNALISM

- Transmitting the right values is a legitimate aim of education.
- Teachers should exemplify proper models of behaviour at all times.
- Teachers should wear decent dress.
- It is important for a public school to promote general moral values.
- A teacher should be able to distinguish what is appropriate regardless of any agreements within a school.
- Teachers should know which methods are the best.
- Imparting appropriate values is part of teachers' educational role.

LIBERALISM

- School achievement is the most important outcome of education.
- Any question may have more than one answer.
- The basis for the moral authority is the majority opinion of the education professionals.
- Children and the young should be introduced to a variety of personal characters and lifestyles.
- Teachers should use a variety of methods considering the preferences of their pupils.
- We can only evaluate teachers' conduct based on the professional standards.
- Values are a matter of personal choice.
- Teachers should be free to choose their conduct.
- A state should enable those parents who wish a particular kind of education for their children to seek it with support of public funding.
- Teachers should be free to choose their dress.
- Teachers should be free to choose their way of expression.
- Pupils should have enough information to be able to evaluate critically all cultures and values, including their own.
- We need to consider the fact that children we teach will live in a different world and have different perspectives.

SOCIAL RELATIVISM

- Publically funded schools should provide moral education accommodating the values espoused by the local communities.
- A teacher should guide students' to commit to those views that are considered as right in their own environment.
- An agreement about a provision of moral education should be reached within a school.
- Parents should entrust their child's upbringing to the professionals.
- We should stick to the norms of a society we live in.
- What is good for a child is a matter of social and legal agreements and professional consensus.
- A school director can be a little autocratic if this ensures that teachers work harder.