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*Le competenze
in educazione e formazione*

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Concepción Naval - María Carmen González-Torres
Aurora Bernal

Character Education
*International Perspectives*¹

1. *Introduction*

We have, for years, been witnessing growing interest in the personal and moral education of children and teenagers²; this means that it has become more and more common to hear about certain approaches in education that specify how to carry this out. Most important among these approaches is what is called Character Education (Ce).

The boom in education of programs on this aspect can, to a certain extent, be explained because society considers that education is one of the principal ways to avoid harmful conducts dangerous to individuals and in society. It is also believed that education will promote the conditions and behaviors that encourage health, well-being, success, integration and social participation. Some problems affecting young people, such as addictions, bullying, truancy, stress, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, academic failure and interpersonal conflicts may be avoided

¹ A short version of part of the content of this paper was published in Spanish: A. Bernal - M.C. González-Torres - C. Naval, *La educación del carácter. Perspectivas internacionales*, in «Participación educativa» 4/6 (2015), Monographic issue: *Valores, virtudes y éxito escolar*, pp. 35-45. Thanks to the editors for the authorization to use it.

² F. Altarejos - C. Naval, *Filosofía de la educación*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2000; N. López de Dicastillo - C. Iriarte - M.C. González-Torres, *Competencia social y educación cívica*, Síntesis, Madrid 2008; L.P. Nucci, *Nice Is not Enough. Facilitating Moral Development*, Merrill-Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River NJ 2009; Id. - D. Narváez (eds.), *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, Routledge, New York 2008; M.V. Trianes - C. Fernández, *Aprender a ser personas y a convivir. Un programa para secundaria*, Desclee de Brouwer, Bilbao 2001.

by means of more appropriate education. The vital goals of any child (well-being and happiness, fitting in socially, friends, healthy leisure, good school performance, etc.) are more attainable if the child has access to an education which spans all their abilities.

The first step in this article is to briefly describe the recent history of the decline and revival of Ce in the 20th century; in a second section this movement is compared with other contemporary ones such as *Social Emotional Learning* or *Positive Youth Development* and the impact that Positive Psychology has had on their expansion. The study presented in this article is set in an Anglo-Saxon context, particularly in the United States.

2. *Beginnings and decline of Character Education*

In the last few decades, Ce has become an *umbrella* term as it gathers together several initiatives which are linked with education in virtues, education and values, citizen education and education for personal development, amongst others. However, we can see that this term has been used more specifically to refer to a certain approach to moral education.

Ce is not a new idea, in fact it responds to a classic approach to education as proposed by Aristotle, in line with Greek tradition which deals with the concepts of virtue, happiness and good citizenship and has permeated Western culture throughout history, merging with other sources of ethics³.

This classically inspired moral education intended to enable people to behave freely and morally well, granting relevance to the promotion of civic attitudes and the virtues of the good citizen⁴ remained valid until the 1960s in American public schools that adopted the Christian principles of the named “Sunday Schools”.

It was in that decade that the decline of Ce began, although it had been predicted, as we shall see, some years previously⁵. We could point

³ A. Bernal, *Educación del carácter, educación moral. Propuestas educativas de Aristóteles y Rousseau*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1998.

⁴ C. Naval, *Educación ciudadana. La polémica liberal-comunitarista en educación*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2000².

⁵ L. Vargas - M.C. González-Torres, *The Revitalization of Character Education in Today's*

out several reasons, but perhaps the most crucial is a change in the perspective on moral education brought about, on the one hand, by the course of psychology, and, on the other, by the ethical prism proposed by philosophers such as Rousseau and Kant which was becoming more and more influential. The legacy of these thinkers can be seen in the emphasis given to the individual's autonomy as one of the main values in education⁶. Autonomy is understood as the characteristic of the subject who is capable of thinking for himself with no external interference, and is therefore capable of organizing his life following his own autonomous moral judgment. Thus begins a vision of moral education which casts aside the idea that the subject should be clearly taught the meaning of good and what values should be sought.

This change in the conception of moral education which was of such great importance until the end of the 20th century was forged in a sociopolitical and cultural context characterized by the conquest of individual rights, individualist lifestyles, a new way of understanding authority, the supreme value of work and competitiveness and of major speedy scientific and technical productivity⁷. In addition, these new trends in education triumphed, to a certain extent, due to the ways psychology was understood and practiced⁸.

In this context we must underline four elements that explain why Ce was relegated at that time⁹:

- The rise of the evolutionist theory questioned the idea of morality considered valid until then. This new approach sought to describe the successive stages followed by individuals as they change; thus, great importance

Educational Psychology Arena. Contributions from the Science of Prevention and Positive Psychology, in «Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology», 7/3 (2009), n. 19, pp. 1379-1418.

⁶ C. Hoff, *The Science of Character Education*, in W. Damon (ed.), *Bringing in a New Era in Character Education*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford CA 2002, pp. 43-63.

⁷ M.M. Murphy, *Character Education in America's Blue Ribbon Schools. Best Practices for Meeting the Challenge*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham MA 2002².

⁸ T. Lickona, *Educación del Carácter. Cultivar la Virtud*, in C. Reigeluth (ed.), *Diseño de la instrucción. Teorías y modelos. Un nuevo paradigma de la teoría de la instrucción*, Aula XXI-Santillana, Madrid 1999, pp. 139-160.

⁹ *Ibidem*, L. Vargas - M.C. González-Torres, *The Revitalization of Character Education*, cit.

was given to the evolutionist development of the individuals, setting the description of the stages of growth within the moral dimension. In this way, Kohlberg's evolutionary cognitive psychological theory triumphed, as we will later see.

- Einstein's theory of relativity which, going beyond the limits of physics, affected the discussion of the relativity of values to guide one's own life.
- Positivism and the adoption of experimental methodologies in the area of psychology which, with the command in the 1920s of the behavior paradigm, was unwilling to focus on conduct dimensions with evaluative connotations which were not easily observed or measured. In this context the research in the school area about character carried out by Hartshorne and May (1928-1930) questioned the existence of stable dispositions of conduct, by showing that the ethical conduct of the students depended to a huge extent on the situation. In this way, they announced the death of the idea of *character* as a construct of interest for psychological research. In passing, and as a result of this belief, the efficacy of the programs applied from the character education approach was called into question¹⁰.
- Humanist psychology, with its proposals on self-fulfillment, also contributed somewhat to the devaluation of the idea of virtue, of the existence of universal values, and so, of character education. Allport (1897-1967), the father of the psychology of personality, contributed to the disappearance of the term character from academic discourse as he considered it to be more philosophical than psychological. This decline occurred approximately in the 1940s¹¹.

The paradigm that replaced Ce was called Moral Education and spread beyond the frontiers of America and became the model for moral education practice in schools. Its main promoter was Kohlberg and it was accepted thanks to the success of his theory – presented as irrefutable science – of *Cognitive Moral Development* based on the legacy of Piaget and the fact that it was relatively easy to put into practice. In

¹⁰ J. Leming, *Research and Practice in Character Education. A Historical Perspective*, in A. Molnar (ed.), *The Construction of Children's Character*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 1997.

¹¹ C. Peterson, *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006.

short, this theory describes the stages of moral development and how to bring about moral reasoning leading to autonomy, as the main goal of moral education. This moral education model encourages students to practice moral reasoning by use of moral dilemmas, and to develop a sense of respect towards others as individuals in society through the practice of democracy and dialogue in the classroom. Several proposals based on this theory, such as the methodology called *Values Clarification*, were used in education centers in the United States in the 1970s and 80s and spread to other democratic countries¹². The values clarification method became very well-known due to the guide published by Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum¹³.

Moral education was expressed in programs in which the education action consisted of accompanying the children and young people in the development of moral reasoning so that they would be capable of independently choosing which values to follow in their conduct¹⁴; the idea was to avoid teacher intervention explicitly presenting ideas such as good or value, together with examples of virtuous actions. Such actions were considered more or less subtle indoctrination and at the same time it was thought that habits formation involves a process of familiarization which excludes reasoning.

In this context, the concepts of character, Ce and virtue were considered somewhat anachronistic, conservative, out-of-date and linked to religion, while terms such as attitudes and values were better received.

3. Resurgence of Character Education

Not until the 1990s was there a resurgence of the Ce movement in Eeuu which also spread to Europe, primarily to the United Kingdom.

Why did Ce make a comeback? The explanation can be found by observing what occurred in what may be considered the first stage of

¹² L. Vargas - M.C. González-Torres, *The Revitalization of Character Education in Today's Educational Psychology Arena*, cit.; C. Naval, *Educar ciudadanos*, cit.

¹³ L.E. Raths - M. Harmin - S.B. Simon, *Values and Teaching*, Merrill, Columbus OH 1966.

¹⁴ S.B. Simon - L.W. Howe - H. Kirschenbaum, *Values Clarification. A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students*, Values, Hadley MA 1995 (Hart, New York 1972¹).

this movement, with several designations such as *traditional perspectives of Ce*¹⁵ or the *return of a renovated Ce*¹⁶.

From the review studies of Vargas, González-Torres and Beltramo we will synthesize the trajectory of this Ce movement¹⁷.

In order to analyze this education trend we must again mention, on the one hand, elements of social and cultural context which demanded a change in the moral education as was being practiced in schools, and on the other, the criticism presented by the psycho-educational research of the education models until the final decade of the 20th century, which were dictated by Kohlberg's approach to moral education.

Cunningham¹⁸ points out a series of events which brought about a change in the paradigm: the disparity of values in Usa society – due mainly to individualism and immigration –, a concern to achieve a certain harmony, the spread in the number of serious acts of violence amongst young people and drug consumption. This concern reached the public administration which asked itself how to avoid to these problems in children, teenagers and young people. It was felt that the current moral education had failed, so measures were taken to encourage other types of moral education, under the Ce umbrella, and this soon spread to public and private schools.

Also of influence in this change was the rise of the communitarian political movement, which, amongst other issues, champions the transmission of shared traditions and values between the generations¹⁹. In addition, in the academic world of the university this need for change was also felt, in order to help prevent and reduce many problems among young people, something that the other proposals on moral education had not managed to do, and to help the students be honest individu-

¹⁵ L. Vargas - M.C. González-Torres, *The Revitalization of Character Education*, cit.

¹⁶ C. Beltramo, *La Pedagogía de la Integración de la persona humana*, doctoral thesis (unpublished), Universidad de Navarra 2013.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*; L. Vargas - M.C. González-Torres, *The Revitalization of Character Education in Today's Educational Psychology Arena*, cit.

¹⁸ C. Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art. The Aise and Fall of Character Education in America*, in D.K. Lapsley - F.C. Power (eds.), *Character Psychology and Character Education*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame Ind. 2005.

¹⁹ C. Naval, *Educuar ciudadanos*, cit.

als and committed citizens. Scientific critiques were then produced on the Kohlberg model and the practice of Value Clarification. In short, the criticism covered the following points: strengthening the capacity for reasoning is not enough to achieve good behavior, there are other important dimensions apart from rationality, such as affectivity; dealing with the formal dimensional of reason is not enough, the contents of the values must be shown so that people may choose, practice and be motivated. In other words, we are not morally good due simply to good moral reasoning, but must also behave in a correct moral way.

Representative of this critical viewpoint was Kilpatrick's exposition, as suggested in the title of his 1992 book: *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong* (Touchstone, New York). Likewise the work of Lapsley and Narváez²⁰, who began their research following the Kohlberg model, shows that people do not mature well or mature badly morally if they are only taught minimal ethics. With time they proposed a moral education that included the main findings of different theories.

In the 1990s, apart from the above-mentioned criticism there was also an increase in the philosophical movement known as neo-Aristotelianism. Thus, there is a return to the classic notion of character as living virtue on Ce as proposed by Aristoteles in his works. A fact that is clear if we glance at the bibliography published by the main exponents of the Character Revitalization Movement²¹.

²⁰ D.K. Lapsley - D. Narváez, *Moral Psychology at the Crossroads*, in D.K. Lapsley - F.C. Power (eds.), *Character Psychology and Character Education*, cit.

²¹ J.S. Benninga (ed.), *Moral, Character, and Civic Education in the Elementary School*, Teacher College Press, New York 1991; Id. - E. Wynne, *Keeping in Character. A Time-tested Solution*, in «Phi Delta Kappan», 6/79 (1998), pp. 439-447; M.W. Berkowitz, *Building a Good Person*, in M. Williams - E. Schaps (eds.), *Character Education. The Foundation for Teacher Education*, Character Education Partnership, Washington 1999, pp. 19-23; Id., *Character Education as Prevention*, in W.B. Hansen - S.M. Giles - M.D. Fernow-Keney (eds.), *Increasing Drug Prevention Effectiveness. Readings for Educators*, Tanglewood Research, Clemmons NC 2000, pp. 43-63; Id., *The Science of Character Education*, in W. Damon (ed.), *Bringing in a New Era in Character Education*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford CA 2002; E. De Roche - M. Williams, *Educating Hearts and Minds*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks CA 1998; T. Lickona, *Educating for Character. How our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*, Bantam Books, New York 1991; Id., *Educating for Character. A Comprehensive Approach*, in A. Molnar (ed.), *The Construction of Children's Character* (Yearbook of National Society for the Study of Education, 96/2), Nsse-University of Chicago Press,

Virtues and character are the aims of moral education which were then circulating. What is most remarkable is the determination to do what is named in the title of a work by H.S. Salls, *Character Education. Transforming Values into Virtue*²².

Next we will underline some of the most important milestones which contributed to the revival of Ce in the 1990's.

- In 1992 the *Josephson Institute of Ethics* called a meeting in Aspen, Colorado, of a group of 30 national leaders (amongst whom were teachers, youth leaders, politicians and experts in ethics) to reflect on Ce and stimulate collaborative work. What is known as the *Aspen Declaration on Character Education* became a milestone marking the beginning of this Ce movement. Face-to-face with the prevailing ethical relativism and moral education, they proposed a list of central values – *core values*– which society as a whole could accept as good and they engaged to uphold a moral education which would promote these core values. Outstanding in this task are authors such as Kevin Ryan, Eric Schaps, Gary Edwards, Thomas Lickona and Marvin Berkowitz. They called on both the schools and the families and communities to be responsible for this Ce of the youngest members of society.
- Due to this milestone, in 1993, two non-profit organizations were set up which have since promoted Ce all over the country. The first of these is *Character Counts! Coalition*, and the second is *Character Education Partnership* (Cep). This latter institution, for example, identified 11 basic principles (*Cep's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*) to be taken into account by the centers in order to develop effective Ce²³.

Chicago 1997, pp. 45-62; B.E. McClellan, *Schools and the Shaping of Character. Moral Education in America*, Eric Clearinghouse for Social Studies-Social Studies Development Center, Bloomington Ind. 1992; K. Ryan - T. Lickona (eds.), *Character Development in Schools and Beyond*, Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington 1991; K. Ryan - K.E. Bohlin, *Building Character in Schools. Practical Ways to Bring Moral Instruction to Life*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco 1999; E. Schaps - V. Battistich - D. Solomon, *School as a Caring Community. A Key to Character Education*, in A. Molnar (ed.), *The Construction of Children's Character*, cit., pp. 127-139; E. Wynne - E. Ryan, *Reclaiming our Schools. Teaching Character, Academics, and Discipline*, Merrill, Upper Saddle River NJ 1997².

²² University Press of America, Lanham.

²³ T. Lickona - E. Schaps - C. Lewis, *Character Education Partnership (Cep). Eleven Princi-*

- The American government, independently of its political ideology, backed the implementation of Ce programs. As a sample we can underline that since 1995 the federal government has offered substantial public funding to help its States set up Ce programs in the schools all over the country and to evaluate its efficacy. In 2002, it was decided that the topic for the annual White House Conference should be “Character and Community”; it brought together some of the most representative authors of the Ce movement (Damon, Narváez, Schaps, Walker, amongst others).
- In 1996, the *Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character*, presided by Lickona, one of the main sources of inspiration and leader of the Ce Movement, published the *Character Education Manifesto* which intended to offer a clear definition of the concept of character and to unify a series of core principles so that education policy would boost the use of Ce programs in the schools. This manifesto was signed by several governments in different Usa states.

On the whole, the rise of Ce was due to the fact that, within a difficult youth context, a broad consensus was generated by educational, political, economic and society authorities in general, in which youth Ce was seen as the key to avoid conducts of risk and to form honest individuals and active participative citizens²⁴. Since then there has been rapid growth of the bibliography on the subject, development of programs for intervention, for theoretical and empirical research, and an enormous political push to fund the integration of Ce into educational centers²⁵.

ples of Effective Character Education, Character Education Partnership, Washington 2003: <http://www.forcharacter.com/page12.html>.

²⁴ C. Naval, *Educación de la sociabilidad*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2009.

²⁵ M.W. Berkowitz - M.C. Bier, *What Works in Character Education. A Research-driven Guide for Educator*, Character Education Partnership, Washington 2004; Idd., *What Works in Character Education. A Report for Policy Makers and Opinion Leaders*, *ibi*, 2005; Character Education Partnership - Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character Blue Ribbon Panel, *National Schools of Character. Best Practices and New Perspectives*, *ibi*, 1999; C. Cunningham, *A Certain and Reasoned Art*, *cit.*; W. Damon, *Bringing in a New Era of Character Education*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford CA 2002; D.K. Lapsley - D. Narváez, *Character Education*, in W. Damon - R.M. Lerner - K.A. Renninger - I.E. Sigel (eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken NJ 2006; M.M. Murphy, *Three Essential Components of Character Development*, in C. Naval - C.

4. Consolidation of the Ce Movement

Following this first stage of the spread and conviction on the opportunity and validity of Ce, there occurred a stage of greater study and theoretical empirical research both of its bases and practical projections. There was a move to carry out in-depth studies and examination of the different methodologies and means of educating character²⁶; new models were established²⁷ and what had been developed in the 1990s was updated²⁸ encouraged by the contributions of psychology (more specifically Positive Psychology), Sociology, Ethics, Neuroscience, and by the scientific developments in the areas that maintain the field of Prevention, which offer concepts and methodologies that facilitate education in virtues²⁹. Outstanding also is the arrival of the specialized scientific «Journal of Research in Character Education».

Urpí (eds.), *Una voz diferente en la educación moral*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2001; D. Narváez, *Integrative Ethical Education*, in M. Killen - J. Smetana (eds.), *Handbook of Moral Development*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah NJ 2006, pp. 703-734.

²⁶ M.W. Berkowitz - M.C. Bier, *What Works in Character Education*, cit.; Idd., *What Works in Character Education*, cit.

²⁷ D. Narváez, *Integrative Ethical Education*, cit.

²⁸ T. Lickona - M. Davidson, *Report to the Nation. Smart & Good High Schools. Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond*, Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility), State University of New York College at Cortland, Character Education Partnership, Washington 2005; M. Davidson - T. Lickona - V. Khmelkov, *Smart & Good Schools. A New Paradigm for High School Character Education*, in L.P. Nucci - D. Narváez (eds.), *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, cit., pp. 370-391.

²⁹ M.W. Berkowitz, *Character Education as Prevention*, cit.; Id., *The Science of Character Education*, cit.; Id. - M.C. Bier, *What Works in Character Education*, cit.; Idd., *What Works in Character Education*, cit.; M.W. Berkowitz - V.A. Battistich - M.C. Bier, *What Works in Character Education, What is Known and what need to be Known*, in L.P. Nucci - D. Narváez (eds.), *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, cit., pp. 414-431; R.F. Catalano - J.D. Hawkins - J.W. Toumbourou, *Positive Youth Development in the United States. History, Efficacy and Links to Moral and Character Education*, *ibi*, pp. 459-483; T. Lickona - M. Davidson, *Report to the Nation. Smart & Good High Schools*, cit.; M. Davidson - T. Lickona - V. Khmelkov, *Smart & Good Schools. A New Paradigm for High School Character Education*, cit.; D.K. Lapsley - D. Narváez, *Moral Psychology at the Crossroads*, cit.; N. Park, *Positive Development. Realizing the Potential of Youth. Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development*, in «Annals of The American Academy of Political and, Social Science», 591 (2004), pp. 40-54; C. Peterson - M. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues. A Handbook and Classification*, American Psychological Association-Oxford University Press Washington-New York 2004.

In this stage we find a tendency to consider the necessary integration of the different individual aspects as a “necessary condition” to achieve moral behavior. This way reason is just as important as the emotions, to know how to behave as important as behavior itself, the physical dimension as important as the spiritual one, the individual dimensional as important as the social and also the habituation driven by reasons.

The work of reflection can be seen in the variety of proposals which had been presented by the beginning of the third millennium and show the status which has again been reached by Ce. The compilations by Damon (2002), Nucci and Narváez (2008), and Lapsley and Power (2005)³⁰ are a clear exponent of the scientific production of this period. They all show that Ce must be projected taking moral development into account, which implies bringing together knowledge, affect and conduct; it also emphasizes the fact that the teacher must become a model, and it insists on the importance of the social climate and the suitable social contexts.

In the following table we present six important Ce proposals which, although different, have many points in common. Five of them appeared in the 1990s and were analyzed by Williams and Schaps in 1999³¹.

Table 1: *Ce Proposals*

<p><i>Care Communities</i> by M. Watson and Nel Noddings Insists on <i>Core Values</i></p>	<p>M. Watson, <i>Developmental Discipline and Moral Education</i>, in L.P. Nucci - D. Narváez (eds.), <i>Handbook of Moral and Character Education</i>, Routledge, New York 2008, pp. 175-203. N. Noddings, <i>Caring and Moral Education</i>, <i>ibi</i>, pp. 161-174.</p>
<p><i>Constructivist approach of socio-moral development</i> by R. Devries Insists on <i>Moral Rules</i></p>	<p>R. Devries, <i>Implications of Piaget's Constructivist Theory for Character Education</i>, in «Action in Teacher Education», 20/4 (1999), pp. 39-47.</p>

³⁰ W. Damon (ed.), *Bringing in a New Era of Character Education*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford CA 2002; L.P. Nucci - D. Narváez (eds.), *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, cit.; Lapsley - F.C. Power (eds.), *Character Psychology and Character Education*, cit.

³¹ M. Williams - E. Schaps (eds.), *Character Education. The Foundation for Teacher Education*, Character Education Partnership, Washington 1999.

<p><i>Development perspective of the child</i> by Marvin Berkowitz Insists on <i>virtues</i></p>	<p>M.W. Berkowitz, <i>The Science of Character Education</i>, in W. Damon (ed.), <i>Bringing in a New Era in Character Education</i>, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford CA 2002, pp. 44-63.</p>
<p><i>Integrative approach</i> by Thomas Lickona Reformulated later in the model proposed by Davidson and Lickona Insists on <i>virtues</i></p>	<p>T. Lickona, <i>Character Matters. How to Help our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues</i>, Simon & Schuster, New York 2004. T. Lickona - M. Davidson, <i>Report to the Nation. Smart & Good High Schools. Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond</i>, Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility), State University of New York College at Cortland, Character Education Partnership, Washington 2005.</p>
<p><i>Traditional perspective</i> by Kevin Ryan and Edward Wynne. Insists on <i>virtues</i></p>	<p>E.A. Wynne - K. Ryan, <i>Reclaiming our Schools. Teaching Character, Academics, and Discipline</i>, Merrill, Upper Saddle River NJ 1997².</p>
<p><i>Integrated model</i> by Darcia Narváez, which, in turn, is inspired by the model of James Rest and other Kohlberg disciples Insists on the development of expert knowledge on the ethical-moral plane.</p>	<p>D. Narváez, <i>Integrative Ethical Education</i>, in M. Killen - J.G. Smetana (eds.), <i>Handbook of Moral Development</i>, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ 2006.</p>

Source: *the authors' own*

5. Other approaches to Character Education

In the same decade which produced the revival of Ce, the 1990s, other intervention approaches were developed, based fundamentally on psychology; they may all be grouped under this label although they have adopted several different names. In this way Ce expanded and took on a broader meaning (*broad/expansive moral character education* compared to *narrow/non-expansive*), which in the end led to a blurring of the concept of Ce and its moral connotations (the teaching of universal values/development of moral habits)³².

³² K. Kristjánsson, *In Defence of "Non-expansive" Character Education*, in «Journal of

These movements coincide in that they seek to contribute to the development of capacities which are not directly related to academia; rather they have relation with lifestyle and interactions with others. We can stress, in this sense, *Positive Youth Development* (Pyd) and *Social Emotional Learning* (Sel). These two coincide in adopting a preventative perspective on behavioral problems or on psychological disorders by insisting on the right moral and emotional children development and learning. The two approaches pay great attention to the management of emotions, and concentrate on “giving weapons” to people so that they may have individual and social well-being. The means of driving this positive development and learning is through education and by paying attention to the contexts in which the people live. *Positive Development Youth* and *Social Emotional Learning* coincide with the objectives and procedures of Ce³³. The second generation of Cognitive Psychology which admits the fundamental role of the emotions, Positive Psychology and Neuroscience are presented as the scientific basis for these intervention trends.

Positive Youth Development is the motto of the new paradigm which inspired the prevention/intervention movement in the Usa towards the end of the 1990s, and it stresses the development of the strengths and competences of all children and young people, and not only on the reduction of problems and attention to people at risk³⁴. Two research lines made notable contributions to its development: a) research into

Philosophy of Education», 36/2 (2002), pp. 135-156; D.K. Lapsley - D. Narváez, *Character Education*, cit.; D.K. Lapsley - D. Yeager, *Moral-Character Education*, in I.B. Weiner (ed.). *Handbook of Psychology* (vol. 7, *Educational psychology*, by W.M. Reynolds and G.E. Miller), Wiley, Hoboken NJ 2012.

³³ R.F. Catalano - J.D. Hawkins - J.W. Toumbourou, *Positive Youth Development in the United States*, cit.; L.L. Matula, *Character Education and Social-Emotional Learning. Why We Must Teach the Whole Child*, 2004: http://www.projectwisdom.com/ERS/Reproducibles/CE_SEL.pdf.

³⁴ K.J. Pittman - M. Irby - T. Ferber, *Unfinished Business. Further Reflections on a Decade of Promoting Youth Development*, in P.L. Benson - K.J. Pittman (eds.), *Trends in Youth Development. Visions, Realities, and Challenges*, Kluwer, Boston 2001; J. Roth - J. Brooks-Gunn, *Youth Development Programs. Risk, Prevention and Policy*, in «Journal of Adolescent Health», 32 (2003), pp. 170-182; S. Small M. Memmo, *Contemporary Models of Youth Development and Problem Prevention. Toward an Integration of Terms, Concepts and Models*, in «Family Relations», 53/1 (2004), pp. 3-11.

the capacity of resilience, and *b*) the study of what are called the *Developmental Assets* (Da)³⁵ and investment into the concept of *health promotion* and schools for its development³⁶.

Pittman et al (2001) and Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003)³⁷ who inspired this movement, amongst others, with the slogan of *Positive Youth Development*, indicate that «problem-free is not fully prepared», to which they add, «fully prepared is not fully engaged». By this they mean that the field of prevention should not only focus on protecting certain children and young people against the most frequent conducts of risk with specific programs centering on certain problems (drug addiction, violence, etc.), but there must also be investment in resources, and it must be directed, to be really effective, to strengthen certain competences in all youths (as they are “resources” of society rather than “problems”). They stress the involvement of schools, families and the community in what they consider should be the focus of preventive labor (we could call this education): the positive development of youngsters.

With these ideas *Positive Youth Development* has begun to be discussed as the goal of prevention and Ce as the way to achieve this³⁸. The close convergence between the both approaches Ce can be seen, for example, in research like that of Battistich (2005): *Character Education, Prevention and Positive Youth Development*³⁹. The author argues that Ce offers important benefits not only to assist in developing positive personal and social competencies, to achieve a productive life and to be effective citi-

³⁵ P. Benson - P. Scales - N. Leffert - E. Roehlkepartain, *A Fragile Foundation. The State of Developmental Asset among American Youth*, Search Institute, Minneapolis MN 1999.

³⁶ V. Battistich, *Character Education, Prevention and Positive Youth Development*, Character Education Partnership, Washington 2005: http://www.character.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/White_Paper_Battistich.pdf.

³⁷ K.J. Pittman - M. Irby - T. Ferber, *Unfinished Business*, cit.; J. Roth - J. Brooks-Gunn, *Youth Development Programs*, cit.

³⁸ V. Battistich, *Character Education, Prevention and Positive Youth Development*, cit.; M. Berkowitz, *Character Education as Prevention*, cit.; M.W. Berkowitz, *Character Education as Prevention*, cit.; Id - S.A. Sherblom - M.C. Bier - V. Battistich, *Educating for Positive Youth Development*, in M. Killen - J. Smetana (eds.), *Handbook of Moral Development*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah NJ 2005, pp. 683-701; D.K. Lapsley - D. Narváez, *Character Education*, cit.; D. Narváez, *Integrative Ethical Education*, cit.; N. Park, *Positive Development*, cit.; E. Schaps - V. Battistich - D. Solomon, *School as a Caring Community*, cit.

³⁹ See *supra*, note 35.

zens of democratic society, but also to reduce the risk of being involved in bad conduct.

The education approach known as *Social Emotional Learning* (Sel) sprang from the American *Association for Moral Education* also in the 1990s⁴⁰. Dewey has been recognized as its source of inspiration. Socio-emotional learning has had widespread echoes in Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom, but also in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and other countries. A center for the promotion of this learning is *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning* (Casel), founded in 1994, by Daniel Goleman and Linda Lantieri, amongst others⁴¹. Their approach links research, education and sociopolitical intervention; one of its goals is to disseminate the results of what they consider to be good practices in societies in all sectors. They consider as a social mission: to have a positive influence on the culture of the nation. Another outstanding figure is Roger P. Weissberg, with many intervention works for prevention⁴².

We must underline the definitions of Sel offered by two leading organizations in this field. *The Center for Social and Emotional Education* (Csee): socio-emotional education teaches abilities, understanding and values that promote social and emotional development. Moreover, *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning* (Casel) points out that socio-emotional learning refers to the knowledge, habits, abilities and ideals which are at the core of children's academic, personal, social and civic development. This type of learning coincides with Ce in as much as it prepares individuals to recognize and manage their emotions, to develop caring attitudes and interest in others, to take responsible decisions to establish and maintain positive relationships and to face up to difficult situations effectively⁴³.

⁴⁰ D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Books, New York 1995; L. Lantieri, *Building Emotional Intelligence. Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children*, Sounds True, Boulder CO 2008.

⁴¹ M.J. Elias et al., *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning. Guidelines for Educators*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria VA 1997.

⁴² R.P. Weissberg et al. (eds.), *Enhancing Children's Wellness*, Sage, Thousand Oaks CA 1997; Id., *Improving the Lives of Millions of School Children*, in «American Psychologist», 55 (2000), pp. 1360-1373; etc.

⁴³ L.L. Matula, *Character Education and Social-Emotional Learning*, cit.

This type of learning is considered essential for success at school and in life and, for this reason, educational, economic and political authorities are very interested in it. However, the setting up of Sel programs in schools at the request of educational policy is not producing the expected results as we shall explain.

Epistemologically, the theorists of socio-emotional learning are far from the ethics and the most classical lines of Ce. They rarely use the term “virtue”, and their basis is the theory of emotional intelligence. Their programs focus more on the acquisition of abilities and competences for behaving well, for living with well-being. These skills are presented with no precise connection to specific axiological contents. We could say that they adhere to a difficult balance of ethical neutrality. This socio-emotional learning intends to avoid disorders, promote mental health and well-being, and to facilitate the acquisition of social competences and positive relationships across the lifespan. This said, the relationship between Ce and Sel must be recognized, because both speak of building character⁴⁴.

The emotional intelligence competences on which Sel focus, and are related with character are: *self-awareness* (recognizing and naming one’s own emotions; understanding the reasons and circumstances that make us feel as we do; recognizing and naming emotions of others; recognizing the forces that bring about positive feelings towards ourselves, schools, the family and other support groups); *social awareness* (increasing empathy and sensitivity towards the feelings of others); *self-control and organization* (verbalizing and managing anxiety, anger and depression, controlling impulses, aggression, self-destruction, antisocial conduct, managing personal and interpersonal stress, activating positive motivation, hope and optimism); *management* (dealing with emotions in relationships, showing sensitivity to socio-emotional indicators, expressing emotions effectively)⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ M.J. Elias - S.J. Parker - M.V. Kash - R.P. Weissberg - M.U. O’Brien, *Social and Emotional Learning, Moral Education and Character Education. A Comparative Analysis and a View Toward Convergence*, in L. Nucci - D. Narváez (eds.), *Handbook of moral and character education*, cit., pp. 248-266.

⁴⁵ H. Resnik et al., *Report Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Past, present and future*, Casel, Chicago 2009.

However, although these approaches (Ce and Sel) stem from different theoretical frameworks, they do share important characteristics, as pointed out by Novick, Kress and Elias⁴⁶. Thus, for example, the Character Education Partnership (Cep) and Casel organizations recommend (setting up intervention programs in schools of high quality), which work many components and are spread ideally over several years.

At present, the Sel programs, apart from being directed towards pupils, have been extended the formation to teachers and families. For example, in the Uk in 2003, the program *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (Seal) was launched throughout the English education system, and in 2010 it was in use in 90% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools. This initiative which was funded by *New Labour* with an investment of over £ 30 million was proposed as a remedy, an education panacea which would improve academic results, positive conduct, school attendance and other important goals linked to the mental health and well-being of those who study and work in schools. However, an in-depth inspection and assessment of the results indicates that the initiative has failed to achieve most of the anticipated results, as pointed out in a critical review by Humphrey and by other authors⁴⁷.

In the Usa the promoters of Ce and Sel programs are running into the same problems, so they are receiving serious criticism. Thus, the broadest federal study carried out on the efficacy of character education programs presented in 2010 expresses serious doubt on its efficacy. This study with the title, *Efficacy of Schoolwide Programs to Promote Social and Character Development and Reduce Problem Behavior in Elementary School Children*, carried out by researchers from the *Usa Dept of Education* has, through the use of control groups, empirically assessed the implementation of seven Ce programs

⁴⁶ B. Novick - J. Kress - M.J. Elias, *Building Learning Communities with Character*, Ascd Executive Council, 2002: <http://www.ascd.org>.

⁴⁷ N. Humphrey, *The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (Seal) Programme*, in P. Adey - J. Dillon (eds.), *Bad Education. Debunking Myths in Education*, Open University Press, Meidenhead UK 2012, pp 143-160; M. Wigelsworth - N. Humphrey - A. Lendrum, *A National Evaluation of the Impact of the Secondary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (Seal) Programme*, in «Educational psychology», iFirst, 2011, pp. 1-2; D.M. Hoffman, *Reflecting on Social Emotional Learning: A Critical Perspective on Trends in the United States*, in «Review of Educational Research», 79 (2009), pp. 533-556; K. Ecclestone - D. Hayes, *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education*, Routledge, London 2008.

for schools, known as *Social and Character Development (Sacd) programs*. The results, in general, show that the schools which took part in the intervention increase the use of teaching and activities for the development of character but, however, the data analysis do not show significant differences in the results⁴⁸. These data might lead us to think that Ce or Sel are not effective. Nevertheless the results obtained also suggest issues such as revision of the assessment tools and the Ec methods, and perhaps that this type of education does not work in a “program format”.

Positive Psychology has contributed to the reinstatement of the study of character and character education within scientific psychology and to its consolidation in education practice. Seligman himself stated that: «Any science that does not use character as a basic idea [...] will never be accepted as a useful account of human behavior. Consequently I consider that the time has come to revive character as a central concept of the scientific study of human behaviour»⁴⁹.

Martin P. Seligman encourages Positive Psychology by attempting to turn the classic focus of the psychological intervention. Thus, instead of paying such great attention to the deficits, difficulties and pathologies people present, he proposes the alternative route of scientifically investigate: how to achieve happiness, satisfaction, well-being; what capacities people need to be happy and what social and community contexts promote that; how people can achieve their optimum and fulfill all their efforts⁵⁰. This statement by Seligman⁵¹ confirms the guidelines of Positive Psychology: *Psychology is not just about illness or health; it is also about work, education, insight, love, growth and play*.

Positive Psychology suggests an intervention which is similar to that proposed in the Ce hypotheses: promoting the people flourish; the hap-

⁴⁸ Social and Character Development Research Consortium, *Efficacy of School wide Programs to Promote Social and Character Development and Reduce Problem Behavior in Elementary School Children (Ncer 2011-2001)*, National Center for Education Research, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington 2010: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncer/pubs/20112001/pdf/20112001.pdf>.

⁴⁹ M.P. Seligman, *La auténtica felicidad*, Ediciones B, Barcelona 2003, p. 193.

⁵⁰ M.P. Seligman - C.R. Snyder - S. López (eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, Oxford University Press, New York 2002, pp. 3-9

⁵¹ *Ibi*, p. 4.

piness and full life. One of the subjects which has brought this rapprochement between the Positive Psychology and the Ce has been the attention to resilience, the capacity to adapt with flexibility to difficult situations (poverty, violence, insecurity; disease, cultural changes, social or economic criticism). This capacity reflects a good character.

One of the main contributions of the Positive Psychology, thanks to Peterson, Seligman, Park et al, has been the development of the project called *Values in Action (Via) Classification of Strengths*, which sought to identify the virtues and strength of character which must be developed in every human being in order to ensure a happy and fruitful “good life”; these would also work as a protective barrier against risks or psychological problems, so their development would clearly be a preventative strategy⁵². These authors established a set of virtues which stand out and grow in different cultural, religious and philosophical contexts. In addition they focus on the identification of these character strengths – the psychological ingredients (processes or mechanisms) – that define the virtues and are discernible routes to express them. They established their well-known classification of six virtues and 24 character strength.

The following step in their research was to create a measurement tool for adults, which would assess the level of presence of these basic virtues and character strengths, called *Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (Via-Is)*. Peterson and Seligman published their classification and tool in 2004, in the book *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. This work has been considered the first major project developed by the Positive Psychology⁵³. Park and Peterson⁵⁴ consider that «the Via Project is providing a legitimized vocabulary for a psychologically informed discussion of the personal qualities of individuals that make them morally valuable morally worth».

⁵² N. Park, *Positive Development*, cit.; C. Peterson - M. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, cit.; C. Peterson, *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, cit.; Id., *The Values in Action (Via) Classification of Strengths*, in M. e I.S. Csikszentmihalyi (eds.), *A Life Worth Living. Contributions to Positive Psychology*, Oxford University Press, New York 2006, pp. 29-48.

⁵³ C. Peterson, *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, cit.

⁵⁴ N. Park - C. Peterson, *Character Strengths. Research and Practice*, in «Journal of College & Character», 10/4 (2009), pp. 1-10, esp. p. 3 .

In his article, *Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development*, Park clearly stresses the connections between Positive Psychology, the model for Positive Development of young people and Ce, as we have stated⁵⁵. This author highlights the value of the work carried out in this Ce revival movement with a view to retrieving the terms of virtue and character, underlining the scientific support it is receiving with the contributions from *Positive Youth Development* and Positive Psychology.

Positive Psychology has also been the basis for the development of programs designed for character education and the improvement of resilience for their application in schools. Here we can highlight the *Uk Resilience Program* (Ukrp) which is a broad-based Positive Psychology program applied in schools⁵⁶. In fact, it is an adaption of the well-known *Penn Resilience Program* (Prp) for children and adolescents developed some years ago by Seligman's team at the University of Pennsylvania; this program teaches children the styles of adaptive thinking (optimism rather than pessimism), assertiveness (certain social skills for negotiation and problem-solving) and relaxation with the aim of promoting resilience, preventing depression and facilitating personal well-being and the flourishing of young people. In fact, cognitive-behavioral and social strategies based on Beck, Ellis and Seligman's well-known theories of depression are taught through this curriculum. It is a 16-hour intervention program directed by Jane E. Gillham, who is the author of the Uk study and a participant in the original Penn program. The Department of Education in England and Wales approved its funding, implementation and the evaluation of its results. This empirical study carried out with Prp is the broadest ever carried out in the history of the Uk. Almost 3,000 students between the ages of 11 and 12 from 16 schools were enrolled. 1,000 students made up the intervention group.

The implementation of this high-cost and low-effect program has been the butt of much criticism. One of the main complaints is that

⁵⁵ N. Park, *Positive Development. Realizing the Potential of Youth. Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development*, in «Annals of The American Academy of Political and, Social Science», 591 (2004), pp. 40-54.

⁵⁶ A. Challen - P. Nodem - A. West - S. Machin, *Uk Resilience Program Evaluation. Final Report*, Dfe Research Report RR097, 2011.

no measures have been taken to remedy, for example, the academic deficiencies which would ease the students' fear of failure and the potential symptoms of depression resulting from this. Despite this, the British government will continue to fund future research of this type. Ecclestone⁵⁷ has his suspicions about the politicians' interest, particularly in England and Wales, in applying psychology, specifically Positive Psychology, to education and the promotion of what he calls *emotional fitness training* as a vaccine against many of the ills of present-day society and as a means to develop the well-being of the whole population, as, supposedly, it will result in better lifestyles, economic development and social harmony.

If, in the 1980 of 20th century, the magic words for the authorities, as a remedy for the problems and challenges of American society, were the promotion of self-esteem⁵⁸, currently in that country and as we see also in the Uk, they are character and resilience. A large amount of public funding is being dedicated to financing programs in this line, partly because the politicians want speedy, gradable interventions which produce short-term results. This, however, does not seem to be working very well.

6. Some lead actors have the final word: authors and research centres

At this stage, and after this broad historical and international review of the development of character education during the 20th century and up to now, we would now like to briefly show the answers of authors who have been working for many years on the subject. They respond to five basic questions. These are not all the questions nor are they the only authors we have asked; we have attempted to reach those who are still alive and have been leaders in this history. We cannot elaborate more on this subject due to questions of space.

⁵⁷ K. Ecclestone, *From Emotional and Psychological Well-being to Character Education. Challenging Policy Discourse of Behavioral Science and "Vulnerability"*, in «Research Papers in Education», 27/4 (2012), pp. 463-480.

⁵⁸ M.C. González-Torres, *Familia y autoestima de los hijos. Orientaciones para los padres* (n. 5), in AA.VV., *Educación para la prevención de drogodependencias. Materiales para la formación de padres*, Fundación Nacional Proforpa, Madrid 2003, pp. 5-34.

6.1. Questions and answers given by Professors

1. How would you define Character Education? What do you think is the best definition?

Marvin Berkowitz: «Character is the complex set of psychological characteristics that motivate and enable one to act as a moral agent. Character education are those educational influences that promote the development of character».

Randall Curren: «I don't have a definition, per se, but I think of it as including the formation of understanding, virtues, and capabilities essential to living well - living in a way that is both admirable and personally rewarding. I classify the virtues as moral, intellectual, and productive -- where "productive" includes forms of excellence pertaining to artistry, craft, sport, and other human endeavors that require both skill and valuing the right things (diverse goods belonging to the practices or forms of endeavor in question). Moral character would be the part of this pertaining to the valuing of persons, other sentient beings of intrinsic worth, and the flourishing of persons and other such beings».

Robert Roberts: «Character education is moral formation, and the kind of intellectual formation that depends on moral formation (the love of knowledge, intellectual humility, intellectual courage, and so forth). It is not by any means limited to formal educational contexts, but goes on in friendships and families and in collegial work. It is largely an *éducation sentimentale*, that is, a formation of the will and the emotions, and of the understanding as it depends on a formation of will and emotions».

2. Why has this revival of Character Education come about? How do you see the future?

Randall Curren: «There is a somewhat complex history to this, and proponents of character education are all over the political and religious/non-religious map. To some extent the revival reflects a concern to resist the demoralizing advance of market values into every corner of contemporary life. Economic models and policy based on them are predicated on a kind of subjectivism about values - the distillation of value down to people's subjective preferences, and idea that policy should treat all preference satisfaction as equal. Maximize the wealth in a society and that is supposed to efficiently make for a happier society. The evidence does not support this "economic man" mythology. Character education, as we understand it at the Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues, is predicated on a naturalistic form of moral realism that says we share a

common human nature; sharing that nature, there are things that are objectively good and bad for us - favorable and unfavorable to us enjoying the fulfillment of our human potential in good relationships, good work, etc.».

Marvin W. Berkowitz: «In the Usa, as in many places, it is both a semantic and substantive change. Semantically, the names shifted from moral and values education to character education, at least in terms of emphasis, in the early 1990s. The main reason was a move to be more integrative, ecumenical and politically broad than in the past, particularly with the formation of the Character Education Partnership. Federal funding that followed that helped support its growth. Now the term is getting firmly entrenched in many other countries (*e.g.*, England, Singapore, Taiwan) while competing terms have begun to get traction in the Usa (*e.g.*, Social-emotional learning; positive psychology). There are opposing forces, especially the academic accountability movement, so it is not clear what the future holds. Ultimately, this is an inevitable and fundamental human issue and will always be there whatever we call it and however we implement it».

Robert Roberts: «I would guess that it has arisen in response to dissatisfaction with conventional education, and the feeling that an education limited to information and technical skills is not really and fully an education».

Andrew Sayer: «My suspicion is that it's a consequence of the emergence of neoliberal political economic regimes, which focus on the so-called "supply-side" – the supply of workers rather than job-shortages, the shift from welfare to workfare and the "responsibilization" of individuals for their fortunes in life. It may also have something to do with the concentration of wealth at the top over the last 3 decades, and the capture of the state by the super-rich and big business, which has allowed the re-emergence of the idea that the lower orders need character training. In practice, character education may be informed by other concerns. As regards the future, we need to resist the idea that social problems derive from lack of character. I know that few researchers and practitioners on the topic believe they do, but we need to beware of the funders' and the politicians' angle on it».

3. Would you mind describing your centre, group or research line on Character Education? How relevant do you think it is at a local, national and international level?

Randall Curren: «The work of the Jccv is getting a lot of attention in the Uk, and there signs of significant policy uptake. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues: <http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk>».

Marvin W. Berkowitz: «Our Center for Character and Citizenship is both a regional resource (research, professional development for educators, graduate degree programs) and an international clearinghouse (Character Education Research Clearinghouse on our website: www.characterandcitizenship.org). Given that we have demands from all over the Usa and most of the rest of the world (we are actively working in Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, England, Kenya, etc.), it seems pretty relevant».

Robert Roberts: «My work has been on emotions (*Emotions. An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, Cambridge University Press 2003; *Emotions in the Moral Life, ibi*, 2013) and virtues (*Spiritual Emotions*, Eerdmans 2007; *Intellectual Virtues. An Essay in Regulative Epistemology*, Oxford University Press 2007, with W. Jay Wood). I think it's quite relevant; the work on emotions and virtues is regularly cited internationally; the work on intellectual virtues was discussed in David Brooks' column in the New York Times. For more of my work, you can find my curriculum vitae at <http://www.baylor.edu/philosophy/index.php?id=001942>».

4. In your Center, is there a relationship between Character Education and Global Education? And with Civic or Citizenship Education? In which direction?

Randall Curren: «From what I can tell, there is no connection of this kind to global or civic education, except in my own work (which does not represent the views of the Centre as such, Jccv). There are connections to professional education and ethical decision-making in the professions, arising from the Uk context of bad behavior by financial sector professionals before and during the financial collapse».

Marvin W. Berkowitz: «We do both character education and citizenship (civic) education and the overlap and have written extensively on that. We have not focused on global education».

5. Is there a relationship between your study line and those that promote social and emotional learning (Sel) (as Casel, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning does)?

Randall Curren: «I think we generally regard Sel as an inferior version of character education - one that is too narrowly conceived.

Marvin W. Berkowitz: «We work closely with many social-emotional educators (Maurice Elias, Jonathan Cohen, etc.). We are producing a primer with Elias on social emotional and character development».

6.2. *The most outstanding centres for Character Education*

Regarding the most outstanding centres for Character Education at an international level, we mention 11, from whose websites and some face-to-face conversations we have gathered general information on activities, managing bodies, the centres' publications, etc., with the intention of giving the general public greater access to them:

- Center for Character and Citizenship (Ccc) (M. Berkowitz) (characterandcitizenship.org): engages in research, education and advocacy to foster the development of character, democratic citizenship and civil society. The Center plays the role of a think tank, offering workshops, consulting, and professional development and also provides resources and tool kits to assist educators, parents and scholars in character and citizenship education.

- The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (J. Arthur) (www.jubilee-centre.ac.uk): pioneering interdisciplinary research centre part of the School of Education within the University of Birmingham. The Centre promotes a moral concept of character in order to explore the importance of virtue for public and professional life. Equally, it is a leading informant on policy and practice in this area and through its extensive range of projects contributes to a renewal of character and values in both individuals and societies.

- Association for Moral Education (Ame) (www.amenetwork.org): non-profit organization recognized by the Internal Revenue Service of the United States that provides a forum for professionals who represent a wide variety of positions in moral education, fosters communication, cooperation, training, and research and serves as a resource in matters related to moral education.

- Character Education Partnership (Cep) (character.org): national advocate and leader for the character education movement based in Washington. A non-profit, nonpartisan, and nonsectarian organization committed to fostering effective character education in American schools. The organization works with schools, districts, and states to foster core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others.

- Character Plus (www.edplus.org): a large and successful community-wide character education initiative committed to building strong school communities where students feel valued and can succeed. To do this, Character Plus helps educators instill positive character traits in students -such as responsibility and respect- through teaching, encouraging and living these values in every aspect of school life. Its work extends to parents and communities and ultimately helps prepare students to become responsible citizens after graduation.

- Center for Character and Social Responsibility (S. Ellenwood) (www.bu.edu/ccsr): an internationally recognized research institute, the mission of the Center for Character and Social Responsibility is to support the professional development of individuals and institutions which seek to expand their awareness, knowledge, and skills in the areas of character development and social responsibility consistent with principles of healthy personal development.

- Character Project (Ch. Miller) (www.thecharacterproject.com): a project from the Wake Forest University (Usa) that using the complementary perspectives of psychology, philosophy, and theology aims to better understand what characters are like and how people can improve themselves as persons.

- Education and Citizenship Research Group (Giec-Grupo de Investigación en Educación y Ciudadanía) (www.unav.edu/web/facultad-de-educacion-y-psicologia/educacion-y-ciudadania): interdisciplinary team which has been working in the area of education for citizenship since 1997. The subjects for study are: the bases of education for citizenship; education for participation and civil society; education for communication and social cooperation; moral and civic education; the impact of It on young people's social relationships; the educational possibilities of the integration of volunteer work into the curricula; the methodology of Service Learning; the history of the doctrines on moral and civic education; intercultural education; the family as an educational setting; social skills and emotional competence; aesthetic education; the self-regulation of learning; and family participation in schools.

- The Duckworth Lab (University of Pennsylvania) (www.duckworthlab.com): focuses on the study and research of two traits that predict achievement: grit and self-control. Grit is the tendency to sustain interest in an effort toward very long-term goals⁵⁹. Self-control is the voluntary regulation of behavioral, emotional, and attentional impulses in the presence of momentarily gratifying temptations or diversions⁶⁰.

- The Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility): located in SUNY Cortland's School of Education, was founded in 1994 by education profes-

⁵⁹ A.L. Duckworth - C. Peterson - M.D. Matthews - R.D. Kelly, *Grit. Perseverance and Passion for Long-term Goals*, in «Journal of Personality and Social Psychology», 92/6 (2007), pp. 1087-1101.

⁶⁰ A.L. Duckworth - M. Seligman, *Self-discipline Outdoes Iq Predicting Academic Performance in Adolescents*, in «Psychological Science», 16 (2005), pp. 939-944; A.L. Duckworth - L. Steinberg, *Unpacking Self-control*, in «Child Development Perspectives», 9/1 (2015), pp. 32-37.

sor and psychologist Dr. Thomas Lickona. Its mission is to promote the development of performance character and moral character – excellence and ethics – in schools, families, and communities (www2.cortland.edu/centers/character).

- Positive Psychology (www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu): a University of Pennsylvania website. The purpose of this website is to provide free resources where people can learn about Positive Psychology, the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive. This field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within them, and to enhance their experiences of work, love and play.

7. *Some final reflections*

As in the 1990 of 20th century, nowadays we hear talk of a moral and cultural decline and of the need to respond to the challenges posed by a digital society and the discourse in favor of Ce continues moving forward.

Although the designation of Ce has become very popular in just a few years, it is not free from confusion or controversy regarding: 1. the definition of character; 2. what can truly be considered Ce; and 3. how character is taught or built⁶¹. It may be said that character, as Berkowitz and Bier⁶² pointed out, is still a term in the making, in development. All the more so if we take into account the numerous contributions which have been made to the movement for the revitalization of Ce. What has occurred is a broadening of the term which has now become an idea used to designate several education initiatives, as has been stated in the preceding sections. We agree with what Lapsley and Yeager⁶³ when they said: think to be correct. If Ce is all these things, like any risk prevention program, and a problematic conduct program or the programs to

⁶¹ D.K. Lapsley - D. Narváez, *Character Education*, cit.; D.K. Lapsley - D. Yeager, *Moral-Character Education*, cit.; K. Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices in Positive Psychology. A Philosophical Critique*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2013; L. Vargas - M.C. González-Torres, *La revitalización de la Educación del Carácter en el ámbito psicoeducativo actual*, cit.

⁶² M.W. Berkowitz - M.C. Bier, *What works in character education*, cit.

⁶³ D.K. Lapsley - D. Yeager, *Moral-Character Education*, cit.

promote resilience, then the singularity of Ce, as an education program with a different purpose, is lost. In fact, the Ce has become a catalogue of psychosocial interventions and of risk-prevention programs whose aims are articulated in a theoretical framework of different directions or traditions that do not refer to morality, virtue or character.

Thomas Lickona, one of the first promoters of Ce at the end of 20th century, takes this approach in a more strict sense, with inspiration from the Aristotelian perspective, and points out that Ce is just that, Ce, specifying what character is. Character is the set of habits of the mind, of the heart and of conduct, taking habit to mean an internal relatively stable disposition which allows us to respond to situations in a morally good way. Essentially he states that a good character knows what is good, loves what is good and does what is good. From this concept of character stems the consideration of Ce as a deliberate effort to teach virtues, and it thus implies assisting people to understand, care and behave in accordance with a set of ethical values the most important of which are justice, equity, respect for all and democratic living. It may be said that this is the most genuine and well-defined perspective on Ce (*narrow* rather than *expansive* as Lapsley and Yeager⁶⁴) would say, as it does not stress the instrumental value of character for success in life, but rather its intrinsic value for a good life. Davidson, Lickona and Khmelkov, precisely, have presented a Ce model, *Smart & Good Schools. A New Paradigm for High School Character Education*⁶⁵, in which they properly differentiate between the two dimensions of character which it is necessary to cultivate as we need to integrate excellence and ethics in order to have full, ethical and productive lives. This division may help us to make out the direction in which the diverse current references to character and its education are headed.

One of the dimensions which is called *performance character*, refers to a set of dispositions or strengths of character (diligence, perseverance, a positive attitude, self-control, flexibility, perception of competence) which must be cultivated among children and young people in order to promote their excellence (their competence at a personal, school and

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ Cfr. *supra*, note 27.

professional level). This character dimension favors *the orientation of power and excellence* in an action. On the other hand, *moral character* refers to a set of dispositions/ethical virtues which give shape to a proper moral structure (integrity, responsibility, respect, justice) which allows young people to behave correctly with a relational direction (taking into account the well-being of others and of society). It is vital to teach this moral character; otherwise we will find competent people who are not necessarily good individuals and good citizens⁶⁶. Thus, the ethical dimension, education on core values is indispensable.

Unfortunately, much of the public discourse and of the attention currently paid to character and its education focus precisely on what Davidson et al. call *performance character* and what Kristjánsson, a researcher at the *Jubilee Centre for Character and Values*, at the University of Birmingham, calls *performance virtues* (resilience, self-confidence, determination). This author points out the risk of these “virtues”, as they make up skills which may be harmful if they do not aim towards moral objectives. They demand to be assimilated together with moral virtues such as compassion, honesty and justice. For this reason it seems interesting and necessary that Ce be discussed, as is currently being done, but with a conceptualization that brings the two types of virtues (*performance* and *moral*) together.

On the other hand, since the revival of Ce in the 1990s, there have been great advances on how it may be taught. There is a large bibliography on the most effective pedagogical practices for direct teaching and particularly for indirect teaching, and on how caring cultures and atmospheres may be created in the contexts in which people interact, thus favoring a sense of connection and belonging⁶⁷. Limiting ourselves to adopting programs, to developing “educational packages” in schools, does not give good results and may even be counter-productive⁶⁸. In spite of the political attention to “accountability”, character must be

⁶⁶ T. Lickona, *Educación del Carácter*, cit.; Id. - M. Davidson, *Report to the Nation. Smart & Good High Schools*, cit.

⁶⁷ D.K. Lapsley - D. Yeager, *Moral-Character Education*, cit.

⁶⁸ D.C. Berliner - G.V. Glass (eds.), *50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools. The Real Crisis in Education*, Teachers College Press, New York 2014.

taught looking beyond the short-term benefits (which in addition are not clear), by carrying out, as has been stated, integrated pedagogical practices in a wide range of contexts (school, family, neighborhood, extracurricular and leisure activities, sports and volunteer groups) in which strengths of character and virtues are discerned in important learning environments.

Currently, as we have seen, there is great interest in finding whether the application of Ce programs really produce better educational results. As the results obtained from the empirical studies carried out are quite unclear, there is an obvious need to develop tools to demonstrate the consequences of this education approach. However, it is difficult to decide what to measure in Ce or to settle on the variables that affect one result or another. In short, research is being carried out into the empirical bases of Ce, when it would probably be better to first redefine the concept. But this leads us to a basic problem, the lack of agreement on the concept of Ce itself, given the diverse potential premises.