

# Rethinking Moral Education: Unpacking Its Foundations and Relevance

Bernardo N. Caslib, Jr.<sup>1</sup>

University of the Philippines-Manila  
Ateneo de Manila University

## ABSTRACT

*The general education course Ethics is required of all higher education students in the Philippines. Envisioned as a course that explores the principles of ethical behavior in modern society at various levels of existence, the general education course Ethics aims to expose students to the intricacies of morality and equip them with skills and knowledge to make informed moral decisions by employing moral frameworks in analyzing and resolving moral dilemmas. Recently, however, education policymakers and government legislators in the Philippines have identified the course as one of the redundant ones that may be eradicated to shorten formal education in the country. This paper revisits the long history of moral education. It attempts to unpack its rich tradition, not just in the Philippines but across the globe, as an essential aspect of both basic and higher education. By employing document analysis, conceptual analysis, and philosophical research, the paper aims to solidify the place of moral education in any curriculum by pointing out that any educational endeavor should always have a place and space for moral education as ultimately, education is a process of transforming and making individuals better human beings, the core thrust of any moral education framework. The paper will also argue, by presenting data across time and space, that moral education has always been a crucial inclusion in higher education because of the benefits it offers in any society that continues to put its trust not just in a productive, but ultimately, a moral citizenry.*

**Keywords:** ethics, education, moral education, philosophy of education

## I. INTRODUCTION

Moral education has been a key issue in the Philippines recently due to the proposed removal of the required general education course, Ethics, in all higher education institutions in the country. Proponents of reforms in basic and higher education in the Philippines have turned to general education subjects, allegedly redundant and dispensable, as possible casualties in shortening formal education in the country. As one of the identified higher education general education courses that will either be integrated into basic education (senior high school) or eliminated altogether, Ethics and its mother discipline, Philosophy, face the threat of being absent from every Filipino student's education. If proponents in the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines succeed in their misguided position that Ethics, along with other general education subjects, is repetitive

---

doi: 10.5281/zenodo.16980250

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: [bncaslib@up.edu.ph](mailto:bncaslib@up.edu.ph)

and unimportant, then Filipino students will eventually complete their formal education without ever having a required philosophy course. The allegation that Ethics as a course is repetitive hinges on the mistaken assumption that related subjects in basic education (i.e., *Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao* that soon will be replaced by Good Manners and Right Conduct and Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person that will no longer be required soon) have already attained the goals of Ethics as a general education course. This is mistaken, though, as a cursory examination of the outcomes and consequently, the course contents of this higher education course reveal that ultimately, while the course is related to the basic education subjects mentioned, its nature, contents, and even target learners are remarkably different.

This paper aims to contribute to this crucial educational conversation by presenting moral education as a coherent education program that should necessarily include a component in higher education, not just in basic education. This paper argues that a significant part of the misapprehension surrounding the course Ethics in higher education stems from a misunderstanding of what moral education entails, how it operates, and what its key components might be. Moral education, that is, the education of human beings to attain a certain level of moral maturity and ethical awareness, must continue into higher education, because many of the skills and attitudes it targets and requires cannot be developed in the early years, but can only be learned when its learners have attained a certain level of maturity. One of the goals of this article is to elucidate these confusions and, once and for all, clarify the nature, complexities, and components of moral education. Additionally, the paper traces the history of moral education and highlights the most significant trends that it has undergone throughout history. This is important so that one can obtain an overview of how moral education has successfully permeated a holistic higher education in different countries and across different milieus.

## II. METHODS

The study employed the methods of philosophical research and conceptual analysis. Philosophical research papers are essentially either conceptual or argumentative. They either map the conceptual terrain of a phenomenon or argue for a particular position. As a conceptual paper, it “relates concepts to specific issues or research problems to advance and systematize knowledge” (McGregor, 2018, p. 500). Their purposes can either be to define a concept, map the conceptual scope of the research problem, or “systematize relations among concepts and between concepts and the phenomenon in question” (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). These papers “do not normally include empirical data; rather, they address questions that cannot be addressed with more facts, requiring instead a sound argument” (McGregor, 2018, p. 501). In order to form the argument and systematically form the conceptual argument in this research, several databases were utilized to mine available studies on moral education, including Taylor and Francis, JSTOR, Wiley Online Library, University of Chicago Press journals, SpringerLink, ProQuest, Project MUSE, Oxford Academic Journals, and Cambridge Core. Local journals were also surveyed for relevant studies.

The primary criteria for selecting the databases were their availability and academic reputation. Books on moral education from two academic libraries (possibly two of the largest in terms of collection in philosophy in this country): the University of the Philippines Diliman's Main Library and Ateneo de Manila University's Rizal Library were utilized. Journal articles, book reviews, books, and book chapters that met the following criteria were selected and included in this study: materials published from 2000 to present were included if deemed relevant, and materials published outside those years were included if they were presented in core research journals or are considered canonical. Several rounds of elimination of sources transpired, taking into consideration the following considerations: (1) does the source present findings that are important and have been taken up by other academics?; (2) does the source include issues that are relevant to the research problem; (3) is the article written by an author who is cited repeatedly on the subject matter, (4) does the source contribute something timely to the study, and (5) does the article highlight a missing link in the literature. Additionally, the sources and literature included are as broad as possible in terms of geography and the level of education discussed (basic to higher education) to account for the universality of moral education as a philosophical-educational endeavor.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of a comprehensive review and analysis of documents and studies on moral education worldwide. Primarily, the questions set to be answered are: what is moral education, and what is its role in education in general? The second question concerns the implementation of moral teaching throughout history and the world. This section will conclude with discussions that argue why there can never be too much moral education and why moral education in higher education, as presented in the Ethics course, is not redundant, as alleged by some education policymakers. It shall outline why Ethics instruction in higher education remains innately crucial and beneficial, and put into context why this historical milieu in the Philippines, more than anything, makes such an instruction an imperative.

#### *A. What is Moral Education?*

Education has primarily been concerned with advancing humanity. The institution of education, since its earliest form, for example, among the Greeks, has always been about ensuring that humanity not only survives but also lives a good life in this world. John Dewey, the leading philosopher of education, reminds us that ultimately, education is a collection of all the bodies of knowledge and skills that have proven effective in the past and may therefore be carried over to the present. David Carr (2005), contemporary philosopher of education, puts it in another way,

...the main task of education is to prepare young people for adult personal and social functioning: a little more precisely, to equip individuals with the knowledge, understanding, and skills apt for a

personally satisfying, socially responsible, and economically productive life (p. 7).

This reminder of education's purpose captures the essence of what education is and what should animate educational efforts. Young students come to school to prepare themselves for the challenges of adulthood and initiate themselves into the intricacies of the world and society. Being educated is a lofty goal because it enables human beings to prepare for life ahead. To be an educated individual seems to be a natural good that everyone should aspire to.

Very broadly speaking, the task of education is to produce a particular type of person, an educated person. To become educated individuals is the culmination of everything learners experience and undergo within and outside the formal system of education. What can be expected, for instance, after an individual completes a baccalaureate degree at a particular university? After going through years of formal education, what is it that happens to an individual? How is this person different from the person they were before entering an educational institution? From a normative perspective, according to the noted philosopher of education, T. W. Moore (1982), "an educated man is an improved man, and as such a desirable product, someone who ought to be produced" (p. 11). What exactly this improved individual might look like, Moore (1982) continues.

He comments that:

[t]he educated man would be one whose intellectual abilities had been developed, who was sensitive to matters of moral and aesthetic concern, who could appreciate the nature and force of mathematical and scientific thinking, who could view the world along historical and geographical perspectives and who, moreover, had a regard for the importance of truth, accuracy, and elegance in thinking (Moore, 1982, p. 12).

An educated individual is, foremost, attuned to moral sensibilities. As Wills (1873) states in *The Maine Journal of Education*, "[a]ll education is one-sided and destructive which has no reference to the development of the moral nature of the student" (p. 366). Progress and advancement as an individual importantly involve improvement in moral matters. One possible arena, therefore, where preparation for adulthood is necessary is in the field of morality. As one matures, one is confronted with the question of the kind of person that one wishes to become and the sort of actions that one is willing to engage in as a part of this journey in life. One of the ends of education is to equip learners with the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad.

Moral education, as a specific kind of education, is explicitly concerned with producing moral individuals. As early as 1839, the *Connecticut Common School Journal* had already published a short article on moral education. In it, the now-unknown author emphasizes that moral education should occupy a prominent place within institutions, ensuring that every child is exposed to moral instruction from an early age. "The germ of morality must be planted in the moral nature of children, at an early period of their life"

(Connecticut Common School Journal, 1839, p. 56). Otherwise, the article warned, "...we shall have a generation whose false pretensions to virtue will ruin us" (Connecticut Common School Journal, 1839, p. 6). The article has prognosticated what the mission of moral education will be. Because children are not born moral, they must be taught to be so. Moral education, very roughly, involves training students in the principles of morality. As a form of education, moral education is concerned with transmitting knowledge, skills, and wisdom that contribute to an individual's moral development. This must be qualified, and this will be done in what follows. It is common sense and plain that children will not be able to choose what is right from what is wrong unless they know what is right and wrong. A child will not be able to choose truth unless the child learns what is meant by truth, as opposed to falsities, for example. Moral education then involves instruction in moral knowledge. Moral concepts must be taught to children first. The acquisition of this moral knowledge rightfully involves understanding basic moral concepts like "right", "wrong", "truth", "justice", and the like. Foremost classical educationalist, Emile Durkheim, posits that "[morality] is a set of rules of conduct, of practical imperatives which have grown up historically under the influence of specific social necessities" (Durkheim, 1979, p. 34). These rules and imperatives are thought by Durkheim (1979) to be proper objects of moral transmission.

Eventually, children are initiated into following rules and principles. Children are encouraged to say "thank you" to denote gratitude or to return loaned items. This is a basic instruction of morality. Eventually, as a child's intellectual capacity expands, so does their moral consciousness. The moral progression from simply following rules to eventually going beyond these maxims to form one's own set of moral justifications and principles can be seen as a development from moral heteronomy to moral autonomy: from being dependent on factors outside the self to making moral decisions entirely on one's own. A person who can make an autonomous moral decision is the moral individual envisioned by moral education.

### ***B. Moral Education as a Historical and Cultural Companion***

The aims and purposes of moral education, despite its evolving forms, have remained consistent over the years and across the globe. There have been key turns that moral education has taken from its early days to the present. From its close affinity with religion to its being considered a form of indoctrination, moral education has evolved through various traditions, including value clarification, the developmental approach, and character education, permeating the history of education.

Moral education has found an important role in different phases of every country's history. For example, in the West, particularly in the United States, Muriel J. Bebeau et al. (1999) in "Beyond the Promise: A Perspective on Research in Moral Education," in *Educational Researcher*, suggest that moral education in the United States has always been responsive to whatever current crisis it faces. Moral education has always been its weapon whenever it is beset by any societal ill such as not being able to keep up with the Soviets in the 1950s, the challenge against the structure due to the Civil Rights movement, and the Vietnam War protests in the 1960s and 1970s, or the ineffectual education across



the curriculum in the 1990s (Bebeau et al., 1999, p. 18). Moral education continuously adapts to societal challenges, ensuring that its contribution in shaping the youth will contribute to solving these challenges. Very recently, the ushering in of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium posed the problem of “basic socialization and reversing the growing destructiveness of youth” (Bebeau et al., 1999, p. 18) in the United States. Because of this recent issue, Americans called for character education as a means of “countering youth anomie and anarchy” (Bebeau et al., 1999, p. 19). Indeed, Bebeau et al. (1999) assert that changing concerns and ideological shifts in American society produce different emphases and various approaches to moral education.

While moral education has always been around since the ancient Greeks, with Plato putting so much premium on the good of the soul and Aristotle having been the recognized author of the first treatise on ethics, the literature on moral education’s formal curricular inclusion can be traced back to the beginnings of universities in the United States. A worthy set of articles that traced the history of moral education in the United States is that of William H. Jeynes and David Robinson (2010) entitled “Character Education in Christian Higher Education: (A Historical Analysis and Contemporary Challenge (Parts I))” and “Character Education in Christian Higher Education: (A Historical Analysis and Contemporary Challenge (Parts II)).” The articles, in two parts, trace the history of moral education from the beginnings of universities in the US to the time when John Dewey, a pragmatist, changed the way moral education was implemented at Harvard. It was due to him, the U.S. Civil War, and the U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s rebuking the increasing role of religion in universities that moral education took an unprecedented turn. In the first part of the article, Jeynes & Robinson (2010, p. 295) trace the origins of moral education in the United States, dating back to the establishment of the nation’s first 122 colleges. Because these institutions were Christian colleges, moral education maintained a prominent role in the curriculum. The European settlers who arrived in the United States carried with them the moral education tradition from Europe, which has always considered moral education a principal aspect of Western education.

As already mentioned, this tradition dates back to the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, who believed that educated men are expected to be virtuous as well (p. 297). When Harvard College (now part of Harvard University) was founded in 1636, it aimed to train “learned and godly ministers” so that these men of religion would become not just spiritual leaders, but intellectual forerunners as well. Needless to say, moral education was at the heart of the education that Harvard first offered. Eventually, Yale and Princeton were founded too for the same moral purposes. That said, tradition continued until Harvard transformed with Charles W. Eliot at its helm in 1869. Eliot changed the course of higher education by regarding university administration as a business. He removed the Classical-Christian model of the curriculum and eventually turned to General Education (p. 319). Along with these changes, Social Darwinism took center stage, and with it, the mocking of any notion of religion and moral education (p. 320). It also didn’t help that John Dewey’s philosophy of education earned a favorable reputation in universities. His “belief that the best way of thinking was experimental and

scientific..." (p. 322) supported evolutionism as a paradigm. Furthermore, the U.S. Supreme Court also came out with monumental decisions from 1962-1963 that were all considered to undermine the central place of religion in most educational institutions. With these developments, moral education and its close affinity with religion took a back seat in higher education in the United States (2010).

Recalling one of the first tensions in the purposes of moral education, Stephan Ellenwood (2006) in "Revisiting Character Education: From McGuffey to Narratives" in *The Journal of Education* illustrates the basic movement and conflict of moral education in the United States. The early days of mass public education witnessed either one of the two forms of moral education: the schools as value-neutral or the schools as inculcators of basic values. Either the school considered the realm of morality as separate and distinct from the space for the intellect, as the first tradition upheld, or the schools considered themselves dispensers of what were considered values and virtues worthy of inculcation, as the second supported. The latter has been known eventually as the values transmission tradition in moral education. When the question of moral education's role in schools has been broached, these two traditions came to the fore. Should moral education be value-neutral and focus on the goods of the mind alone, or should schools serve as a space for the moral growth of their students? While some literature suggests that the second approach still lacked direct instruction on fundamental virtues, schools here allocated space for moral education by incorporating these virtues into discipline/behavior codes (Ellenwood, 2006, p. 24). There was undoubtedly a transmission of values that the school, or perhaps the teachers, consider important for students to imbibe. Mass public education has been divided into these two camps: schools as value-neutral or schools as initiators of morality. This early division will persist until contemporary times.

Eventually, a paradigm shift occurred from these two diametrically opposed schools of thought to the new moral education trend known as the values-clarification movement (Ellenwood, 2006, p. 26). Rath, Harmin, and Simon (1973), the originators of this movement, advocate processing students' values and the entire process of valuing. They push for allowing students to choose personal or public issues that they can work on, articulating their decisions after thoughtful deliberation of the consequences of different alternatives, and making their selections public. This trend has reached the Philippines, where it has been adopted by the country's education sector. In fact, a core subject matter in basic education, called Values Education, was even mandated at one point. The process of valuing and the teaching of values, however, fail to make students understand the complexities in value conflicts and lead the way to a possible resolution only by appealing to higher values (p. 29). Values education as a pedagogical trend does not account for conflicts in values and is not instructive in sorting out the actions that emanate from these internal conflicts.

Numerous articles emerged criticizing the values-clarification approach due to the deficiencies mentioned above. Bruce B. Suttle (1982) published an article entitled "Moral Education Versus Values Clarification" in *The Journal of Educational Thought*, arguing against this approach. In it, he contends that the values clarification approach is "neither dealing with morality nor offering an educational program" (p. 39). He further argues

that the approach leads to relativism and ultimately results in baseless moral positions driven by contingent values. Contrary to values clarification, therefore, Suttle (1982) argues that moral education should deal with values as “non-relativistic, context-dependent, subject to cognitive analysis, and capable as well as in need of justification” (p. 39).

This plea for an alternative approach to moral education has paved the way for a new direction in moral education: the Cognitive developmental approach. It was Lawrence Kohlberg who led the journey into another path (Chazan, 1985). Kohlberg rested mainly on the scholarship of the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget. Agreeing with Suttle and others, Kohlberg considers values clarification to be too relativistic (as cited in Elenwood, 2006, p. 30). In contrast to this tradition, moral education for Kohlberg involves exposing students to various moral experiences and instructions tailored to a particular stage of moral development and helping them progress to the next level. Following Piaget, Kohlberg (as cited in Elenwood, 2006) asserts that every individual progresses through a series of moral development stages, which are based on a person’s cognitive development. He claims that moral education should be done according to the moral stage an individual is in. Without the benefit of the rational and cognitive faculty involved in a particular moral stage, a student will not profit from any form of moral education (Elenwood, 2006, p. 31). His, as can be readily gleaned, is a highly analytical and rational understanding of moral education that can be exemplified by the use of case studies, digests, and the like. Students, in this framework, may be exposed to concrete moral dilemmas and abstract moral concepts and theories to make sense of them. According to Curren and Kotzee (2014), for this approach, “success of moral education has accordingly been judged by its effect on developmental level or progress toward reason from universal principles” (pp. 266-267).

Eventually, many concerns were also raised against Kohlberg’s model. One of which was that of his Harvard colleague, Carol Gilligan. Gilligan disputes that Kohlberg completely missed the “morality of caring” that appears in women’s approaches to the kinds of dilemmas found in Kohlberg’s materials for moral education (p. 33). Bereft of context and narrative, Kohlberg’s moral development stages and the education that follows from it are considered by Gilligan to be too formal and abstract (Gilligan, 1982, p. 19).

Following this discontent, a new trend in moral education emerged: the character education approach. This time, it is seen as a rebirth of the classical teaching of the Greek philosopher Aristotle and his focus on virtues. Going beyond the mere rationalistic analysis of right actions, the framers of the character education approach believe that, more than a rationalistic, analytic approach to morality, or even listing down a set of desirable characters or virtues, the task of moral education involves exposure of students to fundamental habits of action and disposition, reminiscent of Aristotle’s ethics.

There is a more complex approach in the character education movement that brings students the experience of people who steadily demonstrate true character. These experiences are the building blocks for students to develop their judgment. This approach



acknowledges the significance of complexity and subtlety in real-life interactions and in the relationships between characters in literature (Ellenwood, 2006, p. 35).

For supporters of the character education approach, students should be given exposure to exemplars of moral character, allowing them to emulate and learn from these role models. Much of the development in moral education in contemporary times focuses on various approaches to character education.

The character education approach has been proven effective not only in the United States but also elsewhere in the world. James Arthur and David Carr (2013), in their article, "Character in Learning for Life: A Virtue-Ethical Rationale for Recent Research on Moral and Values Education," in the *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, affirm what has been stated about the trend in the United States. Arthur and Carr (2013), in this article, outline British moral education and its evolution from the cognitive model of Kohlberg to contemporary character education. Drawing from "probably the largest empirical study of moral values and character education in the United Kingdom to the present date" (p. 26), their article places the concept of character at the center of contemporary scholarship in moral education. In it, they have confirmed that in the United States and Britain, the highly rationalistic, analytic, and cognitive model of moral education, prompted by Lawrence Kohlberg, has been replaced and overtaken by a more pressing concern with character development (p. 27). Character education has been effective in addressing the limitations of Kohlberg's model by incorporating a more holistic approach to individuals, encompassing their desires, emotions, sentiments, and behavior. This new approach responds to criticisms of Gilligan and her allies, like Nel Noddings and Michael Slote, of Kohlberg's model (Noddings, 2010, p. 145).

Meanwhile, in Asian countries, although some outliers may be observed, a trend towards general agreement with the Western model can be noted. In the case of Japan for example, in "School texts, the Written Word, and Political Indoctrinations: A Review of Moral Education Curricula in Modern Japan (1886-1997)" published in *History of Education*, Stuart D. Hoffman (1999) relays how, in the past, moral education in Japan was ultimately used by the Japanese central government to "fulfill the priorities of the political system by instilling conformity, docility and social cohesion in Japanese youth" (1999, p. 87). Hoffman (1999) conducts a systematic review of Japan's Ministry of Education moral education curricula and reveals that, ultimately, since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Japanese government has employed moral education to instill in its people the values that promote its economic and political interests. This is reminiscent of how moral education has assumed various roles in response to societal needs in the West.

In the case of China, moral education has also advanced from direct indoctrination of societal values to students to a more holistic framework. Hongyan Cheng (2020) in "A Critical Review of Chinese Theoretical Research on Moral Education Since 2000," published in *ECNU Review of Education*, suggests four research dimensions of the current moral education theories in China: philosophy-subject dimension (Kantian and cognitive since allowance for students as moral beings is emphasized), life-emotion (emphasis on emotions and positive social relationships), society-rights (rooted in civil rights), culture-value (culture, value, and spirit) (pp. 563-567). He makes this claim after making a critical

review of nearly 150 articles and 30 books on Chinese theoretical research on moral education since 2000. Given these findings, Cheng (2020) concludes that Chinese scholars “no longer emphasize that the most important goal of moral education is to guide students to internalize societal norms” (p. 254). Cheng (2020) concludes that as globalization slowly encroaches on Chinese society, moral educators have been trying to lead the way towards reconstructing the theoretical foundation of moral education in China. This is in stark comparison with other scholars two decades ago who asserted that “moral education in China is the weapon of ideological-political indoctrination” (Li, 1990, p. 170).

Hanwei Tang and Yang Wang’s (2020) article “Moral Education Curriculum Reform for China's Elementary and Middle Schools in the Twenty-First Century: Past Progress and Future Prospects,” published in *ECNU Review of Education*, affirms Cheng’s findings. After a thorough textual and policy analysis of the progress made in China's basic education moral education curriculum, Tang and Wang (2020) conclude that the new curriculum attempts to embody “modernity, openness, and cosmopolitanism while retaining distinctive Chinese characteristics” (p. 2).

Southeast Asian nations, meanwhile, still grapple with the dichotomy between direct instruction and liberal moral education. Minkang Kim and Monica Taylor (2017), in their article “Cultivating Morality in the Asia-Pacific: influences, issues, challenges and change,” published in the *Journal of Moral Education*, interrogate the approach to moral education in the Asia-Pacific. What factors come into play? Is there a distinctive regional moral education agenda? The article highlights the persistence of the intermingling of politics and moral education in Asia-Pacific countries. In the Asia-Pacific region, political influence on moral education is particularly evident when it is associated, one way or another, with forms of citizenship education that aim to instill patriotism and promote the notion of the virtuous citizen, as is often the case in China, as well as in Korea and Japan (p. 6). In Asia-Pacific nations, moral education must grapple with questions such as what is being taught, how it is being taught, and what a particular nation's core values should be taught. While this may be a thing of the past in the West, issues such as these, which the Western moral education paradigm has moved beyond (indoctrination, moral education based on religion), remain current and relevant in the Asia-Pacific.

It is in Thailand where there is a distinct similarity with the developments in the West. In “Narrative Approach to Moral Education: A Case of Thailand,” published by Pagorm Singsuriya, Wipada Aungsumalin, and Seree Worapong in *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice*, moral education in Thailand is presented as an interaction between Western theories and local ways of doing moral education, with its emphasis on citizenship building and its Buddhist-laden definition of moral education (Singsuriya et al., 2014, p. 209). In the end, the authors conclude that Thai moral education employs a character development approach, which is supportive of Buddhism and Kohlbergian concepts of moral reasoning and development (p. 235).

In Asia, the seeds of timeless wisdom culled from ancient philosophies, such as Confucianism, have remained salient for a fuller understanding of moral education and virtue acquisition. Jain (2022) recalls that Confucius, also known as Kongzi, believed that

society can only be improved when people in power embody virtues. His educational philosophy then focuses on inculcating kindness, knowledge, and wisdom. Central to his philosophy is the relationship of thinking and learning. Most famously, Confucius asserts that “[i]f you learn without thinking about what you have learned, you will be lost. If you think without learning, however, you will fall into danger” (Jain, 2022). As such, the focus of any Confucian moral education can be characterized by at least three aspects: the learning goal of being a sage, the touch of blood and soul or cultivating human nature in an aesthetic way, and the unity of inner knowledge and actual action (Tan, 2021). Indeed, for Confucius, virtue lies in practice, and life is nothing but a lifelong moral education.

Buddhism, on the other hand, also has a very robust conceptual network related to moral education. As Buddhism guides action and methods of cultivating moral character, it is anchored on the fundamental precept that human beings are active beings who determine their own actions and consequently, the results of their own lives. “Buddhism encourages individuals to perform practices of precepts, meditation, and wisdom all the time to rid oneself of craving, hatred, and delusion” (Wang, 2020). All of these are origins of human suffering or *dukkha*. For Buddhism, one cannot reach the ultimate goal of existence, which is *Nirvana*, unless these three are eradicated. Moral education, then, for Buddhists, has to do with the purification of one’s thoughts and actions in order to be rid of these causes of suffering, in order to approach liberation in the form of *Nirvana*.

In the case of the Philippines, a combination of traditions is being implemented, including values clarification, cognitive moral education, and character education. The article “Moral Education Revisited: Truth and Justice as Educational Goals” in *Philippine Studies* by Raul J. Bonoan (1984) discusses the primacy of values education in the Philippine educational sphere. This article traces the history of moral education in the country, the Filipino tradition of moral values, and the promotion of selected moral values that were considered crucial to social transformation at that time. Tracing moral education in the Philippines from Rizal to Mabini to the twentieth-century Philippines, Bonoan (1984, p. 408) asserts that there is adequate evidence to support a particular tradition of moral education that has endured in the Philippines. For him, this moral education is a form of values education that promotes values considered Filipino. This form of moral education has elements from the values clarification and, to some extent, character education.

About a decade after Bonoan, Lourdes R. Quisumbing presented the paper “A Study of the Philippine Values Education Program (1986-1993)” at the International Conference on Education in Geneva, Switzerland. In it, she explores “the Philippine experience in values development” (p. 1). Quisumbing (1994) outlines the goals of the values education program of the Philippines at that time. She summarizes the end as “the development of a person committed to building a free, democratic, peaceful, and progressive nation” (p. 1). She enumerates values and traits (mostly moral) that she considers instrumental in achieving the ends she mentions. The manuscript presents outcomes and frameworks that the then Department of Education, Culture, and Sports

aims to implement in the classroom, such as the values clarification and classical moral education framework prevalent in the West.

Finally, Niels Mulder's (2001) article "Realism in Philippine Values Education" in *Philippine Studies* traces the history of values education in schools in the Philippines since the report by Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani on the Moral Recovery Program (2001). Mulder observes that the curriculum of values education has primarily responded to the findings of Senator Ramos-Shahani and thus, aimed to imbibe certain civic values that were thought to be empowering to every Filipino student. With the primary purpose of enabling every Filipino to realize their potential and thereby advance the nation, reminiscent of the goal in the West, moral education in the Philippines was seen as a tool for change and progress. Mulder (2001) puts it best: "If the nation is to prosper, weaknesses should be eradicated, and people must be convinced that their personal righteousness makes the difference between national advancement and stagnation" (p. 433). Although written decades ago, the paper remains one of the most recent attempts to understand moral education in the Philippines.

In this part of the project, I have surveyed the history of moral education over the past century, as it developed in the West, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. I have also located trends in Asia, most notably in China, Japan, the Southeast Asian region, and the Philippines in particular. Trends in moral education have been observed across time and space. Early attempts at doing moral education have been linked to the intimate relationship between moral education and religion. This is particularly prominent in the contemporary world among some countries, notably in Asia. Eventually, in the West, the values clarification tradition emerged. While it has its strengths, especially in encouraging learners to examine their own value system, its weaknesses, primarily its ambiguity and vagueness, eventually led to another school of thought emerging, the cognitive development model of moral education. Emphasizing the capacity to think and navigate moral issues, given the limits of one's biological moral stage, the movement has advanced the conversation, only to reveal its own shortcomings. The character education movement, reminiscent of the Aristotelian virtue ethics tradition, eventually resurfaced, placing a premium on developing character virtues among learners. Moral education, then, has been shown to be a staple in higher education across time and contexts. The permanence has been due for the most part to its innate link to what education should be about: advancing humanity. As long as education and advancing humanity exist, moral education must also exist.

### ***C. Benefits of Moral Education for Students and Society***

In addition to producing morally responsible individuals, moral education has also been established as a significant contributor to the holistic development of individuals. Lovat et al. (2010) assert that effective implementation of moral education in any of its forms also contributes to "holistic educational development, including academic advancement, of students across all school sectors" (p. 713). Their data suggest that moral education can no longer be seen as merely relegated to the limited "outcomes" that we consider moral or ethical. Moral education is an important element in the overall effective learning of students,



as it affords them an opportunity to deepen and develop self-efficacy, among other benefits (Lovat et al., 2010, p. 725). These are skills that are necessary even in students' future professions and, in the long run, in the productivity of a country's human resources. Cubie LL. Lau (2010), in the article "A Step Forward: Ethics Education Matters!" in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, affirms this: that ethics education matters more than ever and specifically, in and for the professions (p. 565). Lau (2010) rebuts the claim that ethical or moral behavior is inborn. Using an instrument to compare the effects of ethics education on business students, Lau (2010) concludes that ethics education helps students develop fundamental competencies that enable them to perform their tasks effectively in the economic frontier. Employing strategies in ethics education equips students with skills such as identifying, analyzing, judging, and evaluating ethical matters in business, as well as applying ethics to real-life decisions (Rossouw, 2002; Sims, 2002). Indeed, the purposes of moral education are not limited to the internal states of individual characters but are as far-reaching as these individuals' professional lives.

At present, moral education remains relevant due to what it potentially offers not only to learners, but also to broader institutions, such as the education sector, individual countries, and the global community. Around the turn of the new millennium, studies supporting moral education as a fundamental aim of education have proliferated in the research world. One such article, Robert W. Howard's (2005) "Preparing Moral Educators in an Era of Standards-Based Reform" in *Teacher Education Quarterly*, offers the view that preparing the next generation of citizens is one of the most important tasks of public education. This citizenship education has inherent ethical elements and issues that cannot be overlooked, extending beyond the realm of formal schooling. While content and mastery are seen as the end of schooling in a standards-based education, Howard (2005) argues that this is just half the task, as the other half should be moral education. Terence J. Lovat and Neville D. Clement (2008) in "The Pedagogical Imperative of Values Education" in the *Journal of Beliefs and Values* present that "evidence from the Australian Government's Values Education Good Practice Schools Project indicates the benefit to all schools of reflecting on, re-evaluating and rethinking the implications of values education for curricula, classroom management and school ethos in the interests of student wellbeing and progress" (p. 273). In their nationwide study, Lovat and Clement (2008) found out that values education "under its diverse forms of moral, character, citizenship or civics education, as well as service learning and programs designed to address social problems such as sex, drug, alcohol, resiliency education and the like, has been the focus of a worldwide renewed interest and energy in recent times (p. 273). The scholars assert a surge in research on moral education and its various aspects due to the perceived need of contemporary times.

Seconding the findings of Lovat and Clement (2008), the article "Moral Development and Student Motivation in Moral Education: A Singapore Study" in *Australian Journal of Education* by Caroline Koh (2012) does not just provide a glimpse of how moral education is being done in Singapore but also provide a sturdy base as to the mentioned need for moral education in the contemporary world. Koh (2012) enumerates the pressing matters worldwide that served as an impetus for the "revived interest in moral education" (p. 83). She mentions a "perceived global malaise resulting, firstly from the surge in criminal and deviant behavior in modern societies and, secondly, from a series of highly publicized violations of ethical conduct in diverse arenas" (Koh, 2012, p. 83) as reasons for the rebirth of



moral education as a relevant topic among authorities, politicians, and administrators. Specifically, she cements her argument by mentioning rampant bullying and academic dishonesty in schools as indicators that there is an urgent need to revisit the issue of moral education in schools. Truly, moral education, over and above its inherent aim, is rich in its urgent purposes.

John Dewey (1960) further emphasizes this idea by collapsing the gap between the individual and society. Dewey (1960, p. 80) asserts that “[t]he human being is an individual because of and in relation with others.” Moral growth is facilitated by the interactions one engages in with others. Moreover, this development’s effects are not limited to the sphere of the individual but extend to her wider social circle and society, in general. The interrelationship between the self and the social setting is then highlighted by Dewey (1960). Morality, for him, cannot be reduced to either an individual project or a societal mission. It is an offshoot of a dynamic relationship between the self and the society in which it is subsumed. Dewey (1975, p.7) reminds us that “[t]he moral responsibility of the school, and of those who conduct it, is to society. The school is fundamentally an institution erected by society to do a certain, specific work – to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society.” In this case, this includes producing moral individuals in society. Because Dewey’s view of moral education is anchored on his view of ‘democracy,’ which he thinks is the way in which people are related to one another, the school should be a place where students are taught and inducted into life in a society. Moral education then lies at the heart of this education.

Finally, the eminent contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2011) does not deviate from this Deweyan project by famously asserting that education is crucial to all human development. Nussbaum (2011) claims that the primary goal of a nation is to develop its members equally, since all individuals possess the same inherent dignity. This even requires helping members of society who most need additional support to attain development. For Nussbaum (2011), education is the engine of human development, providing equal opportunities for all human beings to attain the fruition of their potential. She emphasizes the liberating capacity of knowledge and critical thinking to enhance the autonomy of all human beings, enabling them to make informed decisions and act accordingly. Robeyns (2016) analyzes Nussbaum’s philosophy of education and reflects on how the latter prioritizes social justice and quality of life as the ultimate goals of education. In her book, *Not for Profit*, Nussbaum (2010) argues that education for humanity is closely tied to promoting the democratic values of civil society. Ben Saunders (2010) argues that Nussbaum must be highlighting the usefulness of the humanities and how, collectively, they can benefit society by pointing out how their teaching promotes democratic values that are crucial in a functioning society. Indeed, for Nussbaum, “education’s role is to foster a reflective type of thinking, decision making, behavior and action in all human beings, including those with mental disabilities, within the scope of their intellectual, cognitive, mental and volitional skills and abilities” (Gluchman, 2018). All efforts in education, then, including moral education, should be about developing and improving thinking, reflection, analysis, and decision-making in order to propel human development. Moral education, then, obviously, falls under the kind of education for the humanities that Nussbaum so vigorously adopts.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the extensive history of moral education to determine how moral education has been conceptualized in academia over time and across different contexts. A parallel review of the development and progress of moral education pedagogy has been undertaken to identify the trends and methods that have both been effective and unsuccessful over time. It has also been shown that numerous studies support the claim that moral education has tremendous beneficial consequences for both learners and their community. Moral education, then, as a fabric of society, must continue to exist because it has always been an integral part of education, serving as an innate component of improving humanity. Additionally, it has proven its many advantageous consequences time and time again.

#### V. REFERENCES

- Arthur, J. & Carr, D. (2013). Character in Learning for Life: A Virtue-Ethical Rationale for Recent Research on Moral and Values Education. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 34(1), 26-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2013.759343>
- Bebeau, M., Rest, J., and Narvaez, D. (1999). Beyond the Promise: A Perspective on Research in Moral Education. *Educational Researcher*, 28(4), 18-26. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X028004018>
- Bonoan, R. (1984). Education Revisited: Truth and Justice as Educational Goals. *Philippine Studies*, 32(4), 401-415. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42632734>
- Carr, D. (2005). *Making Sense of Education*. Routledge Falmer.
- Chazan, B. (1985). *Contemporary Approaches to Moral Education*. Teachers College Press.
- Cheng, H. (2020). A Critical Review of Chinese Theoretical Research on Moral Education Since 2000. *ECNU Review of Education*, 2(4), 561-580. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531119886490>
- Curren, R., & Kotzee, B. (2014). Can virtue be measured? *Theory and Research in Education*, 12(3), 266-282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878514545205>
- Connecticut Common School Journal. (1839). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Durkheim, E. (1979). Contribution to Morality Without God: An Attempt to Find a Collectivist Solution. In W. S. F. Pickering (Ed.), *Durkheim: Essays on Morals and Education*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Ellenwood, S. (2006). Revisiting Character Education: From McGuffey to Narratives. *The Journal of Education*, 187(3).
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gluchman, V. (2018). *Ethics of social consequences: Philosophical, applied and professional challenges*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hoffman, S. (1999). School Texts, the written word, and political indoctrination: A review of moral education curricula in modern Japan (1886-1997). *History of Education*, 28(1), 87-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/004676099284816>
- Howard, R. (2005). Preparing Moral Educators in an Era of Standards-Based Reform. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 32(4), 43-58. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23478745>

- Jeynes, W. & Robinson, D. (2010). Character Education in Christian Higher Education: A Historical Analysis and Contemporary Challenge (Part I). *Christian Higher Education*, 295-315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363751003780514>
- Kim, M. & Taylor, M. (2017). Cultivating morality in the Asia-Pacific: Influences, Issues, Challenges and Change. *Journal of Moral Education*, 46(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2017.1285222>
- Koh, C. (2012). Moral Development and Student Motivation in Moral Education: A Singapore Study. *Australian Journal of Education*, 56(1), 82-101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000494411205600107>
- Li, M. (1990). Moral education in the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Moral Education*, 19(3), 159-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724900190302>
- Lau, C.L. (2010). A Step Forward: Ethics Education Matters!. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 92(4), 565-584. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40605317>
- Lovat, T. J., & Clement, N. D. (2008). The pedagogical imperative of values education. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 29(3), 273-285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617670802465821>
- Lovat, T., Clement, N., Dally, K., & Toomey, R. (2010). Values Education as Holistic Development for all Sectors: Researching for Effective Pedagogy. *Oxford Review of Education*, 36(6), 713-329. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25801425>.
- McGregor, S. (2018). *Understanding and Evaluating Research: A Critical Guide*. Sage
- Moore, T. (1982). *Philosophy of Education: An Introduction*. Routledge.
- Mulder, N. (2001). Realism in Philippine Values Education. *Philippine Studies*, 49(3), 429-444. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634452>
- Noddings, N. (2010). Moral Education and Caring. *Theory and Research in Education*, 8(2), 145-151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878510368617>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2010) *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Belknap Press.
- Raths, L., Harmin, M., & Simon, S. (1973). *Values and Teaching: Working with Values in the Classroom*. Charles E. Merrill professional publication.
- Robeyns, I. (2016). Capabilitarianism. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17(3), 397-414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2016.1145631>
- Robinson, D., & Jeynes, W. H. (2010). Character Education in Christian Higher Education: A Historical Analysis and Contemporary Challenge (Part II). *Christian Higher Education*, 9(4), 316-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363751003780530>
- Rocco, T.S., & Plakhotnik, M.S. (2011). Increasing the odds of publishing a qualitative manuscript. In T.S. Rocco & T. Hatcher [Eds.], *The handbook of scholarly writing and publishing* (pp. 161-178). Jossey-Bass.
- Rossouw, G. J. (2002). Three approaches to teaching business ethics. *Teaching Business Ethics*, 68(4), 411-433. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021159310821>
- Saunders, B. (2010). How to teach moral theories in applied ethics. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 36(10), 635-638. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jme.2009.032052>

- Singsuriya, P., Aungsumali, W., & Worapong, S. (2014). Narrative approach to moral education: A case of Thailand. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 9(3), 209-225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197914534818>
- Suttle, B.B. (1982). Moral Education Versus Values Clarification. *The Journal of Educational Thought*, 16(1), 35-41. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23768128>
- Tang, H. & Wang, Y. (2020). Moral Education Curriculum Reform for China's Elementary and Middle Schools in the Twenty-First Century: Past Progress and Future Prospects. *ECNU Review of Education*, 4(4), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531120923416>
- Wills, D. (1873). Moral Education. *The Maine Journal of Education*, 7(10), 366-368. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44860444>