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# Character Formation in Schools and the Education of Teachers

Canterbury Christ Church University  
College  
in partnership with  
The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this research was to explore student teacher's attitudes towards character education and their experience of values and character education on their courses and in school. The main findings from the project are summarised below:

- Student teachers consider the task of influencing the values and behaviour of pupils as integral to the role of the teacher before they begin their training.
- The majority of students are aware of some input on their courses in relation to this area but training and discussion about character or values is not uniform between courses or institutions.
- Student teachers believe that there are a variety of factors whose influence on pupils' values is greater than their own. Despite this belief student teachers persist in the perception that teachers should be involved in values and character education.
- There is a difference between the approach to values education between students completing a teacher training course at a Christian institution and those at a non Christian institution.
- The majority of student teachers think their role is to encourage pupils to form their own values, however they also think that pupils should be encouraged to accept the ethos of their school and that there are common values shared by society more generally.
- Student teachers' views on values education are sometimes contradictory.
- There is no common practice in relation to the formation of pupils' character or values education in schools in relation to teacher training. The majority of student teachers in this study experienced and observed character and values education whilst the minority did not.
- The majority of students in both institutions thought that there should be greater provision of opportunities to study character education on their courses.

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this project, entitled **Character Education in Schools and the Education of Teachers** is an exploration of student teachers attitudes and experience of character education in schools. It looked at students assessment of the opportunities provided by schools for the development of character and asked them to consider the place and significance of character education in their own training. The data from nearly 2,000 questionnaires in two institutions of higher education indicates that while students believed that the opportunities for character formation and values education depended on their school placement, they were overwhelmingly in favour of developing their own skills as formers of children's character. Whilst character education or building is seen as part of citizenship education by the government, this research project indicates that it is not well understood or part of the formal curriculum of teacher education.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

In Britain today, as in much of the world, we live in a pluralistic society in which our values appear to be constantly changing and in which children are presented with all kinds of models and exposed to all kinds of opinions about right and wrong. For some, this appears to necessitate a content-based moral education curriculum that many others have rejected as too problematic. It is not therefore surprising that most academic discussions of character education have been rife with controversy and many teachers and academics have sought to construct a character education rationale without subscribing to any particular set of values or content-based moral education. They have found subscribing to any set of values deeply problematic in a pluralistic society and so they often commit themselves to nothing in particular. We should note at the outset that in Britain the common language used in educational discourse for the main elements of 'character education' has been 'moral education' and in more recent times 'values education'. It has also become part of citizenship education. Character education remains closely linked to the concepts of moral and values education, the latter two concepts are generally broader in scope, if much less specific about what constitutes character education. Consequently, character education can be understood to be a specific approach to moral or values education. It differs from some other forms of moral education in that it prescribes specific values and forms of behaviour. Character is ultimately about who we are and who we become, good or bad. It constitutes an interlocked set of personal values which normally guide our conduct, but these values are not a fixed set easily measured or incapable of modification.

There is also a debate in Britain between those who say that the government should promote the 'character' of its citizens, and those who say that the term is too pejorative to be used in a pluralistic democratic society. Even so, in modern British liberal society the development of a person's character is not seen as entirely a private matter for individuals or their families. It is recognised that character is intimately linked to the ethos of society itself and shaped by public forces. Public values have an influence on private life, albeit indirectly, because everything a democratic government does is founded on the notion of it being of some benefit to the people it represents. Teachers especially are constantly engaged in the shaping and moulding of young people's character simply through enforcing the rules and norms of everyday school life. Character is connected to the political system through the medium of schooling which modern government oversees. It is also a major component of the making of a citizen.

Character education is currently a growing 'movement', but there is no unity of understanding among members of this movement. The New Labour government, with its heavily moralistic ethos,

has taken up the baton. New Labour has been much influenced by communitarianism which has been reflected in many public policies, including character building in schools (Arthur, 2001). The establishment of citizenship education as a compulsory subject in English schools has been subsequently followed by two government policy papers: the Green Paper, Schools: Building on Success (February, 2001) and the White Paper, Schools: Achieving Success (September, 2001). The latter speaks at length of 'education with character'. The goal of this 'education with character' appears to be about developing certain virtues so that they become internal principles guiding both the students' behaviour and decision-making for operation within a democracy. It is intimately connected with citizenship and character.

It is important to stress that few in Britain would consider the school the most important location for character education, even if it remains the main public institution for the formal moral education of children. However, it would be reasonable to assume that certain positive features of the school will contribute to character development. Against this contemporary background the British government has effectively re-discovered the rhetoric of character education. There seems to be a growing awareness in New Labour that effective policies for the many problems in education and in society can best be developed through a knowledge of the defects in character formation in families and schools. Recognising that there is a broad-based and growing public support for 'moral education' in schools the government aims to heighten national awareness of the importance of character education and encourage its development. The 'moral education' that parents want is not concerned with theories about the way thinking motivates or underlies moral behaviour, but is concerned with encouraging the young to develop positive thinking and patterns of behaviour that will persist through time. In this sense it is more directly a call for character education and is clearly why the government use the term 'character'. Schools and teachers are identified as having a crucial role to play in helping shape and reinforce basic character traits. This represents a new and radical government education policy and is a notion of character education that is explicitly linked to both raising pupil school performance and meeting the needs of the emerging new economy or information age.

The main principles behind the Conservative Party's education policy whilst in government was the enhancement of individualism and freedom of choice conceived primarily as occurring through the operation of the free market economy. Between 1979 and 1997 successive Conservative governments sought to reverse what they perceived to be a decline in moral standards, encouraging more traditional 'family-orientated values'. The Conservative Party also initiated the National Curriculum in 1988 that effectively established State control of what children should know, how

they should learn it and how it should be assessed. Section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 imposes a basic duty in respect of all State schools to promote the ‘spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society’ and prepare such pupils ‘for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life’. These are very wide aspirations and clearly have a relationship to the development of character.

In 1996 the Conservative government encouraged the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) to enter the public debate about morality by establishing a National Forum for Values in Education and the Community which sought to discover whether there were any values upon which there was common agreement within society. Whilst this endeavour began under a Conservative government, it was continued under New Labour. With Tony Blair suggesting that a fourth R should be added to education – the teaching of Responsibility (see Arthur, 2001).

New Labour in preparing the new National Curriculum 2000 for England sought to ‘recognise a broad set of common values and purposes that underpin the school curriculum and the work of schools’ (NC: 1999: 10). New Labour has accordingly been more forthright and explicit about the kinds of goals primary and secondary schools should follow by moving from guidance and discussion of school curriculum goals to a mandatory and ‘official’ rationale contained in the new National Curriculum. In Scotland, the school curriculum is not prescribed by law, but the same New Labour language is used in curriculum guidance to schools. New Labour has added to the National Curriculum in England by articulating new aims for schooling. In its Statement of Values, Aims and Purposes of the National Curriculum for England (1999: 10-11) the following is included: the development of children’s social responsibility, community involvement, the development of effective relationships, knowledge and understanding of society, participation in the affairs of society, respect for others, and the child’s contribution to the building up of the common good. More specifically, the values that underpin the school curriculum are that education should reaffirm ‘our commitment to the virtues of truth, justice, honesty, trust and a sense of duty.’ The school curriculum should aim, to ‘develop principles for distinguishing between right and wrong’, and pass on ‘enduring values’. Whilst the document also encourages the promotion of ‘self-esteem’ and ‘emotional well-being’, the main thrust is the promotion of ‘responsibility and rights’.

The Crick Report (1999) on Citizenship Education was commissioned by New Labour and recommended compulsory citizenship education which the government has accepted and is in the process of implementing. All secondary State schools in England are obliged by law to provide their pupils with citizenship education which should include a moral dimension. The report (1999: 44)

provides an overview of the ‘essential elements to be reached by the end of compulsory schooling’ for every child in England. They include an ambitious list of character traits and virtues: ‘pupils should develop the proclivity to act responsibly’, they should have ‘premeditation and calculation’ about the effect actions have on others and ‘acceptance of responsibility for unforeseen or unfortunate consequences’. Pupils are not only to understand ‘tolerance’, but they should be able to practise it and they should ‘act by a moral code’, although no code is specified in the report. Pupils are expected to act with ‘courage’, be committed to voluntary service, show a ‘determination to act justly’, and have a ‘disposition to work with and for others’. The report lists the skills, understanding, attitudes, values and dispositions which pupils should develop. The Citizenship Order (1999) lists similar virtues and demands. In New Labour’s first White Paper on education, Excellence in Schools (1997: 10) it was also stated that schools and families should take responsibility so that children ‘appreciate and understand a moral code on which civilised society is based...’ and that these children ‘need to develop the strength of character and attitudes to life and work...’ Once again, no explicit definition or suggestion of what this moral code might or should be is given.

In the White Paper (2001) the government recognises that schools may not be the ideal learning environments for building character and advocates experiential learning which is about informed participation in communal affairs. All of this aims to build character by developing ‘rounded individuals’, but there is hardly anything which is new and much will depend on how schools respond. Already the Citizenship Order (1999) makes the promotion of certain values obligatory in schools. Character education is given a limited definition in the White Paper, but taken with the goals of the entire National Curriculum there is an emerging and expanding concept of character development given. In this context James Hunter (2000: 225) makes the observation that: ‘The problem is that character cannot develop out of values “nominated” for promotion, “consciously chosen” by a committee, negotiated by a group of diverse professionals, or enacted into law by legislators. Such values have, by their very nature, lost the quality of sacredness, their commanding character, and thus their power to inspire and to shame’. His general argument is clear: the DfES is incapable of setting moral standards which will be ‘inwardly compelling’ for schools, students or staff. Hunter does not say it is impossible for character to be developed, but doubts whether the State can achieve this – rather he suggests it is better promoted by small and particular communities, or religious schools and other schools which attempt to embody a moral vision.

The character education policies that New Labour are seeking to promote in schools are an integral element of the current political culture - part of which it has inherited from Conservative policies and

part of which it has created. It is a political rather than an educational response. The Prime Minister, in an interview with The Observer on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1999 made explicit New Labour's ethical agenda when he said: 'We need to find a new national moral purpose for the new generation'. Many newspapers interpreted this to be a call for a moral crusade against vice or a return to the failed 'Back to Basics' campaign of the previous Conservative government. In contrast to the USA, Britain is an extremely secular society and in the absence of any strong religious power in society New Labour finds itself in the position that there is no higher authority than government authority which increasingly has exerted its moral influence on schools. Some would argue that this is no less than an attempt by New Labour to socially engineer society in its own image.

## **TEACHERS AND TEACHING**

British teachers will commonly argue that there is little room in the school curriculum to educate for moral character. Many will say that moral character is the responsibility of parents together with faith communities and that in any case in a multicultural society there is no agreed way to determine what is good and bad character. There also appears to be a growing 'moral correctness' mind-set in education, as teachers do not say things are 'immoral' for fear of being branded discriminatory. In fact, British teachers are generally non-judgemental in official language about children. However, it may be that talk of indoctrination and brainwashing often excuses the teacher from the really difficult task of thinking what character traits they might consciously inculcate.

Teachers are perceived to be moral authorities by their pupils whatever they themselves think about their teaching. Indeed, it is in questions about pedagogy that the moral dimension is often most clearly seen. Professor A. H. Halsey (1994: 11f) argues that the teaching profession should be re-shaped to achieve a greater 'parenting' role for schools. He means by this that the parental function implicit within and constitutive of the teacher in loco parentis has been neglected and ought to be restored. Teaching, according to Halsey, has been turned into a cognitive relation between old and younger people with someone else responsible for the really difficult part – the development of a child's character. He believes that teachers need to take the 'parenting' role more seriously as he sees education as a process of teaching someone how to live.

Ryan and Bohlin (1999: 153-154) ask the question: what would you like to see practised among members of the school? The anticipated answer is the practices of good character. A survey of the leadership of teacher education in the USA (see Nielsen Jones, Ryan and Bohlin, 1999) sought to gather information on the degree of their commitment to character education and the philosophical

approaches adopted by them. Whilst there was overwhelming support expressed for the notion of character education in practice the survey found it not to be a high priority in teacher education. It was also found that there was little consensus about the nature of character education and how it should be taught among teacher educators. In a similar survey conducted by the research and teacher education group of the National Forum on Values in Education and the Community in 1997 it was found that few teacher education institutions had incorporated values education into their teaching programmes and yet it was also recognised as being of importance to prepare teachers for their role as form teachers and as teachers of personal, social and moral education in schools. Like the American findings, there was little real time given to the moral dimensions of teaching.

The new Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status (2002) issued by the DfES make no explicit reference to character or character education. Instead, they speak of professional values and practice for teachers that no doubt are intended to cover, in a general way, some of the kinds of values associated with character education. The English teaching standards have statutory force in teacher training and standards 1.1 to 1.5 indicate that newly qualified teachers must demonstrate that they can ‘treat pupils with respect and consideration’. Standard 1.3 states that teachers must ‘demonstrate and promote positive values, attitudes and behaviour that they expect from pupils’. In other words, they must act as role models in the classroom. Whilst there is no explicit reference to the development of character it is clear that this is what is intended by this standard. There is an implicit recognition in these teaching standards that the character of the teacher matters and that pupils will acquire the habits of good character directly from teachers who embody the ideals of character to which they expect their pupils to aspire. In respect of the teaching methods to inculcate this character development, the standards document remains silent. How moral values are actually taught is still rightly left to the discernment of teachers, but teachers are still largely influenced, consciously or not, by some dominant methods, including values clarification approaches.

Character education is back on the agenda in British education policy. However, there is much uncertainty on how it should be implemented in schools and there is no one definition of what it means. This is not surprising since there has clearly been a long history of ill-conceived, ineffective and failed efforts at character education in Britain and elsewhere. The kinds of character goals that teachers and educational thinkers espoused and the teaching methods they used varied enormously. The progressives at the beginning of the twentieth century were reacting against educational practices such as rote learning and the enforcement in schools of patterns of traditional formal behaviour. However, they did not provide many viable alternatives to the various pedagogical methods used for teaching character education at the time. Moral education, the new preferred term

which incorporated some of the goals of character education, continued to be taught in schools in a fairly didactic teaching style with behavioural codes still enforced. The 1960's saw new and progressive teaching methods introduced to the classroom and an emphasis on 'values education' that seemed to down play the need for a substantive content for character development. The 1990s has seen a gradual re-emergence of character education as a theme in schools, but despite government encouragement it could not be said to be a widely adopted policy in British schools.

This review of government curriculum policy documents indicates that there is no consistent definition of what is meant by character education. In the White Paper (2001) the government associate character building with the needs of the economy whilst in the Citizenship Order emphasis is placed on the moral virtues of character. The cumulative picture is more comprehensive, but it largely avoids any fundamental agreement on the justification and content of this character education. Current versions of character education in the USA and Britain are therefore essentially an unsatisfactory amalgam of liberal, values clarification, and cognitive development strategies that are used to fulfil neo-liberal and conservative projects in the classroom. Unfortunately, these wide differences might well prevent the emergence of any working consensus on character education for schools. Perhaps more importantly, these wide differences and lack of consensus allows critics to seriously question the intentions of some character educators and to even accuse them of being anti-intellectual, authoritarian in approach and aligned to reactionary politics.

## **THE RESEARCH**

Although teachers, schools and institutions of education are necessarily at the heart of any attempt to introduce character education educationalists have rarely considered how teachers themselves understand the validity of character formation. Whether teachers think it is appropriate or necessary or even whether they believe it can work are all unasked questions. Similarly the views of the next generation of teachers in relation to character education have never been considered. Do trainee teachers expect to engage in character formation before they enter the profession or is this a facet of their job that concerns them after they begin their teaching lives?

This research is unique in that it looks at student teachers' views on character education before they start their school experience and then again at the end of their course. It compares the views of two cohorts of students from different institutions which offer their students a range of different placements and teaching experiences. The distribution of two sets of questionnaire also allows us to gauge whether students are more or less inclined to support character education after they have

experienced school. We could explore the reactions of students as they entered a variety of school environments, whether there were differences between those who had trained in faith and non faith schools, primary and secondary schools and urban and suburban schools.

The first questionnaire looked at the expectations of students as they started their training as teachers. It asked whether they expected their respective courses to train them to influence pupil's behaviour, values or morals. It went on to examine students understanding of the role of teachers as moral educators in schools and their understanding of the contribution different subjects in the curriculum contributed to the promotion of values. The questionnaire also included questions that explored some of the more sensitive issues in relation to moral education and character formation: did students think it was appropriate that teachers should advocate behaviour and values that was counter to those that were promoted in the child's home and to what extent did students feel that the existence of different faith and ethnic communities in a single school influence the viability of establishing a common standard.

The second questionnaire was distributed to the same students at the end of their course and was designed in response to the data gathered in the first questionnaire. It asked students for their views on character formation in the schools they were placed in and charted their assessment of the frequency and type of moral development they witnessed.

The aims of the project were informed by previous research into the values of student and practising teachers in relation to their role as educators. Lynn Revell conducted research in schools in Boston and Chicago which included interviews with 780 children and 62 teachers about the importance and viability of character education. All the schools were committed to implementing some form of character education yet while the views of children differed dramatically depending on their age, type of school, ethnicity and social background teachers were more uniform in their approach. Teachers supported the principle of attempting to form pupil's character and often defined their profession through the prism of moral educators. Even where teachers thought that their version of character education could be improved they were convinced that character education had or could make an enormous difference to the lives of children.

One of the salient features of this research was that teachers from a variety of types of schools believed that they could use character education to make a difference in some respect to individual pupils and the general classroom environment. Although they believed that the home and wider community were more significant factors in influencing children and forming their character they

also believed that teachers and the school could make a difference. Teacher's belief that they could and should influence the character of children is echoed in the data gathered from this research. Like their American counterparts British student teachers recognised the power of family and community life but their sense of vocation continued to include a commitment to the possibility of influencing the values and behaviour of children.

## **The Research Project**

The data suggest that there is an overwhelming belief from students in all key stages that character education is important. They expect that their training as teachers should include some input on how to encourage pupils to behave and act in an appropriate manner. Similarly they expect that they should be role models to their pupils and that they would like to see a greater input on character education in their courses.

## **Methodology**

The data for this research was collected from student teachers on Post Graduate Certificate of Education courses at Canterbury Christ Church University College and Manchester Metropolitan University in the academic year 2003 -2004. Students specialising in all four Key Stages were involved in the research as both colleges run large primary and secondary PGCEs.

At the beginning of the academic year students were given a 17 question questionnaire which was administered before they began their first placement in schools. In both institutions the questionnaire was administered and collected during a single session to ensure the highest possible return rate. The second questionnaire was administered near the end of the courses so that the time between the questionnaires was maximised. This was because we wanted to give students as great a time as possible in which they would experience values education in schools and on their courses. The second questionnaire was 5 questions long and was administered over several sessions which explains why the return rate is slightly lower.

The institutions in which the research was conducted were carefully chosen because they shared important factors which allowed them to be compared but also because of significant differences. Both colleges run large courses and one ran the relatively new Citizenship PGCE, both institutions also include some form of values education training as part of their courses. The first significant difference between the institutions is that student teachers at CCCUC normally complete their

teacher training at schools in Kent and the Medway towns. This means that although they experience schools in a variety of economic and social environments they rarely encounter schools with a significant ethnic mix. Students at Manchester Metropolitan University are far more likely to train in schools where there are significant ethnic minorities or even majorities.

A further difference between the institutions is that CCCUC is an Anglican college with a mission statement that commits it to an inclusive but recognisably Christian ethos. MMU is not a Christian university and one of the reasons for choosing it for the research was that it gave us the opportunity to see whether students at a Christian and a non Christian institution developed different attitudes towards the teaching of values during their courses.

## **The Questionnaires**

The first questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first collected basic demographic data about the students and enabled us to establish that the students were typical in relation to students on similar courses elsewhere in the country, that is they were representative of other PGCE students. The second section asked questions about student expectations of their course and the third section asked questions about their understanding of the values education in schools and their role as teachers in that process.

The first questionnaire was initially piloted to students at London Metropolitan University which shares some of the significant characteristics of Manchester Metropolitan University. After the questionnaires were analysed along with useful comments from PGCE tutors at London Metropolitan University we decided to alter one of the questions that related to church attendance to make it more inclusive. Although this change did not alter the tone or substance of the questionnaire it did allow those students who believed themselves to be religiously committed in some way but who did not attend a church to register that commitment on the questionnaire.

The central aim of the questionnaire is to examine the student understanding of character education. We recognised that student teachers would probably have no experience of character education. The inexperience of the students meant that asking questions about character education needed to be phrased in language that they would be familiar with. This explains why so many of the questions include references to values and the behaviour of pupils as these terms are relatively self explanatory.

The data from the first questionnaire falls into two broad categories. The first concerns the expectations of the students in relation to their impending course and values education. The second category looks at their understanding of the role of the teacher and the school in the process of shaping pupil's values. Both sets of questions ask students about their own values but the second category looks at their responses through the prism of their definition of what it means to be a teacher.

It was an important element of the research to be able to examine student's attitudes from different perspectives because of the nature of character education. As a model of values education character education relies on the commitment of individual teachers to specific ideals and ethos. An examination of student teacher's receptiveness to a definition of teaching that called upon them to actively engage in the formation of pupil's character was an essential part of the research.

## **THE DATA**

### **Data Presentation Methodology**

The data collected during the research phases of this project have been collected, collated and presented in graphical form. MS Excel™ pie charts have been used to show the broad brush response to the questions asked with percentages shown that relate to the numbers of respondents on each option.

### **Responses to the Questionnaire in Phase 1**

In total 1013 questionnaires were returned from those distributed across students in all ages and phases of initial teacher training at CCCUC and MMU.

Only the statistically interesting questions have been reported here. In each case a graphical representation of the responses is shown followed by the stimulus question and then the choices that the respondents could make. In order to read the graphs it is important to remember that the legend on the right of each diagram is coded to respond to the number of each choice.

### **Section A**

The data from section A of the first questionnaire showed that in both institutions the students were representative of student PGCE students in the primary and secondary phases. That is the majority of

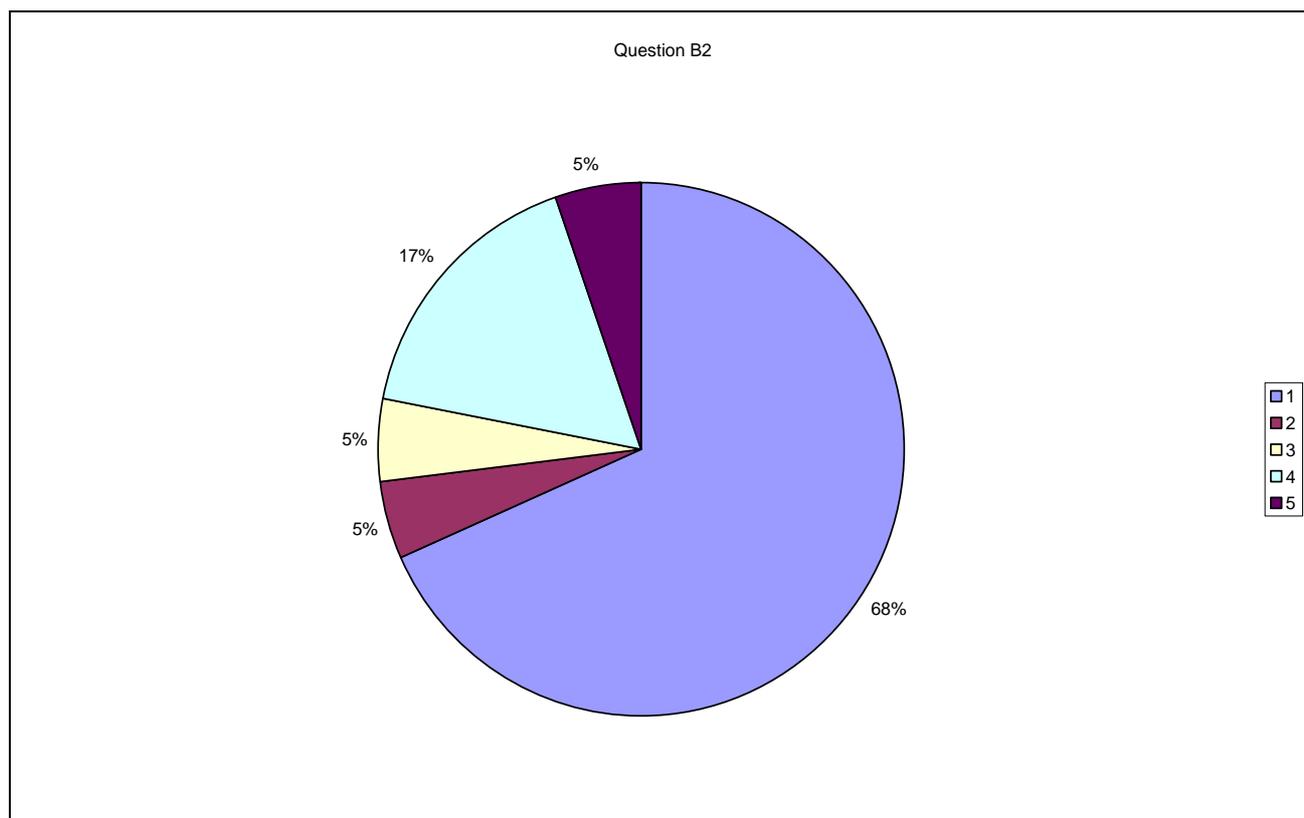
students were between 21 and 28, have no children and over 50% were employed in other jobs or parenting before they enrolled on the course. At Canterbury 12% said they regularly (twice or more a month) attended a church. At Manchester 10% said they regularly attended church with a further 5% saying they attended a mosque, Gurdwara Synagogue or other place of worship regularly. In both institutions the percentage of churchgoers is significantly higher than would be found in the general public. This percentage amongst the students is even more significant when we consider that most churchgoers are much older.

## Section B

Students expected that values education would be a part of their training as teachers. Question B2 asked students if they expected their course to teach them how to influence pupil's values and morals. (Diagram 1)

Diagram 1

Question B2



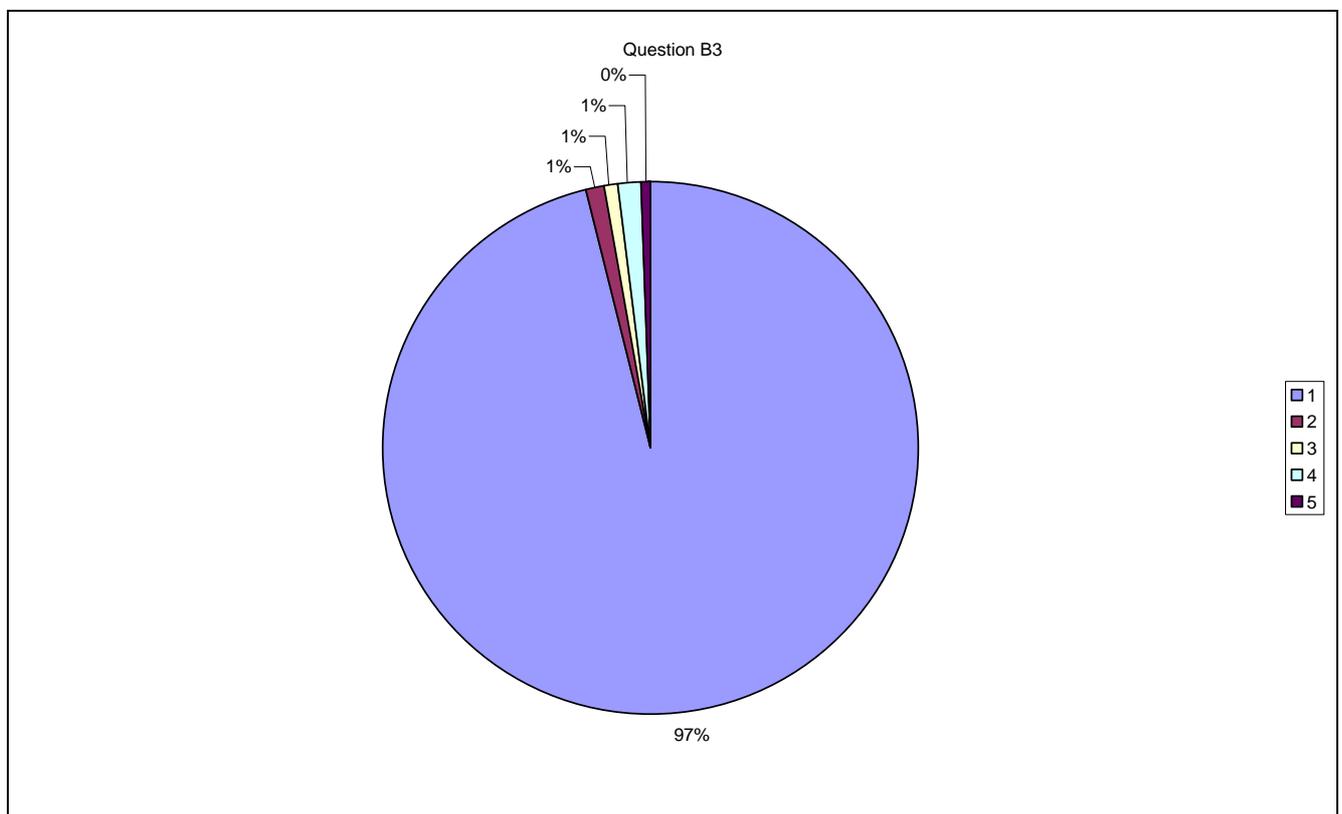
<b>Stimulus question</b>	Do you expect your course to teach you how to influence pupil's values and morals in any way?
<b>Choices</b>	1 Yes, this is an important element of preparing to be a teacher. 2 It is important for teachers of Religious Education and Citizenship. 3 It is more important for Primary teachers. 4 No 5 Other (Please specify)

Not only did they anticipate that teacher training courses would train teachers who specialise in values education, (teachers of religious education and citizenship education) how to influence pupil's values and morals, but over two thirds of them thought that training in this area was an **'important element of preparing to be a teacher'** for all teachers.

When the question was narrowed to behaviour the overwhelming majority (97%) said that they expected their course to teach them how to influence pupil's behaviour (Diagram 2). It seems that student teachers in all key stages believe that teacher intervention in the form of encouragement to behave appropriately 'is an important part of teaching'.

Diagram2

Question B3



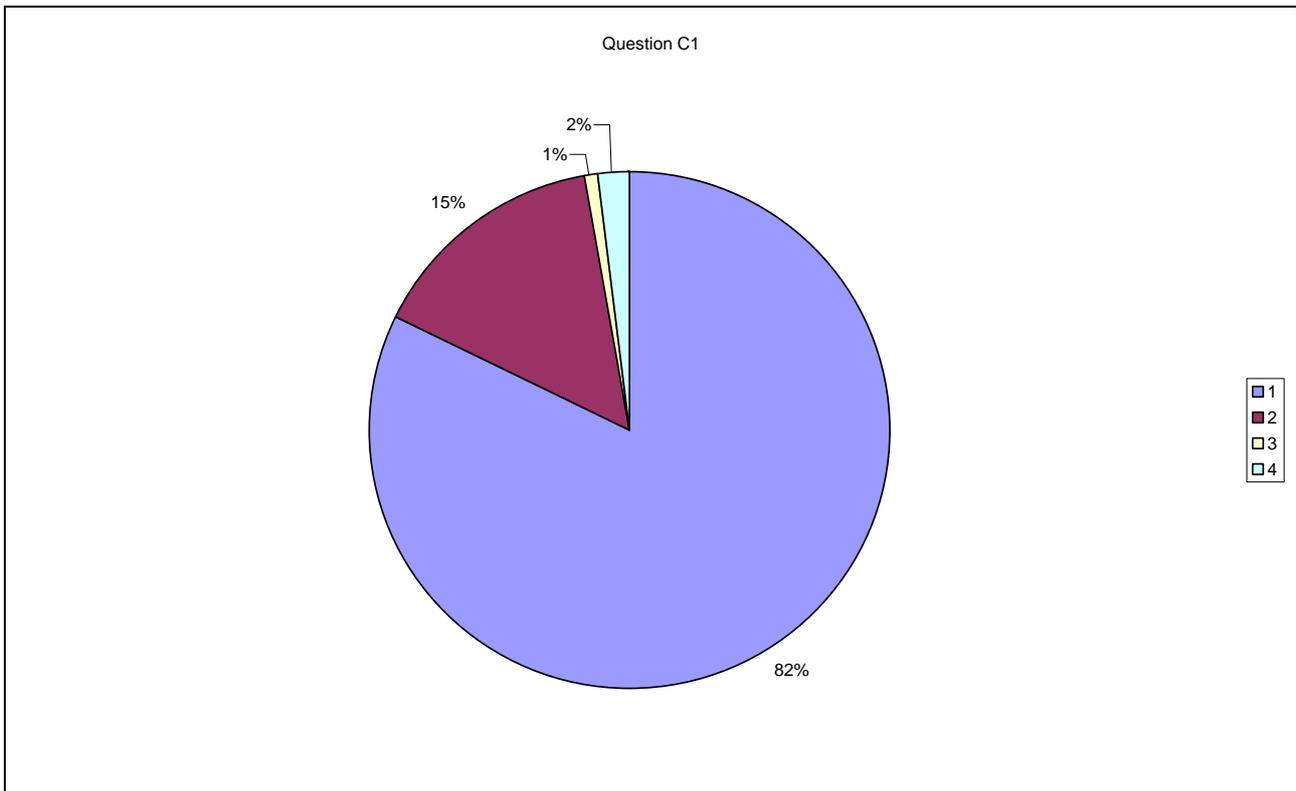
<b>Stimulus question</b>	Do you expect your course to teach you how to encourage pupils to behave and act in an appropriate manner?
<b>Choices</b>	1 Yes, this is an important part of teaching. 2 It's more relevant to some subjects than others. 3 It's more appropriate for Primary teachers. 4 No 5 Other (Please specify)

The data from this research shows that students at the very beginning of their courses, before they enter school as students or start their courses assume that values education is a normal and required function of teaching. Although there were some differences between primary and secondary students and students from Canterbury and Manchester in all cases there was at least a two thirds majority who expected that values education would be part of their training and who thought it was an essential part of their jobs as teachers.

### Section C

The responses to questions B2 and B3 were strengthened by the responses to questions that asked students about their expectations of their roles once they were in schools. In responses to question C1 **'Do you think teachers should be role models to their pupils?'** 82% said yes (Diagram 3). This indicated that students expected that as teachers they would be firmly embedded in the process of values education. The teaching of values and acceptable behaviour would not be a nominal task but one which they were committed to. The large majority of students who said they expected to be role models to their pupils indicated that most student teachers did not distinguish between the good teacher and a teacher who was a role model.

Question C1

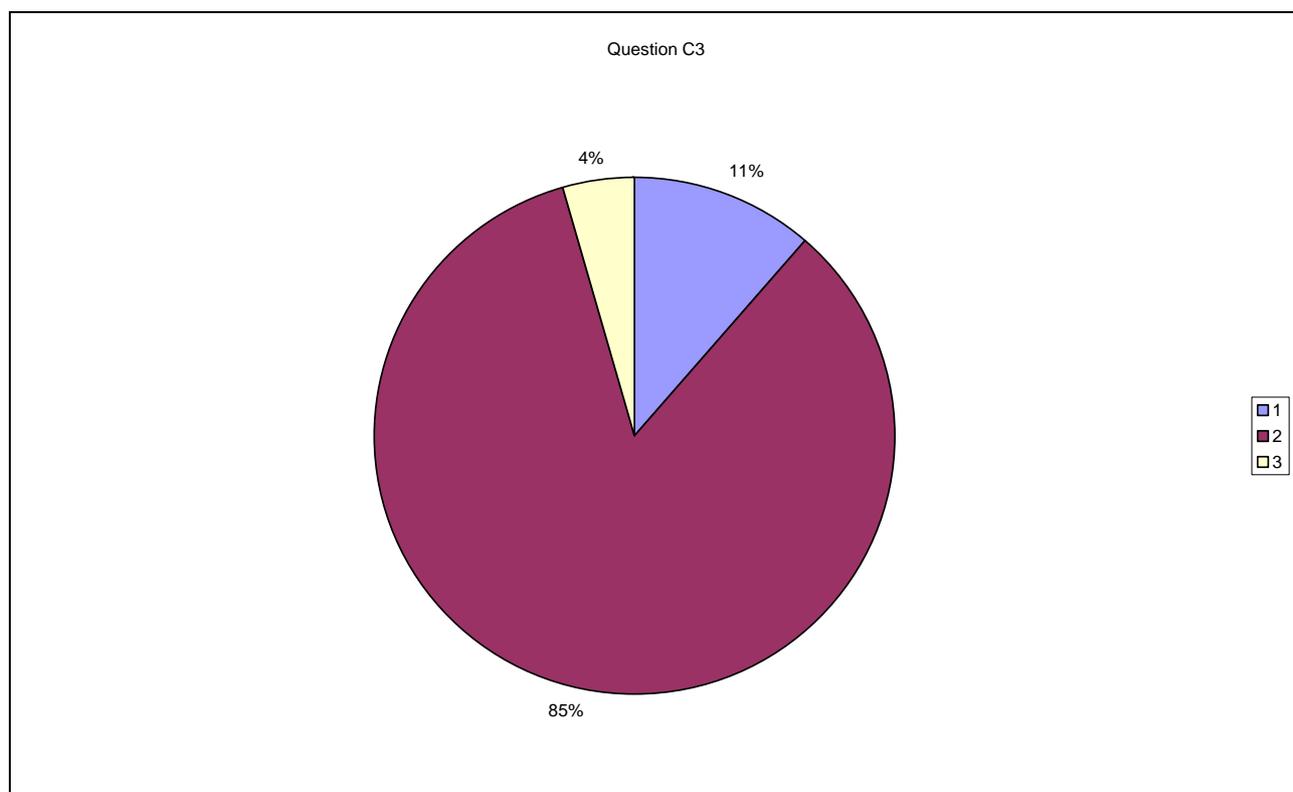


<b>Stimulus question</b>	Do you think teachers should be role models to their pupils?
<b>Choices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Yes.</li> <li>2 Only in the classroom or school.</li> <li>3 No</li> <li>4 Other (Please explain)</li> </ol>

As a form of values education, character education places an emphasis on specific virtues. It differs from the form of values education prevalent in schools between the early 1970's and the late 1980's where teachers saw themselves as facilitators in a process whereby pupils developed the skills necessary for them to determine their values. In the values clarification method pupil's were theoretically free to articulate the values and codes of behaviour of their choice. The teachers' role was to ensure that the process by which pupils came to their own conclusions was free from external influence. In contrast character education stresses the outcome rather than the process. This means the teacher is active rather than passive in relation to the values and character traits that children develop when they are in school. It also means that in terms of values teachers are informed by particular values and a particular ethos. Teachers who are committed to the model of values education at the heart of character education must be prepared to encourage their pupils to accept particular values and to demonstrate particular character traits.

It appears from the responses to the third part of the first questionnaire that there is some ambiguity and contradiction in the way student teachers see their role in the development of their pupil's values. In answer to the question **'If you were teaching a lesson or form period where a moral issue was being discussed how would you see your role?'** The vast majority, 85% thought the 'role of the teacher is to encourage pupils to reach their own conclusions (Diagram 4). Only 11% thought that the role of the teacher was to 'encourage pupils to reach a conclusion that is sympathetic to the one held by the school'.

Diagram 4  
Question C3

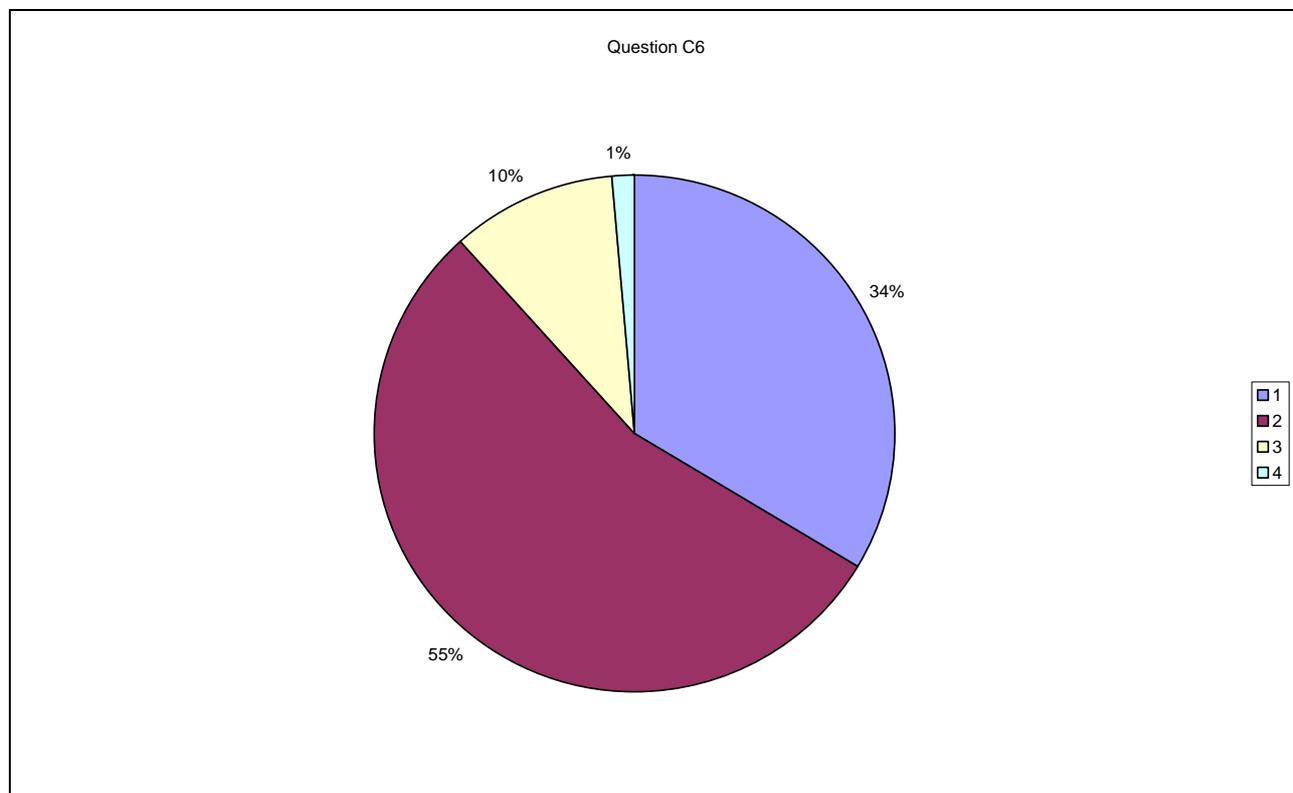


<b>Stimulus question</b>	If you were teaching a lesson or form period where a moral issue was being discussed how would you see your role?
<b>Choices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The role of the teacher is to encourage pupils to reach a conclusion that is sympathetic to the one held by the school.</li> <li>2 The role of the teacher is to encourage pupils to reach their own conclusions.</li> <li>3 Other (Please explain)</li> </ol>

However in a later question student responses suggest that where the values of the home contradicted those of the school a majority of them believed that it was the job of the teacher to encourage pupil's to 'hold values and behave in accordance with the school ethos' (Diagram 5). When students were asked whether they would actively encourage pupils to hold values and behave in a manner in

accordance with the school ethos *even when that ethos contradicted the ethos of the home* a majority of students said that they would. Only 10% thought that as long as pupils were not breaking school rules it was not the job of the teacher to influence their values or behaviour.

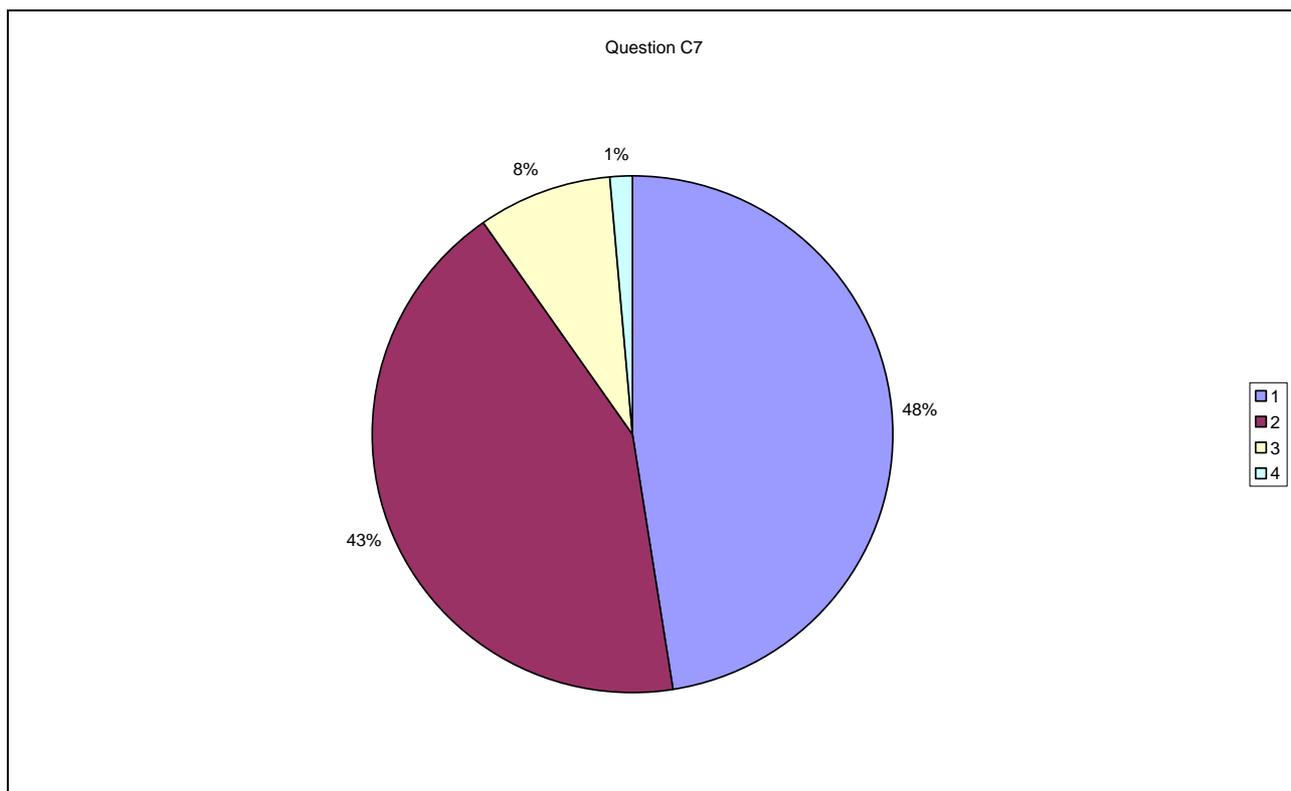
Question C6



<b>Stimulus question</b>	Sometimes values and behaviour are accepted in families that are not acceptable in school. If this were the case in your school, as a teacher would you consider it a part of your job to encourage pupils to hold values and behave in accordance with the school ethos?
<b>Choices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Yes.</li> <li>2 Yes, but in so far as I would encourage them not to break school rules</li> <li>3 As long as they did not break any school rules it is not the job of a teacher to influence pupils' values or behaviour</li> <li>4 No.</li> </ol>

The reason for this apparent contradiction is suggested in the responses to question C7. Here students were asked whether they thought that the existence of different faith and ethnic communities in a school community influenced a school's ability to affect pupil's values and behaviour. The response was divided almost equally between a yes and a no option (Diagram 6). It is worth noting that the responses were also divided equally between students from Manchester and Canterbury. What ever the reason for the split in the response to this question it is probably not related to the geography of the institutions.

Question C7

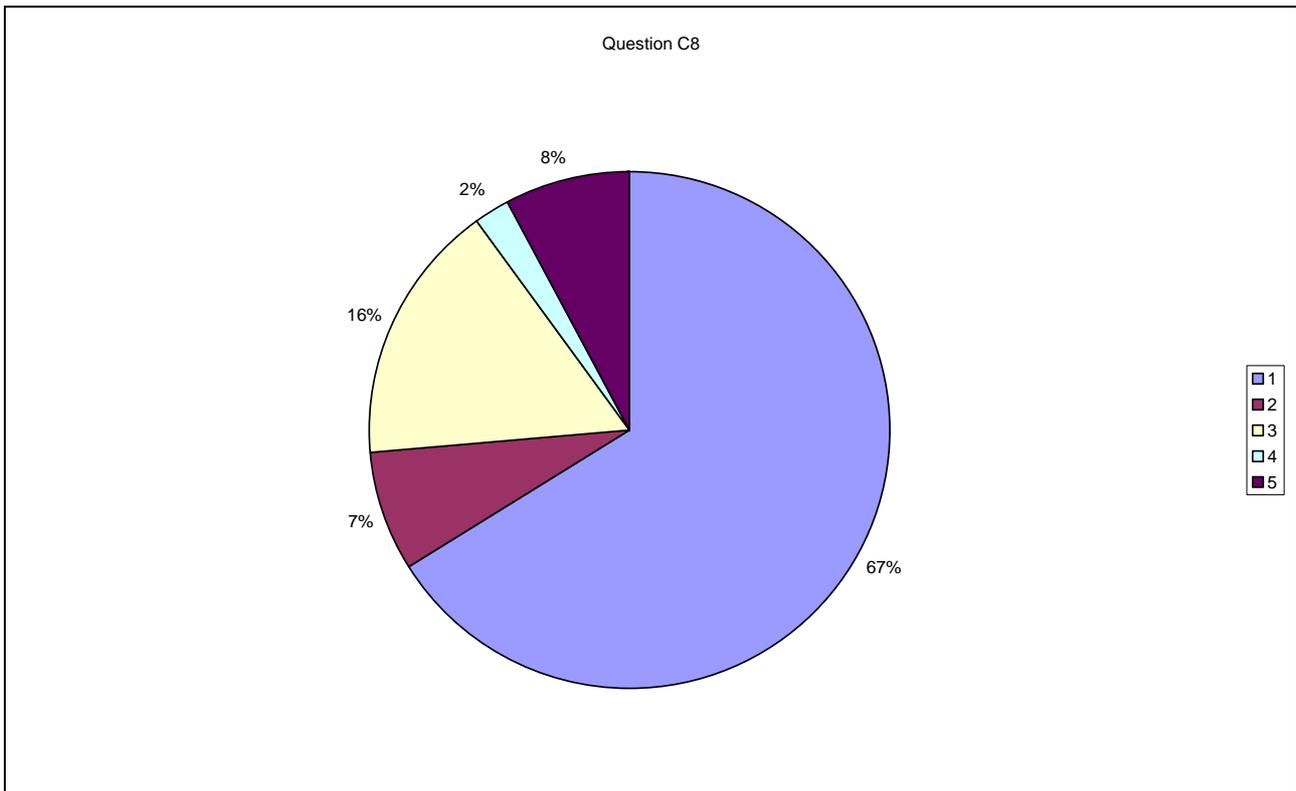


<b>Stimulus question</b>	Does the existence of different faith and ethnic communities in some schools influence the schools' ability to affect pupils' values and behaviour?
<b>Choices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 No, there are values and behaviour that are common to everyone.</li> <li>2 Yes, schools should respect the fact that some groups have values and behaviour that are very different.</li> <li>3 It depends on the groups involved.</li> <li>4 Other (please explain)</li> </ol>

The last question in this section asked students directly about their attitude towards character education. Two thirds said they agreed with the government's statement that there is a need for schools to play a role in the formation of children's character (Diagram 7). Only 8% said they thought that it was not the place of schools to form pupil's character. There was a difference between the responses of students from Canterbury and Manchester. 70% from Canterbury said they agreed with the statement in favour of the greater involvement in schools but only 60% said yes from Manchester. However it appears that students from Manchester were not rejecting values education absolutely but that they believed that '**schools already do enough RE, PSHE and Citizenship**'.

Diagram 7

Question C8



<b>Stimulus question</b>	The government has indicated that it believes there is a need for schools to play a role in the formation of pupils' character. What do you think?
<b>Choices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 I agree</li> <li>2 It is not the place of schools to form pupils' character.</li> <li>3 Schools already do enough RE, PSHE and Citizenship. There is no more need today than there was 20 years ago.</li> <li>4 I disagree. It is not the place of schools to do this</li> <li>5 Other (please explain)</li> </ol>

## Phase 2 – The Second Questionnaire

In total 946 questionnaires were returned from students in all ages and phases coming to the end of their initial teacher training at CCCUC and MMU.

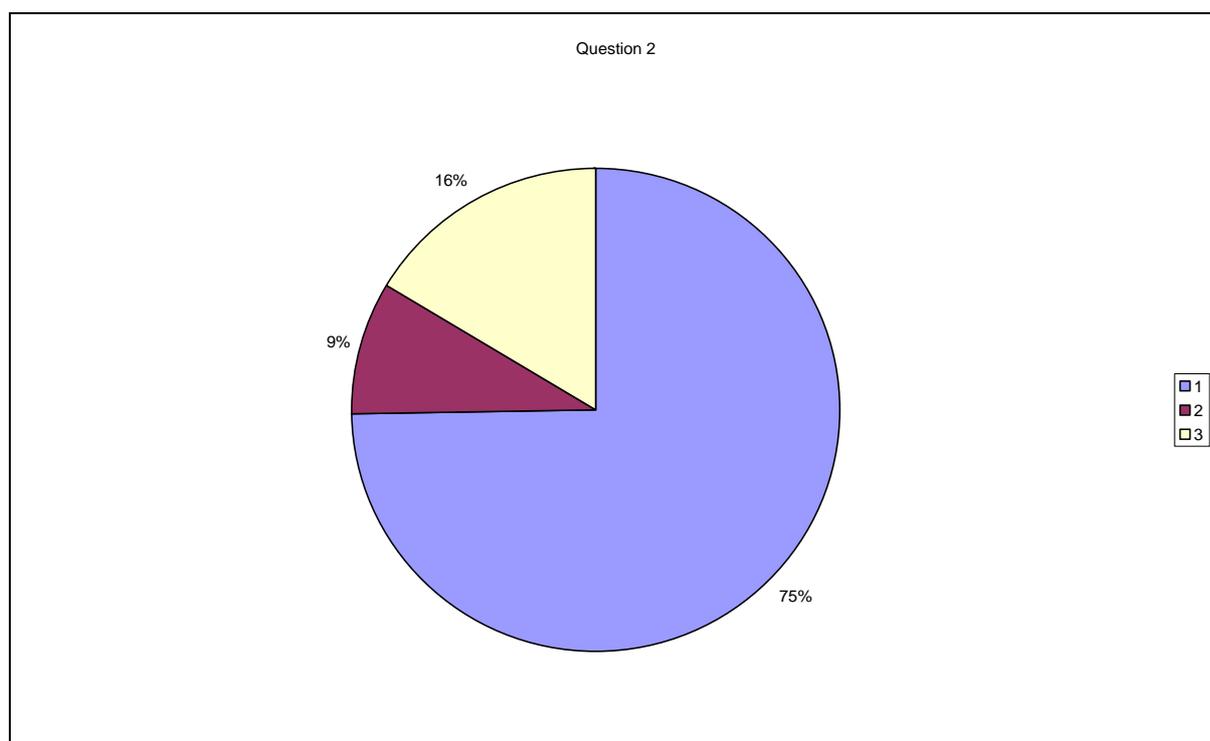
The responses from 946 questionnaires were collated to provide the pie charts as shown with percentages.

In many cases, in both phases of the project, respondents added prose, qualitative statements where the question asked for additional information or asked them to explain. These statements were harvested and are available on request. They can be provided respondent by respondent sequentially or can be grouped according to question.

The second questionnaire was based on the findings from the first questionnaire. The main aim of this questionnaire was to see if student understanding of the role of the school and teacher in values education had changed as a result of their course or their experience in school. Students maintained the belief that it was the home or factors outside school that had the greatest impact on the formation of children’s character and values (Diagram 8).

Diagram 8

Question 2



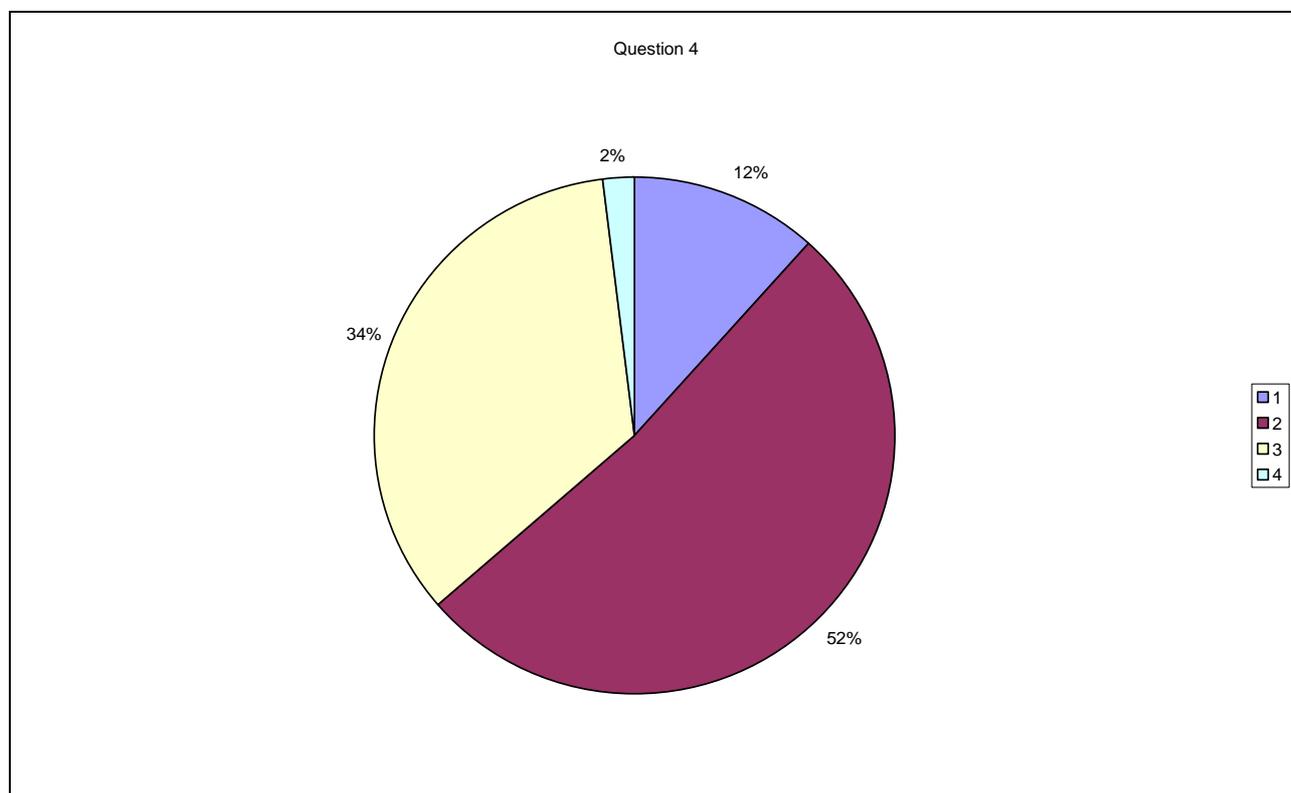
<b>Stimulus question</b>	Do you think school or home has the greatest impact on the formation of children’s character and values?
<b>Choices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Home</li> <li>2 School</li> <li>3 Other (please explain)</li> </ul>

Despite this belief they remained committed to the idea that as teachers they should be involved in values education and the formation of pupil’s character. It is one of the important findings from this research that from the beginning of their training as teachers and with two separate experiences in school the majority of students believed that teacher intervention into the character and values development of pupils was a part of the teacher’s role. Students were asked whether they thought their course had prepared them to influence and develop pupil’s values and character and only 34%

said yes, while 12% said no and 52% said ‘To a limited extent’ (Diagram 9). When they were asked whether they thought student teachers should have more input into their courses in this area nearly two thirds said yes (Diagram 10).

Diagram 9

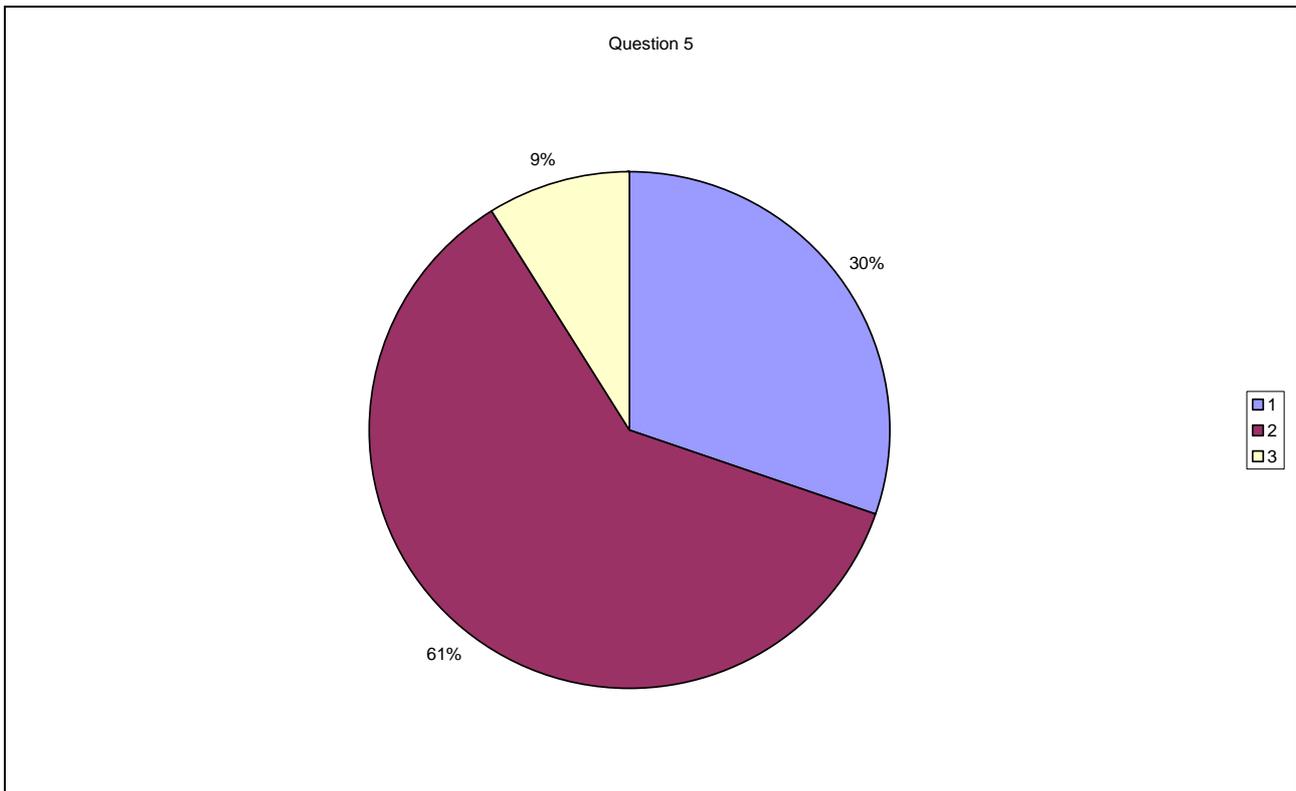
Question 4



<b>Stimulus question</b>	Has your course prepared you to develop and influence pupil’s values and character?
<b>Choices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 No</li> <li>2 To a limited extent</li> <li>3 Yes.</li> <li>4 Other (please explain)</li> </ul>

Diagram 10

Question 5 (Shown as 4 on the Questionnaire itself)



<b>Stimulus question</b>	Do you think that student teachers should have more impact on the topic of influencing pupils' values and character?
<b>Choices</b>	1 No 2 Yes 3 Other (please explain)

**Differences between the two institutions**

The differences between Canterbury and Manchester were interesting in a number of areas. Students at Manchester were less likely to see values education as important, less likely to expect their course to teach them about values education and less likely to see themselves as role models in the classroom. Students from Manchester were also more likely to say that there is no more need for character education than there was 20 years ago.

There are several possible explanations for these differences. The first explanation could be that the slightly higher percentage of regular church goers at Canterbury is reflected in their greater commitment to both values education and character formation. Another possible explanation is that as a Christian college Canterbury is more likely to infuse its courses and general teaching programs with an ethos that emphasises the importance of character formation and values. The last possible explanation is that students who come to Canterbury and who know it is a Christian college expect

values education to be a significant part of their course and they therefore anticipate its importance both in terms of their understanding of the role of the teacher and their expectations of the course. However, these suggestions are only speculative.

The data is not conclusive enough for us to make definite statements about the links or reasons for the differences. However the differences are significant enough for us to note that although there was an overall majority of students who favoured more values and character education on their courses and who thought it was an important part of teaching, students at Canterbury were far more likely to think this than students at Manchester.

### **Implications/Points for consideration**

The data generated by this research is multilayered and could provide the basis for a far wider discussion on student teachers' towards values education and character formation than there is space to be explored here. The key findings and points for consideration are as follows.

- Student teachers come to the profession already convinced that some sort of values education will be expected from them. This suggests that student teachers will be receptive to greater input in their courses of elements of values education and character formation. This point is strengthened when we consider the endorsement students gave to the suggestion that there could more input in this area of ITT.
- Most students see themselves as future role models to their pupils and indicate that in certain situations they are fully prepared to teach their pupils values and encourage them to behave in ways that are different from the norms of the home. At the same time the majority of student teachers believe that where discussions of morals take place it is their function as teachers to encourage pupils to come to their own conclusions. It seems that although students support values education and character formation in schools they are not entirely clear on how it impacts on their role or approach in the classroom.
- This ambiguity is reinforced in their responses to the question that asked them about the values and character education they observed in school. Although a third said that activities which were aimed at influencing values and character were built into the ethos of the school, 10% said they didn't see any activities of this nature and 41% indicated that they were restricted to RE, PSHE and assemblies. The fragmented nature of their response to this question and their confusion about their own role as educators in this field implies both that there college courses do not provide students with a coherent input in this area and that schools also do not provide a consistent curriculum in terms of values and character.

- The incoherence and lack of consistency in teacher training and schools suggests that a structured program on character education and or a wider discussion of the issues within teacher training would have a beneficial impact.

## **Developmental Opportunities**

The two main areas for development highlighted by this data are in the college based training students' receive and in their training in schools. Students in all Key Stages receive input on specific subject studies and more general professional studies. Where it occurs values education falls into the discrete areas of RE and citizenship education and sometimes input on the cross curricular themes of Social, Cultural, Moral and Spiritual Education or PSHE. The fragmenting of values and character education across programs and the curriculum means that it can get lost amongst the detail of other subject areas. The other danger is that when values education is placed within a particular curriculum subject some students are denied access to the training or there is a tendency for them to see values education as restricted to particular subjects.

If input on character formation were located within professional studies units or those strands which dealt with generic issues within education all students would have access to the information, training and discussions. Not only would students be aware of the subject but they would have greater familiarity with the wider philosophical and educational discourses. as well as resources and examples of good practice. Placing values education where it is available to all student teachers also gives a signal to students that colleges take training in this area as seriously as any other.

The second area for development is in the training of teachers in school itself. It was clear from the data that students experience of activities that lend themselves to character formation was not uniform. It is possible that ten percent of students were not able to observe any lessons or practices at all. This means that teacher training in the area of values education in schools is inconsistent.

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