

## Editorial

# The Moral Core of Teaching

**Kirsi Tirri,<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Campbell,<sup>2</sup> Liam Gearon,<sup>3</sup> and Terence J. Lovat<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> *Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, 00014 Helsinki, Finland*

<sup>2</sup> *Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada M5S 1V6*

<sup>3</sup> *Department of Education, University of Oxford, Oxford OX2 6PY, UK*

<sup>4</sup> *Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, Newcastle, NSW 2308, Australia*

Correspondence should be addressed to Kirsi Tirri, [kirsi.tirri@helsinki.fi](mailto:kirsi.tirri@helsinki.fi)

Received 18 July 2012; Accepted 18 July 2012

Copyright © 2012 Kirsi Tirri et al. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Nowadays, schools all over the world are under pressure to create safe, orderly, and effective learning environments wherein students can acquire social as well as academic skills, which will allow them to succeed in school and beyond. Over the last two decades, student populations—as well as those of teachers—have become increasingly diverse. Students and teachers sharing the same school can come from a broad range of cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. Schools face the challenge of creating pedagogical environments that are sensitive to numerous individual backgrounds in order to support students' social and academic success. In this kind of educational atmosphere, the moral core of teaching and the teacher's role as a moral educator are important issues in school pedagogy. Furthermore, updated research illustrates that pedagogy imbued with a moral core has ramifications for student well-being and achievement.

The main focus of this special issue is on the moral core of teaching. It is an international forum for researchers to summarize the most recent developments and ideas in the field, with special emphasis given to the role that teachers should play in moral education. In this special issue, we have nine papers from three different countries, Finland, the Netherlands, and Iran. These three countries represent very different academic, religious, and sociological contexts for education. Finland is known to be Europe's highest achiever in international PISA tests in mathematics, science, and reading and was also the first Nordic country to establish the Ethical Code for Teachers in 1998. Six papers from Finland discuss the moral core of teaching in different contexts, including early education, elementary and secondary school, science education, and teacher education.

Two papers from Iran deal with Iranian teachers' moral competence and discuss the moral nature of teaching in an Islamic country. In the Netherlands, moral education is seen as an important part of citizenship development. Schools in the Netherlands should actively promote the citizenship skills of their students, including in terms of their social integration. The Dutch paper introduces teachers' and students' views of the goals and practices in moral and citizenship education at the secondary level.

One paper of this special issue addresses the moral foundations of kindergarten teachers' educational approach from the perspective of sensitivity towards religion and worldviews. In the context of multicultural and pluralistic early education in Finland, continuous negotiations among the staff and families are necessary. Another paper continues the discussion on religious differences and presents a unique study of 16 Muslim youngsters' ideas on how to deal with religious and cultural differences in the context of Finnish society.

Moreover, a paper from Finland presents elementary school children's perceptions of moral behavior, with a focus on bullying and in the imaginary context of them possessing the infinite powers of superhero defenders. Also another paper presents empirical data of Dutch teachers' and students' views on moral education and citizenship education in vocational schools in the Netherlands. A paper that deals with the scientific, societal, and moral questions concerning science asked by gifted international students who study in the summer Camp in Finland is also presented.

The rest of the papers in this issue deal with teachers' moral competence. Two papers validate the instrument on

teachers' ethical sensitivity based on American theory with Finnish and Iranian teachers' data. The findings demonstrate similarities and differences among teachers from different cultures in their ethical sensitivity. A paper from Iran addresses the importance of caring in teaching and develops a quantitative instrument to measure the caring behavior of teachers. Another paper in this special issue explores the supervisory relationship as an arena for ethical problem solving in the context of doctoral supervision in higher education. All nine papers of this special issue focus on the moral core of teaching, contributing to its understanding through new perspectives, instrument development, or empirical data that have not been previously published.

*Kirsi Tirri*  
*Elizabeth Campbell*  
*Liam Gearon*  
*Terence J. Lovat*



# Hindawi

Submit your manuscripts at  
<http://www.hindawi.com>

