

INTEGRATING VALUES CLARIFICATION AND CHARACTER EDUCATION IN TEACHING RESEARCH INTEGRITY

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SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Universities worldwide are in search of effective measures for countering unethical practices and promoting research integrity in order to maintain public trust in science. Besides developing various **guidelines** and **codes of ethics**, a great deal of effort is put toward developing **teaching research integrity**. Studies show that there is substantial variation in the content, duration, timing and methodological approaches (Abdi, Pizzolato, Nemer et al. 2021).

FIRST QUESTION: Should we aim to identify the best teaching method?

Depending on which ethics theory one prefers, one either focuses on virtues or principles.

- The strength of the **principle-based** approach is its usefulness in providing guidelines for activity in certain situations. However, since the principles are often articulated negatively, they are too formal and they lack the internal impetus to follow them.
- The strength of the **virtue-based** approach is that the person who has developed proper virtues not only has an understanding of what is morally good, but is also habituated to act accordingly.

As a matter of fact, **principles and virtues** can be viewed as **complementary**. While principles serve as good guides to cultivating professional virtues, having proper dispositions helps to guarantee that principles are followed in a reflective and wholehearted manner.

The focus is gradually moving from the legalistic way of teaching the **principles and compliance** with rules about what not to do to a **virtue-ethics approach**, which pays attention to the researchers' moral and value development and aims toward fostering positive character traits – virtues – that dispose a person to exemplary practice (Pennock 2018; Berling, E., et al 2019; Evans, N., et al 2021).

This shift to virtue ethics may have a positive effect. If researchers follow the norms only because they must do so or because they fear sanctions, they lack integrity. If there is a gap between external norms and internal values, there is a danger that scientists will ignore or violate the norms if not watched, and this creates the need to increase control and policing. Too much control will destroy trust between scientists and society. Thus, the aim should be to make scientists internalize the positive values and act upon them.

SECOND QUESTION: Are there any specific scientific virtues?

Good science has two simultaneous dimensions: **high research quality** and **ethically correct science**.

PROBLEM: there is no shared understanding of which virtues scientists should develop.

- In our EU-project PRO-RES we analyzed existing codes and guidelines, identifying 24 values (Parder and Juurik 2019).
- Edmund Pellegrino (1992) listed objectivity, critical thinking, honesty with respect to data, freedom from prejudice and sharing knowledge with the scientific community.
- Robert T. Pennock (2018) speaks about specific **“scientific virtues”**: honesty, curiosity, attentiveness or observance; perseverance or patience, objectivity; humility toward evidence, scepticism, meticulousness; courage and collaboration.
- Why these “scientific virtues”? Because they meet **the ends** to which the profession of science is dedicated.

PROBLEMS with this approach:

- Are these ends similar for different types of science?
- Does an excellent scientist only need “scientific virtues” or do we also want her to have certain personal values and be exemplary in every way?

? “Can a vicious person be a good scientist?”

As integrity means **“wholeness”**, one cannot have integrity if one fails to hold a coherent set of values or fails to live up to her values. If being a good scientist means having integrity, and integrity is understood as being faithful to moral values, the answer to the above question is no. However, besides moral values a good scientist should also have other virtues.

THIRD QUESTION: What would be the advantage of adopting Aristotle’s approach to virtues?

It would be useful to enrich research integrity through the incorporation of a neo-Aristotelian character education framework which sees different types of virtues as the building blocks of good character, which is a prerequisite of living a good life.

Intellectual virtues:	Moral virtues:	Civic virtues:	Performance virtues:
autonomy	honesty	citizenship	confidence
critical thinking	gratitude	community awareness	determination
curiosity	humility	service	motivation
reasoning	justice	volunteering	resilience
reflection	respect		teamwork
	compassion		

For Aristotle, these virtues form a coherent, mutually supportive whole in a well-rounded life, guided by the overarching intellectual virtue of *phronēsis*, practical wisdom or good sense (A Framework for Character Education).

While the perfect unity of the virtues can be set as an aim that character education should strive for, most people will never reach that ideal. In achieving „virtue literacy“, one goes through different steps:

1. by developing understanding of the meaning of the virtue term and why the virtue is important,
2. by developing the ability to apply the virtue to real-life contexts,
3. by learning to make reasoned judgements and autonomous decision-making.

FOURTH QUESTION: Are character education and values clarification in conflict?

Character education aligns with Aristotle’s perspective on virtues as behavioral inclinations that become habitual through practice (Kristjánsson, 2015). Research institutions play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of integrity that nurtures researchers’ behavioral inclinations and virtuous character qualities, enabling them to perform morally required actions (Forsberg, E. et al. 2018).

Character education is often set in contradiction with **values clarification**, which perceives values as personal entities, ones that individuals consciously choose, take pride in, and publicly affirm among a spectrum of alternatives, free from coercion.

The values clarification approach adopts a pluralistic stance towards values, asserting that diverse value models coexist within pluralistic societies. Rather than prescribing specific values, proponents of values clarification have devised a process for elucidating and developing values. This can be done through rating value statements, completing unfinished sentences, employing discussion cards, and engaging in group discussions.

However, there are compelling reasons to believe that these two approaches are not opposite but **complementary**. This becomes especially clear when character education is understood in terms of Aristotelian virtue ethics which affirms **moral deliberation** as the core element of values clarification. On the other hand, if the aim is to make people act upon the values they have freely chosen through reflection and discussion, there must be an **environment** which supports practicing them and nurtures ethical behavior by offering proper incentives.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe that an integrated approach, blending the virtues of values clarification and character education, enables learners to engage in **reflective value exploration** while simultaneously cultivating **virtuous character traits**. By harnessing the strengths of both methodologies, research integrity education can be enriched and more effectively contribute to the development of ethically responsible researchers.

Also, both principles and virtues have relevance for ethics education. In **teaching principles**, one should examine what the principles mean, how they apply, and how to weigh them and arrange them in a hierarchy when needed. In mentoring one should focus on showing how principles can be interpreted and applied to ethical decision-making. To **teach virtues**, one should start from virtue perception: recognizing them and noticing situations in need of the virtues; moving then to their understanding and application to concrete situations. Giving feedback to actions helps to develop desired dispositions. In mentoring, one can set an example of being committed to the virtues as well as showing the students how to do the right thing in the right way.

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