The meaning of role modelling in moral and character education

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Character education considers teachers to be role models, but it is unclear what this means in practice. Do teachers model admirable character traits? And do they do so effectively? In this article the relevant pedagogical and psychological literature is reviewed in order to shed light on these questions. First, the use of role modelling as a teaching method in secondary education is assessed. Second, adolescents' role models and their moral qualities are identified. Third, the psychology of moral learners is critically examined, using Bandura's social learning theory as point of departure. It turns out that role modelling is rarely used as an explicit teaching method and that only a very small percentage of adolescents recognises teachers as role models. If role modelling is to contribute to children's moral education, teachers are recommended to explain why the modelled traits are morally significant and how students can acquire these qualities for themselves.

1. Introduction

Of the four most influential twentieth-century approaches to moral education (values clarification, cognitive development, care ethics and character education) values clarification and cognitive development have been reluctant to recommend teachers to model morally desirable attitudes and behaviour. According to values clarification, teachers' only moral educational responsibility is to clarify students' values, refraining as much as possible from the inculcation of values and virtues. Kohlberg's cognitive developmental approach mainly wants teachers to be Socratic dialogue mentors who illuminate children's moral reasoning structures, so they can eventually justify their values from a universal and impartial point of view.

Kohlberg's influential theory attracted more and more criticism in the 1980s and early-1990s, when feminists, virtue ethicists and others increasingly blamed him for having a limited understanding of morality and the psychological mechanisms underlying its development. For example, David Carr (1991, 1999) accused Kohlberg of only developing children's rational capacities, with which they could decide for themselves how to live, and not providing them with any clues about

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what kind of life is worth living. As an antidote to teachers' 'agnostic neutrality' with regard to substantial moral issues, Carr tried to show that there are objective moral goals that teachers can encourage in children, such as the virtues of courage, temperance, justice, honesty and compassion. In his view, the moral dimension of teaching has less to do with explicit moral didactics, but with morality in a basic sense: moral education does not equal 'teaching morality', but being a 'moral teacher', which means extending everyday morality into the nuances of teaching.

Nel Noddings (2010), the most important representative of a care ethical approach to moral education, treats modelling (besides 'dialogue', 'practice' and 'confirmation') as an important means to nurture ethical caring in schools. Besides care ethics, the approach to moral education that has relied most on role modelling is character education. Several character education-based handbooks and websites offer a repertoire of teaching materials on role modelling (e.g. Lickona, 1991, pp. 308–311). The idea that teachers can only cultivate children's character if they display it themselves is even considered to be 'the most important moral lesson in the character curriculum' (Lickona, 2004, p. 118). Moreover, several virtue theorists interested in the philosophical underpinnings of this educational practice, such as David Carr (1991, pp. 258–259), Jan Steutel and Ben Spiecker (2000, p. 329; 2004, p. 544–546) and Kristján Kristjánsson (2002, p. 190; 2006; 2007, ch. 7; 2010, p. 237), have discussed role modelling. At the same time, social learning theory (Bandura, 1963, 1986) contributed greatly to a better understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying this educational practice. Bandura found that a considerable amount of learning takes place through a process in which children learn behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs by observing others and the consequences of others' actions.

Although it might be uncontroversial among care and virtue ethicists that teachers cannot easily separate between their professional role and personal character traits, modelling becomes more problematic——and more interesting——when we realise two things: (1) teachers' character traits do not necessarily have to be admirable and (2) even when teachers do model admirable character traits, this might not be done effectively. Unfortunately, teachers' function as role models has been taken for granted to such an extent that it has prevented people in both educational theory and practice from enquiring whether modelling can be improved. Firstly, there is no reason to assume that all teachers model virtuous behaviour. Teachers might as well be weak, spiteful, vain and greedy, thereby qualifying as bad teachers (Carr, 1991, p. 258). This implies that we should distinguish between good and bad role models, where good teachers model praiseworthy character traits and bad teachers blameworthy ones. In order to substantiate this distinction, certain traits should be identified as morally desirable (Steutel & Carr, 1999, p. 5). An Aristotelian approach could justify such traits as virtues by explaining why certain character traits are necessary for flourishing as a human being. This approach has been advocated by a number of virtue ethicists, such as Nussbaum, MacIntyre and many others (for an overview, see Crisp & Slote, 2007). Secondly, even if all teachers model desirable character traits, it does not

follow that their modelling is effective as an educational method. Therefore, it is worth examining how modelling can best contribute to students' moral development.

In the remainder of the article, the social scientific literature will be reviewed in order to find out whether and how moral educational theory can benefit from empirical research and vice versa. Although the psychological processes and mechanisms involved in role modelling are discussed, emphasis is put on the ways in which teachers and students conceive of role model education in secondary education. In section 2 we will examine how teachers use modelling in education and whether adolescents recognise teachers' efforts. In section 3 we will take a closer look at the virtues that adolescents value in role models and at the virtues that teachers consider to be important. In section 4 we will focus on the psychological state students have to be in before we can say that they have a role model——is simply admiring and imitating a teacher enough or should students, for example, also know why the teacher's qualities are worth having? In section 5 the relevant pedagogical literature is consulted to provide teachers with tips on how their modelling can be improved. In the conclusion, we will answer the question how philosophy and the pedagogical sciences can benefit from each other in the field of moral education.

2.   The use of modelling

The first issue is whether teachers use role modelling as a means to morally educate and, if they do, in what way. Despite failed attempts to use modelling on a large scale as part of mentoring programmes in Dutch vocational education (Meijers, 2008), there is consensus in the pedagogical literature that the moral aspects of teaching are paid attention to in mostly unintended and unconscious ways (Hansen, 2001, p. 852). Moreover, the literature on teacher education suggests that preparing student teachers for moral education is often implicit and unplanned (Willemse et al., 2005, 2008). From interviews with 54 teacher educators, Willemse et al. (2008) concluded that moral education is highly dependent on the personalities of individual teachers and that they hardly morally educate by explicitly inculcating values or virtues. Instead, they try to infuse the classroom somehow with their manner, style and judgment. Klaassen (2002, p. 155) makes the same observations: teachers shy away from talking about norms and values explicitly and try to serve as a model in a predominantly non-verbal manner. If most of the modelling in (teacher) education is implicit, it can hardly be called a teaching *method*.

If these observations are right and most of the role modelling going on in education remains implicit, we would not expect many students to mention teachers as role models. In this section, four large surveys will be reviewed that can help us to answer this question. First, there is the survey by Bucher (1998) among 1150 Austrian and German students aged 10 to 18 years. Data were collected using a questionnaire, which included the open-ended question 'What persons are your

personal models, and why?' Multiple responses were possible. Spontaneously, parents (45%) and other family members (31%) were mentioned most often. These results were confirmed when students had to rate 40 persons on a scale from 1 ('no model whatever') to 4 ('a very important model for me'). Teachers were only mentioned as role models in another part of the survey, when students were asked to recall *former* models. Again, parents and other relatives were highest on the list, but 10% of the participating students mentioned teachers as former role models this time. Second, there are two surveys on the relation between having a role model and health-risk behaviour (Yancy et al., 2002, 2011). In both studies, adolescents aged 12 to 17 were asked about the persons they 'admire or look up to' or 'want to be like'. Parents and relatives were chosen most often, while teachers were mentioned by about 3% of the respondents. In total, 4759 adolescents participated in these surveys. Finally, there is a survey by Bricheno and Thornton (2007) among 379 British students aged 10 to 16 years. This study differed from the other three as its explicit purpose was to explore whether children see their teachers as role models. Data were collected using a questionnaire in which students were asked about their 'most important' or 'best' role model. Overall, a third of the students chose one or both parents as their most important role model and 1.9% mentioned teachers as their most important model.

When we examine these studies, it is worth noting that between 28 and 44% of the adolescents did not mention a role model at all. From this, we should not conclude that their lives are not influenced by parents, siblings, peers or others but, for one reason or another, they simply are not able to *recognise* this influence. Secondly, all surveys found that relatives, and in particular parents, are important role models for adolescents (on average, about one-third mentions them). Thirdly, when children are asked about their current models, teachers turn out to be very low on the list, typically about 3%. And when they are asked about their most important model, figures are even lower. However, if adolescents are asked about their *former* models, 1 in 10 recognises a teacher as a role model. Moreover, in a study by Timmerman (2009), 13 teacher educators (between 32 and 60 years old), who had taught in secondary education for several years and eventually became teacher educators, were asked about which teacher models impressed them. Interestingly, all but one respondent 'had vivid memories of their teachers, particularly in secondary education' (Timmerman, 2009, p. 230).

What this suggests is that parents, friends or teachers do have a certain formative influence on our (moral) development, but that we only realise their contribution to our development in retrospect. Only when we have acquired certain character traits ourselves can we identify educators who had similar traits and tell a story about how they contributed to who we have become. Although such a narrative process would explain why adults have a better memory of their role models than children, it doesn't offer an explanation for why teachers are only mentioned by a minority of students. There might be other factors that can explain why teachers are not often mentioned (e.g. the fact that kids spend more time with parents, siblings and peers than with teachers) but, despite this, it seems reasonable

to assume that if modelling is paid attention to more seriously in schools, figures could be higher. Of course, this raises the question of why it is important for teachers to be role models, and what they should be models of.

3.   Teachers' virtues

The question of what teachers should be a model of can be answered in several ways. If we want to know what character traits are morally desirable, we can consult the writings of moral philosophers. However, another potential source is ordinary people's intuitions. Provided that this kind of research is valid and reliable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), teachers can be asked what virtues they want to be a model of and students what character traits they value in teachers. Of course, philosophers may show that the intuitions of teachers and students are inconsistent, but people's ideas about virtues are at least a good starting point for philosophical reflection.

The first question that must be confronted, however, is whether we can think of role models *in terms of character traits*. The concepts of 'moral development' and 'moral maturity' were understood predominantly along Kohlbergian lines in the twentieth century (although neo-Kohlbergian models of development are still being supported, see Rest et al., 2000). In line with the results from his empirical research, he constructed a normative theory about the goal of moral development, which he conceived of as an autonomous person who could justify moral judgments from an impartial point of view. It was only in the early-1990s that psychologists started to correct his philosophical conception by investigating how ordinary people understand 'moral excellence'. Especially Colby and Damon's (1992) study of 23 recognised moral exemplars helped to alter the landscape of moral development and education. It showed that moral exemplary people are not distinguished by their level of moral reasoning, as one would expect if one follows Kohlberg, but by their moral personality or 'self' (Power, 2007, p. 92). Subsequent studies (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Walker et al., 1995; Matsuba & Walker, 2004, 2005) confirmed that character traits play an important role in distinguishing moral exemplars from ordinary people. Hart and Fegley (1995) discovered that young moral exemplars referred more often to moral and caring character traits than comparison adolescents. In addition, Matsuba and Walker (2004) found that exemplars describe themselves, for example, more as trusting, modest and caring than comparison peers do. According to virtue ethicist and character educationalists, a 'character' (or 'personality', which is arguably its modern psychological equivalent) is an integrated set of virtues, which are essentially dispositional emotions (Kristjánsson, 2002, p. 9). These virtues are intrinsically related to a flourishing human life, which philosophers have traditionally referred to with the Greek notion of *eudaimonia*.

If a role model can be characterised by having a moral character or being a kind of person, the next question is which character traits are appreciated in teachers. Although there are a number of studies that have investigated the personality

factors that people associate with the abstract *concept* of 'moral exemplar' (Walker, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 2004), there are only a few studies that look at the character traits that people attribute to their own role models, teachers included. Research by Bricheno and Thornton (2007, p. 388) shows that students admire people who are honest, who help other people (to learn), who are hard working and successful in their career, who have a sense of humour and who are respected by others. Each of these attributes was mentioned by at least one third of the respondents. However, we cannot conclude that students specifically wanted *their teachers* to have these attributes——students use these attributes to describe all of their role models, whether they are teachers or not.

The only empirical study that goes some way in answering the question of what students admire in teachers is a study conducted by Timmerman (2009), who interviewed 13 teacher educators about their former role models in high school. A reason why we have to be cautious in using these results, however, is that she asked these teachers to recall specific *teaching* (and not 'moral') qualities. They are nevertheless interesting, because the respondents' descriptions of their former models contain moral concepts. Timmerman classified the qualities mentioned in three categories. The 'storyteller' can tell fascinating stories that students never forget; the 'personal teacher' type is admired because of his human interest in the students and the way in which he shows his 'self' by teaching a subject in his own typical way; and the 'playful' teacher is admired because he uses all kinds of experimental ways to motivate students to engage in the learning process and because he manages the class in a light, natural way. What this means is that respondents were impressed by teachers who were not just experts, but who are also interested, engaged and playful, who fascinated and inspired them and who dared to show their personality and their identity as a human being. Although it is not immediately clear why being 'interested', 'engaged' or 'playful' would be *moral* qualities (or virtues), Timmerman's study emphasises that students appreciate teachers who show through their behaviour what kind of person they are. As teachers place a heavy emphasis on setting a good example themselves (Klaassen, 2002, p. 155) and parents endorse teachers modelling values (Veugelers & De Kat, 2003, p. 84), there seems to be ample room for teachers to model virtuous conduct.

We have seen now what students appreciate in teachers. But what virtue do teachers (want to) model? There are only two studies available that can indirectly help to answer this question. Van Oudenhoven et al. (2008) asked 83 Dutch teachers to mention what they take, in general, to be positive character traits or virtues. These teachers worked at both public and religious (e.g. Protestant, Catholic, Islamic) schools. The 195 virtues that the teachers mentioned were categorised by the researchers in 15 categories. 'Respect' was the most often mentioned (cluster) virtue, followed by 'justice', 'wisdom' and 'joy'. When teachers were asked to rate the virtues on a scale from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), 'respect' was again rated highest (4.5), 'love' came second (4.2) and 'justice' and 'reliability' third (both 4). A reason why 'love' was not

among the virtues mentioned most often, while it did get high ratings, has something to do with the religious nature of some of the schools: it turned out that especially the teachers with a Muslim background held the virtue of 'love' in high esteem. When the teachers were asked how virtues can be paid attention to, they considered role modelling to be by far the most important method. It is tempting to interpret this study as saying that character education is very much alive in Dutch schools, because teacher can articulate what virtues they consider to be important and because they have an idea about how to educate them. However, the fact that 'respect' is valued most, suggests that things are more complicated than this.

In education, the meaning of 'respect' often seems to be close to what R.S. Peters (1966) described as the 'awareness one has that each man has his own aspirations, his own viewpoint on the world; that each man takes pride in his achievements, however idiosyncratic they may be' (p. 59). Ideally, this would imply that students are taught to listen to what others have to say, to accept personal differences, to be considerate and not to ignore others' needs. In liberal societies, respecting others often comes down to treating people's moral values and virtues as a matter of personal choice. As long as teachers' and students' conduct does not violate certain minimal standards, their morality is a private business (Klaassen, 2002, p. 155). In this case, 'respect' is nothing but a formal meta-virtue that teachers agree upon precisely because they do not agree on anything substantial. Understood in this way, the importance teachers attach to (the virtue of) respect is a mixed blessing. While van Oudenhoven et al.'s study makes it clear that in denominational schools, teachers are still committed to teaching something like traditional religious virtues, such as love, faith and hope, the popularity of 'respect' suggests that the moral content——the virtues that enable a student to flourish as a human being——is still a controversial subject, especially in state schools.

Van Oudenhoven et al. (2008) inform us about the virtues that teachers *profess* to value, but they don't show what virtues teachers actually model in the classroom. Fallona (2000) empirically studied how three teachers, who taught a reading course at an American middle school, exhibited moral virtues. She concluded that these teachers exhibit Aristotelian virtues all of the time, but that not all virtues that were identified beforehand turned out to be immediately visible. Most observable were friendliness, wit, bravery, honour, mildness, generosity and magnificence. Virtues that were less visible and needed higher degrees of interpretation were magnanimity, temperance, truthfulness and justice (Fallona, 2000, pp. 689–690). For example, justice, which was understood as fairness in the application of both rules and norms to individual children, turned out to not be readily observable——not because it was absent, but because it pervaded all aspects of classroom life. If a teacher's attention is seen as a scarce good, than distributing it over a group of students is already a matter of fairness. Fallona's research is important because it makes us realise that we shouldn't conclude too soon that virtues are not modelled if they can't be *seen*.

4. Imitation and emulaion

When reviewing the pedagogical studies on role model education, we found several ways in which the notion of 'role model' is operationalised. For example, adolescents were asked whether they 'admire', 'identify with', 'look up to' or 'want to be like' certain people they know. The way these questions are framed presupposes that teachers are only role models to children when these children have a certain attitude towards teachers. This raises the question of (1) what effect teachers' modelling brings about in learners and (2) what effect we think modelling *should* bring about. Are we content when adolescents adore their teachers and imitate them, or is there something worrying about this?

What effect modelling has on children depends on how 'modelling' is conceived of. In this section, two kinds of modelling will be distinguished. In both cases, modelling is understood as a kind of Aristotelian *habituation*, which is learning by doing virtuous things frequently and consistently under the guidance or authority of a virtuous tutor (Steutel & Spiecker, 2004, p. 536). Firstly, we can understand habituation as a kind of instrumental conditioning. The educators' character traits are inculcated as they connect to the child's behaviour with different reinforcing and punishing stimuli (Miller & Dollard, 1941). It is suggested that this kind of conditioning works particularly well if there is a mutual loving and trustful relationship between child and tutor. In that case, the child will experience pleasure when the tutor praises him and experience pain when he is blamed or punished. Because no effort is made to make children understand moral concepts, children might not know *why* they are praised or blamed. Research by Bandura (1963) affirmed that modelling is a powerful process that can account for diverse forms of learning, but his research revealed that modelling can also occur in the absence of reinforcement stimuli to observers. Children can learn new patterns of behaviour vicariously, that is without actually performing actions or receiving rewards. Moreover, Bandura regarded modelling as a much more cognitive process. For him, '… modelling was not simply response mimicry' (Craighead & Nemerhoff, 2001, p. 171). On this second interpretation of modelling, the child does not only want to resemble the actions and emotional reactions of the model, but also recognises the educator as representing a virtuous ideal, knowing what is virtuous about him or her. This kind of habituation will only be effective if educators explain to children why they act the way they do. According to Bandura (1997, p. 93), this more cognitive kind of modelling works particularly well in situations when it is difficult for students to learn by observation only, for example in cases when teachers' thoughts are not adequately reflected in their actions. When models verbalise their goals and strategies as they deal with moral quandaries, children's cognitive skills are stimulated too.

Although Bandura rightfully emphasised the cognitive nature of modelling over and against Miller and Dollard's behaviouristic approach, his social cognitive theory can only be of limited help to understand modelling *moral* behaviour. It takes individuals to be rational actors and downplays the experience of moral emotions,

while these play a major role in moral development from an Aristotelian perspective. If we want to know what goes on in children's minds when they are habituated, Kristjánsson's (2006) article on the emotion of emulation is helpful (for Kristjánsson's conception of 'emotion' and 'virtue', see Sanderse 2011). His point of departure is Aristotle's treatment of emulation (*zēlos*), which we still recognise in the English 'zeal', enthusiastic devotion to a cause, ideal or goal and tireless diligence in its furtherance. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (1991) describes it as 'a kind of distress at the apparent presence among others like him by nature, of things honoured and possible for a person to acquire' (p. 161). One might be tempted to call this kind of distress 'envy', but envy differs from emulation in that envious persons try to prevent others from having certain qualities or goods, while an emulative person tries to attain the similar goods for himself (Kristjánsson, 2006, p. 42). A neo-Aristotelian approach to emotions enables us to distinguish between affective, conative, cognitive and behavioural aspects of emotions (p. 45). The affective element of role model education consists in the kind of pain that the learner experiences for not having a desired quality that is possessed (to a greater degree) by the role model. The conative element is the learner's motivation to acquire this quality, without taking this quality away from the model. The cognitive element consists in two elements. First, there is the learner's understanding of why the quality that is possessed by the model is worthy of being valued. Second, the learner will need some thinking about the ways in which he can alter himself in order to acquire the quality. The behavioural aspect of emulation is that the learner takes action in order to acquire the desirable quality.

Combining Steutel and Spiecker's ideas on habituation with Kristjánsson's ideas about the moral psychology of the learner, we can conclude that there are roughly two ways to model moral actions and emotions, thereby guiding students' moral development. First, teachers can *condition* students, which results in students *imitating* their role models. In this case, students will feel the pain of not being able to act or emotionally react in the way that the virtuous model does, this feeling will motivate them to acquire this quality and they will take action in order to behave like the model does. Second, teachers can *educate* students, which results in students *emulating* their role models. Students will not only feel pain, be motivated to change and take the appropriate action, but they will also understand that teachers are not the measure of moral virtue and vice. They merely embody them. Although virtues are morally justifiable independent of the role model, there is pedagogically no way to become virtuous than by emulating role models (Kristjánsson, 2006, p. 47).

Once students recognise that a distinction can be made between 'becoming like the teacher' and 'becoming like what the teacher exemplifies', the question rises what it means for the student to have this quality himself. This will involve deliberation about what kind of person one currently is and how one can alter one's character to become a paragon of virtue in one's own way. When modelling is used in the educational sense, it will make students ask 'What does it mean *for me* to be virtuous?' In her recent book *Intelligent virtue*, Julia Annas (2011) stresses a point that was also made by Kristjánsson (2006): understanding is paramount for

moral development, because it enables students to acquire for themselves the virtue that teachers embody. This means that the reasons that educators give are a kind of explanation that puts children in a position to go ahead in their own situations and contexts (Annas, 2011, p. 19). They should not follow the teacher, but understand what to follow in the role model, so they can use this knowledge when the teacher is not there. Although Bandura talks about 'rules' instead of virtues, his basic view is in accord with Kristjánsson and Annas: modelling is not productive if people follow scripts, that is if they simply enact fixed action sequences. In his view, children would ideally develop a 'generative guide for constructing actions to fit changeable circumstances', so that they can go beyond what they have seen the teacher do or heard the teacher say (Bandura, 1997, p. 90). The three authors agree that 'emulation' enables students to go their own way—which really is what moral education is all about.

However, this is not to say that students who have excellent role models in high school can do without role models in the future. Probably because the foundations of the moral self are laid early in development (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009, p. 441), there is hardly any research on the use of modelling as a strategy to cultivate a *virtuous character* in post-adolescent life. However, there is abundant evidence that role modelling remains an important strategy to construct people's *self-concept* in professional contexts (Javidan et al., 1995; Ibarra, 1999; Gibson, 2003). The difference between someone's self, as a subset of someone's character, and his self-concept is that a self-concept is a set of beliefs *about* his or her real self. Although the self-concept does not merely describe the self, but also influences it, some character traits are rather resistant and very hard to change (Kristjánsson, 2010, p. 31). Interestingly, Ibarra's (1999) research on the styles and management techniques that junior consultants and investment bankers adopt from colleagues in order to experiment with their professional self-image reveals that they also emulate a lot of moral virtues, such as trustworthiness, integrity, honesty and humour. Moreover, Gibson (2003) has pointed out that the tendency to observe role models does not change throughout people's career, although professionals in the middle or late stage of their career are more likely to see their role models as sources of specific rather than global attributes. Especially people with only a couple of years work experience 'spoke of role models as providing a range of attributes in "one package", including personal traits' (Gibson, 2003, p. 598). If Gibson's results also apply to educational contexts, experienced teachers will probably still have role models. As people grow older, their models are more often 'negative' (e.g. colleagues demonstrate how *not* to act), but teachers might as well be inspired by students who are eager to learn. This shows that in the field of moral education, the traditional division of roles between 'teachers' and 'students' might also be reversed.

5. Improving role modelling

If teachers want students to emulate them, they will have to explain to students how their actions and emotional reactions are related to an ideal of the virtuous

life. However, teacher educators often lack the knowledge and skills needed to make their own teaching explicit (Lunenberg et al., 2007, p. 597). They know that they should 'teach as they preach' and 'walk their talk', but they do not connect their moral ideals to their actual behaviour in the classroom. If teachers want to be good, effective models, teachers should become 'reflective in their own work, working at a meta-cognitive level in their own teaching by explaining their actions in words in relation to why and how they teach as they do' (Smith, 2001, p. 11).

The pedagogical literature offers a number of recommendations that can help teachers to think——individually and in a team——about questions such as: What virtues do I/we want to be a model of? Why do I/we want to model these character traits? How can I/we model these virtues best? First, modelling could be made more productive by giving so-called 'meta-comments', verbalising feelings and explaining to students which choices they make and why (Wood & Geddis, 1999). Second, teachers can learn from their experiences in the classroom by keeping a 'professional ethics' journal, in which they clarify their pedagogical choices. In this journal, they can describe (1) the moral situations they were in, (2) their thoughts, feelings and actions, and the way students or colleagues reacted, (3) their self-image, what they consider to be their virtues and vices, and (4) what the best reaction would look like and which virtues need to be developed further in order to bring this about. Third, teachers can teach together (co-teaching). In this way, they can observe each others' teaching and discuss how colleagues put virtues into practice. Useful for this purpose is the Leadership Virtues Questionnaire (LVQ), developed by Riggio et al. (2010). Fourth, teachers could benefit from reading and discussing literature on moral education, because theories can offer a moral language that enables them to recognise and talk about the moral aspect of their work (Swennen et al., 2008; Willemse et al., 2008). Finally, it would be recommended to target current as well as future teachers. As teacher training programmes hardly prepare teachers for the moral educational aspects of their work (Willemse et al., 2005), it seems that paying serious attention to moral education in teacher training colleges could help student teachers to develop the virtues, skills and techniques to be a morally better and pedagogically more effective role model. Therefore, Koster et al. (2005) recommend colleges to extend competence profiles to include teachers' attitudes, motives and personal characteristics, so that they are made aware of their existing attitudes and are, if necessary, encouraged to develop new ones.

6.   Conclusion

Many teachers want to be a model to students, parents endorse this and students like teachers who show their personality, but the inconvenient truth is that modelling has been taken for granted to such an extent that the question whether teachers are morally good and effective role models has hardly received serious attention (Javidan et al., 1995, p. 1272). Colleges for teacher education do hardly prepare new teachers for this role and most modelling that goes on in schools is unintended and unplanned.

For philosophers working in the domain of moral education it is therefore not enough to repeat the old message *that* teachers have to be role models. What teachers don't know yet, is *what* this really means, *why* it is important and *how* it can be done best. In this article, we started to make these things clearer by distinguishing between two kinds of modelling and by explaining why we need emulation if modelling is to contribute to students becoming more morally mature. Moreover, we examined the body of didactical literature suggesting ways in which teachers can improve their role modelling, for example by keeping a professional ethics journal.

By conceptualising and justifying role modelling well, philosophers can also contribute to better (and more) social scientific research into the effectiveness of role modelling as a teaching method. In most studies we looked at, students are simply asked who they admire/identify with/look up to/want to be like. Putting aside the question whether these are really the same (e.g. why could a child not choose a role model that they *cannot* identify with yet?), the more pressing issue is whether having a personal role model includes more than such motivational aspects. Drawing on Aristotle, both Kristjánsson and Annas have argued that students should learn to *understand* what in the role model is worth following. If social scientists want to take role modelling seriously, questionnaires should be designed to measure this cognitive aspect of modelling too, including questions about what respondents take the (moral) qualities of their role models to be and how they attempt to acquire these qualities for themselves.

Finally, we saw that in the field of moral education philosophy can also benefit from social scientific research in various ways. Firstly, several studies showed that role modelling is even more problematic than we thought: only very small percentages of students mention teachers as role models, and many teachers consider 'respect' to be the most important virtue. Secondly, psychological research confirms the virtue ethical insight moral exemplars can be distinguished from 'ordinary' people in terms of their character and virtuous behaviour. Thirdly, psychological research made clear what virtues teachers value and what qualities students value in teachers. This research could be extended, for example to find out whether teachers need some virtues more than others. A starting point for this research would be to find out that what emotions teachers experience in morally critical situations (e.g. Maas, 2010, p. 144). If virtues are understood as dispositional emotions, empirical research about frequently experienced emotions can inform philosophers to determine what corresponding virtues are worth exploring.

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