"We need to learn what choosing and acting morally involves and how to do it. Educational programs, well conceived, pedagogically sound, and morally carried on, are basic to our attaining personal and social well being."

Much stress is being placed today on human rights, minority rights, children's rights, and all sorts of rights—and rightly these deserve attention. Frequently, in our efforts to deal with issues in these areas, we turn to legal solutions and to more and more codified proscriptions and prescriptions to assure these rights. Establishing laws defining what society claims are rights of individuals is in the humane tradition and is basic to the protection of individuals from the grossest violations of these rights. Laws attempt to embody standards of right action of persons toward their fellow human beings. By compelling certain acts and prohibiting others in keeping with these standards, compliance can be monitored with the approval of society and undesired relationships can be halted.

Compliance with law, however, depends not only on the wish to avoid a penalty incurred by a violation of law, but it also depends largely on understanding the meaning of "right action" embodied in the law and on willingness to act in conformity with that understanding. Law by itself neither provides the acquisition of this understanding of "right action" nor the process of becoming convinced of the wisdom of acting in accord with this understanding. These are educational tasks. Whether on matters society has decided to govern by law or on more routine decisions and actions on which the law is silent, persons continually face choices of what to do. They must learn to judge what is right or best in these situations and to regulate their own conduct as an individual.

Learning to do this is not easy, and all too often institutions of education have failed to be as helpful as they could have been to children and adults who struggle toward competence in this aspect of their lives. Indeed, in the realm of making corporate or civic decisions, the concept of "right action" and the processes of coming to a "best judgment" for the common good are given so little attention in education that many people do not feel certain of what is involved or how to deal competently with this realm of social life. The prevailing myth regarding more personal choices is that it does not matter what one chooses to do—within reason and within the law, of course. Right judgment and good actions are not the focus of prevailing educational practice regarding personal conduct. Our proper fear of dogmatism and our high regard for the idea of freedom have contributed to our acceptance of this myth, and the importance of taking moral responsibility for one's actions seldom comes through in our teaching.

How Improve Education of Judgment and Action?

What can be done to improve education of judgment and action, both personal and civic? This issue of Educational Leadership is devoted...
to examining this problem. Several writers give analyses of what education of judgment and action entails, and others identify and discuss promising educational approaches aimed at such a goal. Were it not for the fact that many good intentions to implement programs of moral education have gone astray, educational institutions might be content to put in place almost anything directed toward this goal rather than to avoid the problem entirely. The difficulty lies with keeping educational activities, teaching materials and strategies, and evaluation procedures in line with the goal, and with being absolutely clear about what the goal of education of judgment and action should be.

Let's admit the consequences of inappropriately focused and conducted programs of moral education have far greater negative impact in the lives of individuals and for society as a whole than poorly conceived and poorly mastered programs of factual acquisition or skill development. Though it takes knowledge and skill to make wise judgments, the absence of appropriate ethical standards and the commitment necessary to act upon them no doubt accounts for more personal and social grief and dissatisfaction with life than the absence of perfect knowledge and technical skill. After all, these can be sought and acquired when someone finds himself/herself deficient in them, but a person cannot repair the results of a poor judgment once made, or reverse the consequences of social decisions that set in motion whole chains of actions involving the lives and fortunes of many people. In other words, it does matter whether education on the purposes and processes of making good judgments among potential actions is conceptually, pedagogically, and morally sound.

The goals of a program aimed at education of judgment and action, both personal and civic, should be rooted in the following assumptions:

The making of judgments is an inescapable and continuing human activity. Such judgments may focus on issues about what a person should do in personal and social relationships, or about what social or civic bodies should do in the interest of the common good. The quality and adequacy of any such judgment may be enhanced through the acquisition of proficiency in the judgment-making process and in following up with action. Entailed in education directed toward this goal is the necessity of providing instructional opportunities that allow learners (a) to grasp the elements of the process and the pertinent information and standards relevant to the various types of judgments that can be made, and (b) to have the opportunity to engage in making practice-judgments until one is able habitually to make adequate, high quality judgments and to act upon them.

An educational program with this basis and intent should be adequately conceptualized. Precise meanings must be attributed to the terms "judgment" and "action" and to the relationship between them as human activities. The kinds of judgments and actions to be dealt with, and the processes by which they can be executed, must be articulated clearly within the definitions given these basic concepts. Pertinent kinds of information required in making an adequate judgment must be identified, and appropriate standards for conduct relevant to particular options must also be intelligibly set forth. Finally, the cognitive steps in utilizing pertinent information and in applying appropriate ethical standards must be actively engaged in, and the consequences of acting upon a decision must be noted in light of some standard for judgments, if an assessment is to be made of how good a particular judgment of "right action" was. All these conceptual matters need to be specified in a plan for education of judgment and action. Their presentation must maximize clarity and consistency, and provide a rational framework of ideas upon which to design an educational program.

Improving Our Knowledge Base

The knowledge base upon which to draw in
developing an adequate conceptualization of moral judgment and action is quite extensive though perhaps unfamiliar to many people. Some sources I suggest be examined are Phenix's analysis of moral knowledge; his treatment of critical reflection and judgment; Dewey's treatment of habit, character, and intelligence in conduct; Hall and Davis's analysis of moral judgment and moral reasoning; Hirst's approach to justification of morality; and Dewey's discussion of moral principles.

An educational program that has clear and logical conceptual aspects must also be adequate pedagogically. The objectives, content, design, and method of a program of moral education need to be valid both logically and empirically. It may be easier to detect whether they are logically coherent with the designated conceptualization of education of judgment and action than whether the program works in practice in the form in which it was developed. The latter requires extended periods of time for the program's impact to be detected and some delicate assessment procedures. Attempts to do some evaluation during implementation of the program, however, may suggest weaknesses that can be remedied immediately.

For objectives in this kind of education to be sound pedagogically, they will need to focus upon real actions of persons—either of personal intent, social relations, physical activities, or corporate affairs involving either voluntary or coercive actions—or any human activity that results from deliberate choice among potential actions. Assuming sound educational processes, if learning does not culminate in improved actions—according to some appropriate standards—then it probably was aimed at objectives more cerebral or affective than moral. For content to be adequate in this type of program, it must focus on life situations in which alternative courses of action are apparent, and judgment is required. Situations involving various categories of individual conduct as well as many sorts of corporate or public actions must be included. The technical knowledge of how to make such choices responsibly will be included here. The curriculum design will necessarily follow developmental stages and be structured less around knowledge categories than normative ones such as are possible in core or problems approaches. The criterion of adequacy


7. The process of making judgments regarding one's own conduct and the process of making group judgments may be similar, if not identical. Phenix suggests a series of principles for improving personal conduct (a) consider antecedents; (b) consider the consequences; (c) consider the motives; (d) consider the available means; (e) contemplate ideals; (f) examine traditions of mankind; (g) consider the customs and beliefs of society; (h) try to achieve consistency in conduct; (i) experiment; (j) build habits; (k) engage in discussion; and (l) develop a philosophy of life. In group decisions, Raup et al. suggest the following steps: (a) clarification of common purpose—the projection of a desired state of affairs; (b) survey and assessment of the existing state of affairs; (c) suitling the ideas employed to the situation as a "whole"; and (d) fusion of the ideal and the existent in a program of action. R. Bruce Raup, George E. Axtelle, Kenneth D. Benne, and B. Othanel Smith. The Improvement of Practical Intelligence. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1962. pp. 102-18.


for instructional methods to be employed in this kind of program is that they engender the actual use of the method of moral deliberation and judgment by the learners on the kinds of situations that call for this. One does not stop with cognitive mastery of the process but must be given the opportunity to use it and act on it.

**Developing Sound Programs**

Several recent books and articles give excellent insights into the problem of developing sound programs of moral education. Hall and Davis give both theoretical guidance and practical suggestions on the use of the case study method, the analytical discussion method, and techniques using games and simulation. Hall and Davis, op. cit., pp. 127-69.

A comprehensive sourcebook of articles on three approaches to moral education has recently been edited by Purpel and Ryan. ASCD has published a booklet suggesting social, governmental, and international issues that might serve as a basis for moral education content. ASCD has published a booklet suggesting social, governmental, and international issues that might serve as a basis for moral education content. The entire April 1977 issue of *Theory Into Practice* deals with pedagogical implications of moral development. A promising new program called *Skills for Ethical Action* is being developed by Research for Better Schools.

Educators who attempt to develop programs of moral education do not need to proceed without benefit of excellent resources containing sound, contemporary pedagogical concepts and aids; many are now available.

An educational program, adequately conceived in terms of education of judgment and action and adequately planned pedagogically, must also be adequately implemented, both technically and morally. It would be the height of folly to attempt to teach in this realm in a manner inconsistent with the nature of the program’s intent. If it is the purpose of this type of education to enable learners to become more and more proficient in making moral judgments and in acting upon them, the first moral principle of conducting such a program must be to avoid indoctrination of certain “right” judgments and to avoid inculcation of certain “right” behaviors, and to respect the learner’s right, indeed the necessity, to come to his/her own decisions and to control his/her own behavior. This means accepting for a time what might seem to be immature or insufficiently thought through decisions. It may mean tolerating failure in the learner to do satisfactorily the principled thing that he/she decides is best or right. These are the expected consequences for one who has not yet seen all that is involved in making adequate, high quality moral judgments or has not yet learned those habits of conduct that enable one to follow through on one’s choice of right actions.

**Avoiding Self Deception**

Another moral principle to be adhered to in programs of moral education is to avoid accepting as final or fully adequate a level of learning that leads the learner to believe he/she has made adequate judgments or acted morally when, in fact, he/she has not. Rather, one must challenge the learner to examine his/her judgments and actions over and over again in light of a wider range of relevant information and previously unknown ethical principles. One can do this, while at the same time respecting the individual’s present powers of judgment and action (the first principle) by stressing the role of “good reasons.”

10 Hall and Davis, op. cit., pp. 127-69.
14 Hirst, op. cit., pp. 102-16.
15 Marian L. Chapman and Florence V. Davis. “Skills for Ethical Action: A Rationale.” Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools, Inc., July 1977, 33 pp. (mimeographed). The six-step process utilized in this program is: (a) identify the value problem; (b) think up action ideas; (c) consider self and others; (d) judge; (e) act; and (f) evaluate.
The learner must come to recognize that, whatever justification may be given for a judgment or an act, the reasons can be questioned in terms of the accuracy and scope of information employed in them or of how fundamental the principles are upon which the argument is built. An implication of this second principle (to challenge the adequacy of reasons) is that the teacher must know the status of the learner's moral growth and know when it is timely to probe intellectually and openly for more adequate reasons, and when it is best to let the learner ride and discover his/her own inadequate reasons by reflecting on the consequences of his/her own personal judgments and acts.

Perhaps a third moral principle can be asserted as necessary if the conduct of an educational program of this kind is to be considered adequate morally. With the diversity of standards of "right judgments and action" that are likely to be brought into play in the educational process envisioned here, the educator will undoubtedly have his/her own judgment of the worth of various of these standards. The guiding rule, it would seem, would have to be to avoid judging any of these as ultimately right or wrong and not to act as an authority in such matters, whatever belief one may personally hold in the matter. Put positively, the rule would be to deal objectively with all such standards, inquiring together with the learners as to the validity of specific imperatives and rationales put forth in any or all of them. One needs to resist purely dogmatic battles over basic beliefs that can't be settled by argument in any case. One may expect, after respecting a learner's autonomy in judging rightness and after assisting the learner in all ways rationally appropriate to seek "best reasons," that many learners will settle on ultimate standards of rightness to which the educator cannot personally subscribe. That is the nature of the moral life, and it should not bother the educator, if he/she has adhered to the moral principles that should govern the conduct of his/her professional responsibility in this kind of education.

Help in recognizing ethical standards for conducting moral education programs is to be found in a number of places. Ethics of a democratic society are discussed in Raup et al. Distinctions between moral, religious, and axiological standards are important to discern. Hirst discusses the secular role of the educator involved in moral education. Greene's book provides stimulating thought on what a teacher's moral obligation entails. Education without indoctrination is the subject of a chapter by Hall and Davis, who also pose and defend five moral principles for governing the educational process.

In this day and age, we may be concerned more about our rights and those of other individuals than we are about the rightness of our choices and of our actions. These two matters are, however, intimately related. Until we hold the view that right decisions and conduct on the part of all other persons whose lives may affect us and that right judgments and actions on our part toward all other persons are the only guarantee that anybody will be able to exercise his/her own rights, we shall not be able to depend upon the protection of the law to sustain whatever rights we claim individually or collectively. No rights without right actions! We need to learn what choosing and acting morally involves, and how to do it. Educational programs, well conceived, pedagogically sound, and morally carried on, are basic to our attaining personal and social well-being.

16 Raup et al., op. cit., pp. 205-21; 254-83.
20 Hall and Davis, op. cit., pp. 27-44; 171-76.