

GORDON A. NAYLOR

**THE EXPERIENCE OF
MORAL CAPABILITIES
IN A
HIGH SCHOOL SETTING**

September 1998

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INTRODUCTION

For many decades the issue of moral and/or religious education in Ontario has been the subject of considerable debate and conflict. This, of course, is not only a matter of concern in any one country, but rather for all of mankind. Some of the questions that seem to be on the minds of many social scientists, educators, and the public in general include:

How do we help our youth develop into moral citizens?
Is society declining and are our youth worse than they used to be in the past?
Can we teach someone how to be morally capable?
Is religious and moral training the same?
What is the role of schools in the process of moral education?

Lind (1997) maintains that the most successful and productive years for moral development are between the ages of ten and sixteen years of age. Therefore, the importance and timeliness of high school programming designed to foster moral development is paramount. The manner in which moral development takes place; how it is taught and best developed is significant and involves various important components if it is to be done successfully. The critical question is how to create an educational environment that develops and/or reinforces healthy moral development of youth into world citizens.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Both Piaget (1969) and Kohlberg (1984) maintained that morality is fundamentally made up of two different aspects. These two aspects are: affective (i.e., moral attitudes, values, ideals a person holds) and cognitive (i.e., a person's moral competencies). Lind (1978; 1995) demonstrated that these two aspects can be measured and operationalized independently.

Morality must be described not in external states, but rather in terms of internal states. A person is called moral if he acts upon his own moral principles rather than complies with external rules or norms (Kohlberg, 1984; Pittel & Mendelsohn, 1966). Therefore, our moral goodness depends on our moral

ideals or principles to which we aspire and on our capability to judge issues according to them and act upon these decisions.

Moral judgment competence which is the cognitive aspect of moral judgment behaviour develops through the four phases that Piaget described. Kohlberg (1984) identifies six stages of moral perspective-taking which provide an appropriate classification for the *affective* aspect of moral thought and behaviour. Lind (1997) states that moral autonomy is not absolute, but in relation to a particular perspective. Someone is called *morally autonomous* when they can consider all moral perspectives available to them at the time, even though some perspectives may be in conflict with their most salient one. Lind's (1985; 1993) dual-aspect-theory implies that moral perspective precedes the development of cognitive competencies needed for moral action. Moral perspectives serve as goals or ideals. Lind (1997) maintains that if both affective and cognitive aspects of moral development are measured, the most successful and productive years for moral development are between the ages of ten and sixteen years of age. Therefore, the importance and timeliness of high school programming designed to foster moral development is paramount. The manner in which moral development takes place, how it is taught and best developed is significant and involves various important components if it is to be done successfully. A considerable amount of research has been carried out regarding educational environments and the components necessary to promote self-sustaining, moral development. This research will be discussed later as we examine the example of the Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute moral leadership programme.

THE NANCY CAMPBELL COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE EXPERIENCE

“But the moral leader should not be seen, that is, the moral leader is actually doing wonderful, amazing things but he shouldn't be proud of them... he can tell himself, “Oh, the things I made, I made a change in some ways,” but he shouldn't stand up and say, “Oh, I'm so good, I'm so good.” No, this isn't ... what leadership is about. It's really being humble, being patient and ... guiding others and helping them to transform themselves ... moral leadership is not only about transforming others, it's about transforming ourselves and also by making social transformation. These are the two purposes of moral leadership ... social and personal transformation. ... this is what moral leadership is about.”

(Sixteen-year-old student from Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute)

The Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute (NCCI) in Stratford, Ontario, has implemented a program to educate students in the development of moral capability. There are several elements in this programme based on a chosen moral framework. The origin of this framework was the moral leadership component of a socio-economic development project at Núr University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. It has been adapted and other elements added to suit the NCCI environment and the social role of students as world citizens.

The moral framework chosen is non-denominational and based on moral and human values working towards establishing sound moral leadership. This framework is consistent with standards set forth in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. NCCI has linked this moral framework with the concept of world citizenship in an attempt to create capable leaders

with world-embracing vision. We will discuss this programme in more detail further in this study.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to describe the personal experience of the students enrolled in a private high school programme based on a clearly articulated moral framework which includes moral capabilities. Through the research process we will be looking for some commonalities of their experience or themes that emerge from our interviews with students who have taken the programme.

We will also interview the parents to determine their perception as to their personal experience of having a youth from their family enrolled in the above-mentioned high school programme. The results of this investigation will allow us to know if the people involved in the programme feel that it is worthwhile. The interviews will help to identify themes and important issues that youth and/or parents consider meaningful and desirable in this private high school programme

FUTURE RESEARCH

It is conceivable that through this study we could be guided to a more informed approach as to what parents in the community beyond NCCI want or value regarding moral education. It should be noted that obviously one of the limitations of this type of study is that the views of students and parents who have opted out of the public system and are willing to pay for a different type of education would not necessarily be similar to the views of parents and students in the public system. However, the views and experience of these parents and students may present clues that would be worth considering in a further study focused on what it is that parents in the public system are searching for and would support in public high schools. On the other hand, parents who are paying for quality education could be expected to demand more and be more critical of the value they are receiving for their education dollars. Nevertheless, the results of this study may help in attempting to understand some of the hopes or goals of most parents as they would like the high school system to respond to the issue of moral development.

PROCEDURE

In order to conduct a study of examining the experiences about which little is known, phenomenological methods are well suited for this purpose (Colaizzi, 1978; Osborne, 1990). Through this method deep and detailed explanation and description of experience can be undertaken (Osborne, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Although a phenomenological approach does not coerce or force the phenomenon, it allows the experience to speak for itself (Colaizzi, 1978). In the interviews of the students and parents from the NCCI programme, the experience remains as it was and this methodology attempts to maintain contact with the experience as it is given (Ibid.).

The programme at NCCI has been executed in a participatory manner. Therefore, in keeping with this basic philosophy of the World Citizens courses, the research was carried out in

a participatory manner. Students in the Personal Transformation course were asked to volunteer for an in-depth interview in order to help others become aware of their experiences at NCCI and to glean from them what they valued about the high school moral development programme and NCCI in general. All students enrolled at NCCI that are above the Grade 9 level are required to take the World Citizenship Curriculum course being offered in that year (i.e., in 1997-98, Personal Transformation). Since the study is exploratory in nature, i.e. looking for themes, it was felt that asking for volunteers was in keeping with the participatory nature of their experience. One of the limitations that may have resulted from this recruitment process is that students who do not volunteer may have reasons to avoid such an interview. This is obviously a limitation of the selection process and would affect the study. However, students may have volunteered that have had negative experiences which they also felt the need to share. In any case, this selection process would have biased the interviews. In the case of the parents, they were selected by virtue of their youth volunteering for the study. Of course, they were given the option not to participate.

1. Eight of the students experiencing the programme were interviewed (27% of the course).
2. Seven parents of students were interviewed (23% of the total number of students in the course had at least one parent interviewed).

Students and parents were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Request for students to volunteer.
2. Parents of these students were interviewed on the basis of availability and willingness.

In one case the student of the parent was not interviewed, but the parent was interviewed. In another case, the parent of one of the students interviewed declined to be interviewed. This research was carried out in June, 1998. An interviewer was hired who was familiar with the NCCI programme and the phenomenological research approach utilized. The questions that the students were asked are attached (see Appendix A). Data was analyzed utilizing most of the steps of Colaizzi's (1978) seven step method of phenomenological analysis. This involved reading the transcripts a number of times and getting a general feel for the material. Highlighting meaningful phrases and the formulation of meanings for each significant statement was undertaken. The meanings thus extracted were organized into clusters of themes in order to provide some structure to the data. Listening to the audio tapes deepened the analysis of the interviews whenever subtle clarity was required beyond what was possible to detect from the typed transcripts. The list of formulated meanings was not returned to the students or their parents for validation; however, great care was taken to ensure the precise words were used whenever possible or the meaning was clearly maintained.

MORAL CAPABILITIES PROGRAMME

UNIVERSITY OF NUR'S MORAL LEADERSHIP COMPONENT

The NCCI moral leadership programme is based on the Moral Leadership Component of the University of Núr's "Training of Rural Schoolteachers as Community Development Agents" Course which focuses on the need for a new mental model of leadership. The following is a description of the various elements of their Moral Leadership Component. Their moral programme component postulates that most people have formed their view of a leader through a complex process of socialization that begins at infancy. People unconsciously, and without question, adopt mental models that are prevalent in society. As mental models are adopted, they become the "lenses through which we perceive and interpret reality. In other words, we believe that reality works as our mental model describes it."¹ If evidence emerges that contradicts our model, we tend to rationalize it away or not see it as significant. (Argyris, & Schon, 1974; Senge, 1990, 1994).

Based on these assumptions, if mental models are this powerful, in order to achieve behavioural changes that are lasting, one must change one's mental models.² Personal transformation, in terms of mental models, insists upon becoming aware of the mental model that you have and independently investigating the elements of it through critically analyzing each component such as assumptions, beliefs, prejudices and attitudes. This process can be painful as it requires objectivity and change and moving out of one's comfort level with what we had previously believed.³ This is not surprising but rather is a necessary part of reframing our understanding of leadership.

It is a very complex process to construct a new conceptual framework or mental model that requires conscious and incisive thought from our best intellectual and spiritual resources.⁴ There are six elements proposed and considered to be essential to understanding the new conceptual framework of moral leadership at Núr University. The six elements are:

- 1) Orientation of service to the common good;
- 2) The purpose of leadership: individual and social transformation;
- 3) The twin moral responsibilities to truth;
- 4) Transcendence through vision;
- 5) Belief in the essential nobility of the human being;
- 6) The development of capabilities.⁵

1) Orientation of service to the common good.

¹ Anello, Eloy. *Distance Education and Rural Development: An Experiment in Training Teachers as Community Development Agents* (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1997), p. 107

² Anello, p. 107

³Anello, p. 108

⁴Arbab, Dr. Farzam. Senda (unpublished)

⁵ Anello, p. 109

The following is a brief synopsis of the thinking behind the elements of the conceptual framework. The predominant mental model that comes to the fore when you hear the word *leader* is a person in charge or in control, having power over others. “This concept needs to be questioned and replaced by a concept of service to others.”⁶ The most important foundation for a moral leadership model is the spirit of service to others. The person who serves the community the most is of greatest value to that society. The person who attempts to dominate that community is a cause of oppression. Robert K. Greenleaf identified the *servant leadership* concept in 1991 and it has had profound influence on top management in the corporate world. (Greenleaf, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992; Spears, 1995).

Models of leadership based on greed and personal power over others has resulted in a history up to the present day which places people in either authoritarian paternalistic, manipulative and know-it-all modes of operation. This kind of leadership, Anello argues, “... continue(s) to cripple those very groups which they claim to be serving.”⁷ What is needed is a transfer of power from the individual leader to the group.⁸

The world needs a new kind of leadership, dedicated to personal and collective transformation, totally committed to moral values and principles, based on the unfettered search after truth, inspired by a sense of transcendence, and guided by the exercise of capabilities in service to the common good.

- Anello, 1997, p. 110

Domination, in whatever form, is ultimately the result of an individual who feels s/he is superior and, therefore, should force her/his will on others by forcing them to follow. This would not happen if the leader was morally capable, as such a leader would be characterized by actions of true humility.

For example, the paternalistic leader tends to “baby others” and does not encourage them to do for themselves that which they are capable of doing. This kind of leadership does not encourage free will or independence. Servant leadership would help every member of the group to develop their capabilities to handle and consult on all aspects of material, intellectual and spiritual matters in their own lives and in that of the community. A leader’s task in this capacity would involve challenging and exciting the people with whom they work. The leader would be presenting opportunities, along with others, to empower others and themselves to take action. Learning and being engaged in tasks that build competencies would be the effect of such service leadership. The richness of the opportunities for growth would enthuse and inspire everyone to act in a unified, yet diverse, manner. Such leaders would be creating through reflection and action new lines of movement to ensure greater development. Sharing knowledge and skills and inviting others to participate and learn would be the main activity of this community of learners.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 110

⁸Ibid., p. 110

It would mean encouraging others to take initiative and, in some cases, the servant leader would follow their lead (DePree, 1989).

The concept of the invisible leader emerges. This type of leader could be best summed up in an ancient Chinese proverb: “When a true leader has finished his work, the people say, ‘Look at what we have achieved.’” When this happens, it is a sign that individual transformation has flowered into collective transformation (Heider, 1990). This kind of leadership can best be summed up in the following words: that they desire, “... no name, no fame, no rank” (Bahá’u’lláh). These people are in no need of recognition or reward for their services as they are doing it to contribute to the social good. The concept of true moral leadership is wedded to the acceptance of our station of servitude to all mankind whatever the cause may be. Our motivation emanates from a desire to serve God by serving His noble creation of mankind. The diversity of the fields of service is vast and limitless. As limitless as individuals are unique. The purpose of each individual in society, therefore, is not embodied in the idea of vaunting oneself over another; but rather in contributing to the development and progress of the human condition. Thus resulting in personal transformation through selfless service to the collective good.

With such a definition of leadership every individual would be trying to discover what their community really needed through consultation with community members and then arising to meet that need through their own initiative and with a willingness to work either alone or alongside others. This desire to serve develops in individuals new and greater capabilities as they strive and struggle to accomplish what is needed to transform society. As different chosen objectives in service are completed, the individual is rewarded by an inner satisfaction and joy that results from knowing that they have arisen with a pure motive to serve.

2) The purpose of leadership: individual and social transformation

An important element of the framework is to identify the purpose of human existence and provide the definition of responsibility. Núr’s programme affirms the dual purpose of human life as being:

... promoting the ongoing processes of personal transformation and social transformation. When this double process is recognized and accepted by the individual as his personal purpose for existing, it provides a basic orientation for an active and meaningful life.

- Anello, 1997, p.115

Therefore, the task of bringing forth the innate talents of the individual through acquired experiences of learning and service becomes the realization, indeed, of the nobility of the human being. In order to accomplish personal transformation, it is necessary to serve the common good. This is because implicit in the dual purpose of human life is the notion that what is good for the collective is ultimately good for the individual. The individual does not pursue his own idle fancies and vain imaginings which could lead to self-centeredness and the exploitation of others for personal gain.

The creation of an ever-advancing civilization based on the principles of justice, unity and love is the goal of social transformation. The development of a “social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on cooperation and reciprocity” (Universal House of Justice, 1985) is the sophisticated, subtle and inspiring challenge facing those in administering to the affairs of mankind.

As mankind moves from its developmental period of adolescence to that of maturity, much change in the manner of conducting its affairs is required.

That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race can neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day, this period of newness and consummation.... Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities.... The gifts and blessings of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity.

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá⁹

What are these new capacities, attitudes, concepts and skills necessary for personal and collective transformation? How does one change relationships that are top down and vertical to true relationships for the new age based on reciprocity, cooperation and mutual respect? The practice of the moral capabilities to be discussed will move us in the right direction. The individual must not only be able to conceptualize the changes necessary, but must be engaged himself in personal change to embody these changes. Indeed, the idea that one does not need to exemplify what one is asking of others leads to a reinforcement of a sense of superiority of the leaders leading to the ills of anger, disunity, disrespect and a lack of trust. Justice is the basis for unity and without leaders submitting themselves to the rigors of the practice in their personal lives, social transformation is impossible. A community that attempts to develop within each individual an environment of social transformation and growth is one that is rich in human resources which is the most valuable resource a society can have. When individuals are thus developed, the survival and advancement of a meaningful society is ensured (Durkheim 1961). When civilization operates in this manner, it helps renew the energy and enthusiasm of its members to promote and implement change based on the truths discovered. Sorokin (1960) quoted the famous historian Arnold Toynbee as having referred to such groups as “creative groups,” that rise up from the ashes of decaying civilizations and ultimately create new civilizations.¹⁰

At present society is in dire straits in many ways. When we exist in a society that is corrupt or unjust, it is more difficult to practice justice and service with integrity because the opposite of this is the norm. “Creative groups” are, therefore, more critical at times of transition

⁹:Abdu’l-Bahá, cited in Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh: Selected Letters, 2d rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 165

¹⁰Anello

in order to strengthen the resolve of those arising to help society transcend its present difficulties and achieve true development and transformation.

Dr. Anello postulates that two things are necessary for personal and social transformation. The first is the necessity of having a vision of the ideal towards which you are striving. It is also necessary to have a collective vision as to the desired objectives based on a conscious commitment to principles that will be utilized to undertake the task. This allows social change to be taken out of the realm of complaint or protest against the present social conditions as opposed to the creation of social transformation.

The other requirement identified is the development of capabilities. These are necessary if the vision is to be implemented and exemplified. These capabilities are practiced in an on-going process of taking action and then reflecting on the effectiveness of that action through group consultation. These efforts contribute to the development of competencies and the refinement of judgment as the group moves towards the realization of its vision. The act of sharing lessons learned creates an environment of openness and reinforces the concept that knowledge is to be shared for the benefit of all. The outcome of such a process is the individual is able to internalize the moral standards associated with growth and the whole community brings them to the table to assist in the enrichment of the common good. Energy, eagerness and enthusiasm is released as a result of the collective recognition of progress being made, individuals being nurtured and encouraged and meaning to one's existence being affirmed. Thus, personal and social transformation remain the dominating passion of human life.

3) The twin moral responsibilities to truth

According to the Núr model of leadership, the basis for the moral dimension of leadership is:

- 1) the unfettered search for truth and acceptance of truths which have been verified through independent investigation by the individual, and
- 2) the thorough application of these truths in both the social and individual transformational processes in every aspect of life.

These twin moral responsibilities ensure that one's dedication to truth will guide all efforts to fulfill the dual purpose of existence. Of course, the question as to what is *truth* in this context would be answered by the statement that the individual alone can discover, verify and live according to the conclusions which have been the result of personal investigation. So therefore, truth is relative and not absolute.

There are two categories into which truth is divided which should (be) discerned by those who profess to practise moral leadership. The first category is called "contingent truth" and this relates to understanding the facts as they are at any given time and in any given place. Senge utilizes the term "current reality" to describe this. Due to varying perceptions and understandings, as well as human inadequacies, it is difficult to be sure about contingent truth. Science is one of the tools we use to discover it. Scientists humble recognition of the fact that it

is inadequate and, therefore, relative is what keeps science on track as an instrument of search. (Senge, 1990-94).

“Ideal truth” is what we would call the way we think things should be. Ideal truth has to do with principles. Covey’s work regarding principled leadership explains the importance of guiding action by principled processes. Núr’s model purposes that social and individual transformation should be guided by ethical, moral and social principles.¹¹ It proposes that the ultimate moral leadership challenge at this critical time is to achieve a universal consensus on principles that could serve as a moral code for the development of a global society.¹² The United Nations Human Rights Declaration is one example of social principles that should serve as a basis for global society to develop collective well-being and preserve human dignity. The outcome or goal, therefore, is to bring contingent truth into alignment or solidarity with ideal or principled truth (Covey 1989).

The importance of each individual being able to discover truth and recognize it in a very personal, experiential way is fundamental to life itself. Conscious efforts to extricate our minds and hearts from prejudice would allow us to make fair and moral judgments.

Once a truth or principle has been accepted by the individual, the application of that truth in her/his life is fundamental to the process of moral leadership. This does not imply that this is the end of the search for truth, but rather the most recent approximation towards ideal truth that has been achieved. The search continues, and as experience is gained and reflected upon, new truths or clarification of previously discovered truths result. It is through the application of these discovered truths that the individual comes into harmony with the underlying structure of reality. If he does not apply these truths, he will tend to create problems in his own life and tend to blame others for them or consider them part of his fate or *bad luck*.

These truths must be applied. There are consequences to ignoring truth. Whatever is built on the foundation of falsehoods or inadequate truths will be deficient and crumble. This is a natural consequence.

Núr proposes that there are spiritual laws and social principles which govern inter-relationships of people just as powerful and in need of recognition as are the physical laws of existence, e.g., gravity. It does not matter whether or not someone believes in gravity as they step off the roof of the fourth floor of a large building. The consequence is the same for the believer or non-believer. The difference is the believer understands why they are falling. It therefore makes sense that those families, communities and societies that have applied these spiritual and social principles have tended to survive and prosper. Those who have ignored them lapse into a state of social decline and community disintegration.

Generally, man becomes aware of the laws of the physical world through experience. In the same manner, through trial and error, man also becomes aware of principles that govern

¹¹Ibid., p. 123

¹²Ibid.

human relationships. Another means by which man has become aware of spiritual and social truths has been through the founders of the world's great religions and through science.

Toynbee demonstrates that as a people were faithful to a spiritual code identified, at different historical points, they would prosper. Once this code was abandoned, their civilization became corrupt and disintegrated.¹³

Since there cannot be contradictory truths, as truth is one, scientific truth and spiritual truth are to be harmonized in a complementary pattern to help give a more complete perception of reality. Scientific truth provides practical means whereas spiritual truth provides moral guidance which propels a society to be just, unified and of benefit to all.

In this model, it would be necessary to identify the contingent truth in a problem situation as well as the ideal truth or principles that those consulting agree should be applied to creating a solution. To ascertain the facts is insufficient without utilizing principles of a spiritual or social nature to create a solution that is in harmony with shared values and ideas. When problems are raised to the level of principle, motivation is achieved through this dynamic that creates the personal commitment to carry the solution into action.

Once a vision has been created by applying principles to the contingent truth, it becomes clear as to how to resolve the problem. This process moves the contingent truth into the ideal truth that has been envisioned.

If individuals in society are unable to identify or have not identified the ideal truths or the vision as to where they wish things to be, it leaves them devoting their energies to protesting and fighting against what they see as "bad" or "wrong." There is no energy put into viable solutions. If, on the other hand, ideal truth and vision is ascribed to without a clear knowledge of the contingent truth, the transformation of the situation would also fail. Only when both contingent truth and ideal truth are understood, embraced and a vision created will social transformation take place.

4) Transcendence through vision

The entire cause of social transformation is a learning process that requires moral self-discipline in one's personal life, an attitude of service to others and fixing one's gaze on serving the common good and not solely for one's own benefit. Nothing short of this could be considered adequate if one is attempting to embody sound, moral leadership objectives.

The idea of transcendence is critical to social transformation. When we make decisions or take action based on values and principles with their inherent discovered truths, we sense a connection with the eternal, a greater purpose, and this generates the experience of transcending. Dr. Anello gives a working definition of transcendence as "... the capacity to detach oneself from 'current reality' and to connect with those values and principles which one believes to be of

¹³Anello, 1997

eternal worth and which form part of one's vision."¹⁴ By this definition of transcendence, one's commitment to return over and over again to problematic situations with new perspectives, new energy and continued moral strength is assured.

When we are lost in endless, negative details of a problem and encounter obstacles, it would be easy to become disillusioned. We can only remain committed if we approach the task with our vision and principles. Our vision causes us to resist the temptation of withdrawing our energies prematurely from the work to be done and reinforces our strength to oppose our egos or lower natures. The vision that we commit ourselves to, and the principles we adopt to work toward that vision, serve as the means to transcend the details of our daily efforts by putting them in perspective. For example, this could be illustrated by the following story.

As a man approached two workers moving bricks to assist in the building of a church, he noticed that one of the men was very serious, unhappy and with drudgery executing his task of moving bricks from one location to another. The man asked him what he was doing and he replied, "I'm moving bricks," and went on about his work. The other worker, doing the same job, was smiling, whistling and seemed happy and energetic. The man asked him what he was doing and he replied, "I'm building a cathedral! It's going to be so beautiful!"

The obvious difference between these two workers was the vision that one of them had which connected his apparently menial job to the great accomplishment of the cathedral. Vision was stressed by King Solomon in the Book of Proverbs when he declared, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."¹⁵ When spiritual principles incorporated in the great religions of the world have been combined with social action, great civilizations have resulted. As John W. Gardner stated,

A vision relevant for us today will build on values deeply embedded in human history and in our own tradition. The materials of which we build the vision will be the moral strivings of the species, today and in the distant past.

(Gardner, 1990)

The Núr model proposes that new universal principles must be incorporated in humanity's shared vision for the basis of an emerging global society.¹⁶ This model envisages the community functioning by practicing the elements and capabilities of moral leadership to inspire efforts working towards the transformation of the community.

At times of conflict and confusion, the community must seek a condition of tranquillity which would facilitate reflection and thereby connect with the eternal. Once this is achieved, one can transcend the situation and get a clearer or more detached picture of the present, thus placing the present on a continuum in relation to the vision or desired goal. This allows one to

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Proverbs 29:18

¹⁶Anello, p. 131

become committed and is a source of strength, ensuring that action proceeds along sound moral principles. Dr. Anello identifies various means for attaining the condition of transcendence. If you are religious, prayer and meditation on the Sacred Writings of one's religion is effective. Other methods may include: walking, communing with nature, listening to music, appreciating works of art that express values and principles, imagining as a reality the vision or what is known as "envisioning," or collaborating with a person whom you feel has greater vision or spiritual maturity than oneself. When we raise consultation to the level of principle, this assists in us cultivating a transcendent attitude in our search for solutions to problems. It means we would give up our personal interests and welfare to engage in action or strategies that would promote justice, unity and the common good.¹⁷

5) Belief in the essential nobility of the human being

Dr. Anello cites Douglas McGregor's work in the field of management which states that a manager's assumptions regarding human nature profoundly influences his approach to administering in the workplace (Luthans, 1997).

Although people may not have thought much about their own beliefs related to human nature, it is these very beliefs from which spring their attitudes and actions towards others. These beliefs influence self-image, self-expectations and the types of behaviours one should expect from other human beings. Dr. Anello categorizes some of the concepts he has found when carrying out leadership training workshops. Human beings are seen as: 1) racially superior or inferior (racism); 2) rational animals (the naked ape); 3) products or victims of forces beyond their control in society (determinism); 4) creatures born in sin and destined to be sinners because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (sinners); and 5) creatures created in the image of God (essential nobility of man).

The Núr model suggests that the essential nobility of man is the obvious choice when considering personal and social transformation. This belief recognizes that human beings were created to develop spiritual attributes such as love, kindness, unity, justice, truthfulness, etc. to be true to the idea of being in the image and likeness of God. There is a recognition that man has both a higher and lower nature and that as man learns to choose higher nature options, he develops spiritually and morally. As this takes place, gradually and automatically, his lower nature defects are eliminated. It is through the conscious will to choose higher nature purposes that true life and meaning is achieved. People then experience happiness and a sense of purpose. Their own process of growth is of significance as they consciously utilize powers of reason to become more adept at understanding spiritual truths and principles and, ultimately, capably applying them in service to humanity.

The task here is to see others as created in the "image of God" as noble beings with great potential no matter what their current condition. One believes in the capacity of others to intuitively recognize the truth of spiritual principles and to respond by acting nobly.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 132-133

Recognizing that the “current reality” or present condition of humanity may seem to offer evidence that the first four concepts mentioned earlier are supported. Dr. Anello proposes that this “current reality” has resulted from individuals themselves believing in one of those four concepts instead of believing in their inherent nobility. He states that “... if these same people were to make a conscious choice and change the way they think about human nature, adopting a more positive, noble concept, then this change in outlook would set in motion a process of personal transformation that would dramatically change their behaviour.”¹⁸

This conceptual framework of moral leadership stands firmly on the conviction of the essential nobility and potential goodness of man. Belief in this concept allows one to remain committed to moral leadership beyond the present decadent and spiritually moribund condition that may be perceived in some parts, if not many parts, of the world. Although man is born noble, the characteristics of nobility come into being gradually and are reinforced and/or brought forward by processes of action and reflection. However, there are many examples of the tragic misuse of these noble endowments, as well as countless examples of mankind’s struggle to demonstrate nobility.¹⁹

The belief in the nobility of man is the foundation upon which the moral capabilities model is built. It is the only foundation that would usher mankind towards its collective state of maturity - a state wherein people will find more satisfying ways to be productive and creative in realizing and working for the common good. Most people, it is believed, will respond positively to this view of moral leadership and will intuitively recognize that this model embodies, and will bring forward, what is best in human nature and in generating transformation.²⁰ With this element of the conceptual framework firmly in place, all other elements seem attainable. The importance of the element of the nobility of human beings cannot be overemphasized for it is by bringing out this noble and latent potential that a living reality of physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions is realized. This living reality occurs by developing specific capabilities, such as the capabilities which are in harmony with man’s essential nobility. These include, but are not limited to, the capabilities of moral leadership. In addition to this moral capability there is, of course, need for technical capabilities and other particular talents that contribute to roles that an individual can choose to engage in for the common good. If the motive for the development of skills and capabilities is to serve the common good and not only for his personal development, then the individual will not be self-centered. Another even more dangerous ill-conception would be to pursue the development of technical capabilities, such as academic programs for the purpose of using these capabilities to exploit or harm others.²¹ It is only when one arises to serve others that the worth and value of skills and capabilities, whatever their nature, become meaningful and of benefit to civilization.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 140

¹⁹Ibid., p. 141

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., pp. 142-143

6) The development of capabilities

The moral capabilities developed at Núr were as follows:

1. The capability to evaluate one's own strengths and weaknesses without involving ego.
2. The capability to oppose one's lower passions by focusing on higher purposes and capabilities.
3. The capability to manage one's affairs and responsibilities with rectitude of conduct based on moral and ethical principles.
4. The capability to learn from systematic reflection upon action within a consistent and evolving framework.
5. The capability to perceive and interpret the significance of current events and trends in light of an appropriate historical perspective.
6. The capability to think systemically and strategically in search for solutions.
7. The capability to form a common vision of a desirable future based on shared values and principles, and to articulate this in a way that inspires others to work towards its realization.
8. The capability to imbue one's actions and thoughts with love.
9. The capability to encourage others and bring happiness to their hearts.
10. The capability to take initiative in a creative and disciplined way.
11. The capability to sustain effort, persevere and to overcome obstacles.
12. The capability to participate effectively in consultation.
13. The capability to build unity in diversity.
14. The capability to commit oneself to empowering educational activities as a student and as a teacher.
15. The capability to understand relationships of domination and contribute to their transformation into relationships based on interconnectedness, reciprocity and service.
16. The capability to contribute to the establishment of justice.
17. The capability to serve in societal institutions so as to facilitate the expression of the talents of others who are affected by these institutions.
18. The capability to be a responsible and loving family member as a child, spouse or parent.
19. The capability to cultivate and create a sense of beauty in every endeavour. (This capability was added by NCCI).

Implementation at NCCI

Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute is a private, residential, co-educational secondary school where students become active agents in their own learning and diverse perspectives are respected. The staff and students at NCCI are committed to the development of moral leadership, scholarly attainments, and global citizenship. There is a special focus on the arts designed to harness the power of creativity to uplift the spirit and raise social consciousness.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute provides a complete academic curriculum meeting Ontario, Canada, Ministry of Education standards, from Grade 7 to completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

For students coming to Canada whose native language is not English, they offer up to five high school credits in an English as a Second Language programme.

The founder postulates that formal education in Canada has developed from the one room, low priority rural schoolhouse to a system based on mass production methodology with an excessively large number of students in each school. The educators at NCCI believe that a more optimal learning environment can be achieved using the “Micro School Model” with a maximum of one hundred to two hundred students. The small population enables everyone at the school to know each other in classes with a low student/teacher ratio. The school is designed to create what those involved believe to be a more comfortable, natural workplace. Through this small community environment, it is believed the quality of education improves. It also strives towards excellence in the development of each student’s unique potential.

NCCI is committed not only to the scholarly achievement of their students, but also to the development of moral leadership and global citizenship.

MORAL LEADERSHIP

In addition to the moral framework outlined above, NCCI, has designed and implemented other unique programme components at the high school level in an effort to reinforce and develop the chosen moral capabilities in their students. The high school programme includes the following components:

1. Moral Framework and Capabilities
2. World Citizenship Curriculum Courses
 - a) Personal Transformation
 - b) World Issues
 - c) World Religions
3. Mentorship Programme
4. Service Programme
5. NCCI Artistic Performance Workshop

These various elements of the programme combine as a constellation or network to create multiple ways of teaching, sharing, learning and implementing the moral framework adopted to prepare students for their role as leaders in social development.

NCCI has adopted nineteen moral leadership capabilities as the moral standard toward which the entire body of staff and students strive. NCCI believes that meshing diversity of colour, nationality, beliefs and temperament is a complex, but enriching endeavour when based on unifying principles of moral leadership.

As outlined earlier, the moral capabilities are based on the philosophy and framework of the Moral Leadership Capacities Unit taken from Núr University's programme entitled *The Training of Rural Schoolteachers as Community Development Agents* as described above. The basic elements include a new conceptualization of the role and capabilities of the leader. The six elements of the new mental model for leadership as discussed earlier are:

- 1) Orientation of service to the common good;
- 2) The purpose of leadership: individual and social transformation;
- 3) The twin moral responsibilities to truth;
- 4) Transcendence through vision;
- 5) Belief in the essential nobility of the human being;
- 6) The development of capabilities.²²

NCCI has added another element (element six below) to the conceptual framework that was implied in the original model, but NCCI believed that it needed to be explicitly set forth as a foundation element. Therefore, NCCI's moral framework includes the following:

- 1) Orientation of service to the common good;
- 2) The purpose of leadership: individual and social transformation;
- 3) The twin moral responsibilities to truth;
- 4) Transcendence through vision;
- 5) Belief in the essential nobility of the human being;
- 6) Belief in a world-embracing vision;
- 7) The development of capabilities.

BELIEF IN A WORLD-EMBRACING VISION

This is the only element that has not previously been explained in the Núr model as it was not included explicitly.

“The greatest challenge facing the world community ... is to release the enormous financial, technical, human and moral resources required for sustainable development. These resources will be freed up only as the peoples of the world develop a profound sense of responsibility for the fate of the planet and for the well being of the entire human family.

This sense of responsibility can only emerge from the acceptance of the oneness of humanity and will only be sustained by a unifying vision of a peaceful, prosperous world society. Without such a global ethic, people will be unable to become active, constructive participants in the world-wide process of sustainable development.”²³

²²Ibid., p. 109

²³The Bahá'í International Community, *World Citizenship A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development* (New York: Bahá'í International Community).

NCCI believes that world citizenship needs to be understood as a universal principle. It is based on the principle of the oneness of the human race as mentioned above. It involves the cultivation of "... tolerance and brotherhood, nurturing an appreciation for the richness and importance of the world's diverse cultural, religious and social systems and strengthening those traditions that contribute to a sustainable, world civilization."²⁴ World citizenship includes the teaching of the principle of *unity in diversity* as the key to strength and wealth for nations and the world community. World-embracing vision would foster an ethic of service to the world-wide common good and an understanding of both the rights and the responsibilities of world citizenship.²⁵

World-embracing vision, along with the other above-mentioned elements, form the foundation of the philosophical or moral framework for the approach to moral leadership undertaken at NCCI. They are at the core of the NCCI programme which is designed to assist the students in becoming effective, social actors in the field of community development. When students enter the NCCI program, they are informed of the moral capabilities as the standard of what staff and students are striving towards and all issues and incidents are raised to the level of principle as outlined in the moral capabilities themselves. After consultation as a staff body, it was decided to adopt nineteen moral capabilities. They are as stated above. A Moral Capabilities Report Card was designed to focus discussion and is completed by the student twice a year. Created for the student's personal use, it allows them to mark how they perceive themselves, as well as how they believe others see them (see Appendix B). This report card facilitates an opportunity to discuss improvement and focuses on the "how to's" of improving their capabilities if they choose to share it with their mentor.

The nineteen capabilities are continually being worked into the overall curriculum as well as forming the basis for the standard of conduct in the school. The curriculum, as it is delivered by the teachers, is designed to reinforce these capabilities in as many credit subject courses as is possible. Some courses lend themselves to the integration or perspective of the moral capabilities more than others. However, whenever possible they are utilized. The staff have been trained through various workshops and discussions to look for opportunities or teaching moments that afford an occasion to help the students process the capabilities more deeply. With respect to awards and, in keeping with the new mental model of leadership as serving the common good, students compete for high academic grades; however, the competition is with themselves and not against one another. Awards received are based on increases over a student's own past performance or their continued academic excellence. This encourages a supportive, helpful environment amongst students and ensures they strive to do their best and to help others do well.

As mentioned earlier, NCCI functions on the basis of the fundamental principle that each person is a noble human being. At all times students and teachers are to treat each other with respect valuing each person's uniqueness and noble nature.

²⁴Ibid. p. 3

²⁵Ibid.

GUIDED REFLECTION REQUIRED

Moral development is required and essential for maintaining, and even correcting, the social order. Durkheim (1961) showed that complex societies, in order to be maintained, require individuals who take ownership of, and learn to apply in a capable manner, the moral principles upon which it is built. Staub (1996) writes that moral autonomy or moral courage is essential to question policies and practices in order to ensure they are not destructive to their own group or to others. All kinds of social discrimination are the result of the inability of people to do this.

When people are at a low stage of moral development, they have difficulty being able to judge when given a moral task. They have difficulty being aware of their capability in moral judgment and, therefore, will choose a task too difficult to practise their skills. Lind (1997) writes that children depend very much on the guidance of an experienced person, i.e., parent, teachers, and continue to benefit from such mentoring throughout their adolescence and adulthood in a progressively less-involved manner. Lind (1997) also insists that giving adolescents opportunities for social role-taking is an important part of moral education; however, it is not sufficient for reaching self-sustained moral development. Another necessary element is the availability of competent advice and of opportunities for reflection. He states that only when the learner becomes very autonomous is s/he able to evaluate the outcomes of his/her moral decisions. They require guided reflection. Without guided reflection, the taking of social roles before one is morally equipped can cause significant abuse of power and other problems (Kohlberg and Higgins, 1984).

TEACHER MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

Another component of the programme is teacher mentorship. As each student enrolls in the school and has attended classes for a couple of weeks, s/he is assigned a teacher who acts as a mentor for her/his social, moral and educational development. Every two weeks the teacher meets with each student whom they are assigned to mentor. The emphasis is on the student setting goals facilitated by the teacher, to ensure that they become active agents in their own learning.

Students are encouraged to set high goals for their academic, spiritual and moral development through one-to-one consultations with their mentor teacher. The mentor serves as a consultant to the student in the setting of goals for his or her development, thus ensuring individualized attention to assist in releasing each student's latent potential into action.

DIRECT TEACHING FOR MORAL EDUCATION - DOES IT WORK?

Very sophisticated instruction is required for moral development, for it is only after considerable moral, cognitive development that one is capable of judging oppositional arguments

as to their moral quality (Lind, 1985; 1993). The individual must have developed the skill of symbolic reasoning and formal operational thinking (Kuhn et al., 1977; Kohlberg, 1984) which will make moral knowledge psychologically essential for his or her behaviour. Ryan (1996) states that character educators assert the fundamental mission of schools is to indoctrinate children with the community's very best values.

Hartshorne and May (1928) showed that direct teaching and indoctrination of children in traditional moral education can create a high level of moral expectation of themselves and others when they do not possess, or have not been helped to develop moral competencies that affect their behaviour. This can create feelings of insufficiency and depression or lead to moral anger and hate (Lind, 1997).

The education system of today has gone to the other extreme of stripping the curriculum of any moral education due to its highly political nature and this has had devastating effects. Lind (1997) argues that the schools have created an antiseptic curriculum, intended to be safe from conflict due to the advancing of divergent beliefs. In other words, because of their neglect and abdication of responsibility to teach morals, the schools have done more harm than good: their influence, the psychological education they give, is negative (Piaget, 1965/1932; Kohlberg, 1980; Neill, 1960).

MORAL DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSIONS

One of the most successful methods of helping students develop moral judgment and capability is the Moral Dilemma Discussion (MDD) method (see Appendix C). Lind (1997) concludes that while direct teaching seems to be well suited for changing children's moral attitudes, it does not seem to assist in the development of moral competencies. Blatt and Kohlberg (1975) suggest that a more suitable approach is to require children to solve concrete behavioural problems. The MDD method confronts a child or youth's cognitive system with moral dilemmas that are realistic, that is, real enough to arouse their moral emotions, but not so real as to have consequences for the child or youth.

It is necessary and clear that instruction in moral education is important and must be taught in a manner that respects the present, highly diverse societies in which we live. Moral education should make use of such methods as the Moral Dilemma Discussion method and not simply a rote learning method of instruction. It needs also to be accompanied by social role-taking activities to develop competencies in behaviour.

WORLD CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM

NCCI has developed a World Citizenship Curriculum that lies at the heart of the student's educational experience and provides a realistic foundation for developing a global ethic and the practice of world citizenship.

The goal of having students think globally as global citizens has been furthered by NCCI's diverse school population. Students have come to NCCI from Southeast Asia, Africa, the South Pacific, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, the United States and Canada. This innovative core curriculum is permeated with the moral capabilities framework and consists of three full credit courses designed to help students develop a better understanding of themselves, their relationships, their values and the potential within them for contributing to a better civilization from a global perspective. This curriculum utilizes the Moral Dilemma Discussion method as one of the main means for the development of students.

The courses consist of Personal Transformation, World Issues and World Religions. These courses are taught consecutively in a three-year rotation to all students in Grades 10 to 12/OAC. This provides an additional opportunity for students of all ages to work together, fostering unity and breaking down barriers that may exist between grade levels. All courses contribute toward the Ontario Secondary School Diploma requirements.

Course 1 - Personal Transformation

The goal of this course is to assist students to develop the art of judgment when faced with moral dilemmas. The learning and practice of the moral capabilities and their application through the development of improving students understanding of the concepts, attitudes, virtues and skills that comprise them enhances the theories discussed.

Course 2 - World Issues

This course is designed to expose students to the various interpretations of the emerging global order. In this course students are challenged to identify and analyze issues and trends from an international perspective and develop well-reasoned and moral solutions to world challenges.

Course 3 - World Religion

Students will explore the world's diverse belief systems in order to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of their neighbours' beliefs and values in the global community. This assists the students in recognizing and respecting the various belief systems that exist throughout the world and their relationship to the values that shape the decisions that are required in a diverse community.

SOCIAL ROLE-TAKING - IS IT NECESSARY FOR MORAL DEVELOPMENT?

Moral autonomy is best achieved when individuals are given roles of social responsibility that meet their level of moral development and challenge their capacities of moral judgment competence. Keasey (1974) found that young children agree with any argument that supports their opinion on a particular matter and they disagree strongly with opposing opinions. He refers to this as the tendency to search for "opinion-agreement." It is only as children get older that they start to view arguments not as a means to 'rationalize' their opinions, but rather as a way to

evaluate their ethical value. In the same way as youth undertake social roles of responsibility, with availability of competent advice and guided reflection, significant growth occurs in moral competency development (Lind, 1997).

NCCI WORKSHOP AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

The Workshop brings students together in a consultation/service program. This constitutes the outreach component of the Moral Capabilities or World Citizenship Program. The NCCI Workshop presents a creative platform for the students through the dramatic arts. It also provides Nancy Campbell students with a rare opportunity to be part of a “performance troop.” Throughout the course of the year, they repeatedly create, stage, produce and perform as a company for audiences throughout the province and on the international scene when feasible.

The Workshop is a “work in progress.” It begins as students and their teachers identify critical social issues of particular concern to youth. After becoming more knowledgeable about these issues, they then select appropriate artistic formats to express both their understanding and possible solutions to the issues at hand.

Whether a student performs on stage, cues up lights, builds props, or writes plays, he/she undergoes a transformative process which results in confidence and expanded awareness. It creates an opportunity for the student to practice the moral capabilities in a meaningful and “real life” manner.

The harnessing of the power of the arts to raise social consciousness is the objective of the workshop. It develops the imaginative faculties and stimulates meaning in the performers as well as the audience.

As one student put it, “Racism, sexism, violence...These problems used to seem impossible to handle. I felt like I couldn’t do anything about them. At Nancy Campbell, I can go out to different schools and social events, sharing what I believe in through performing, and now I feel I can hold the whole world up on my shoulders and make a difference. The problems don’t seem impossible...just an incredible challenge.”

Students who do not wish to participate in the NCCI Workshop are required to perform some other community service or to work with others to create a service project. Students are required to serve fifty hours of community service per year. They are given a letter of commendation outlining the skills demonstrated and the number of hours served in the community by NCCI in recognition of their valuable service work.

RESEARCH RESULTS

After reviewing the material generated from student interviews as outlined above, the comments and views were divided into four major categories that consisted of a number of themes. The categories were:

- 1) The Unique Atmosphere
- 2) Spirituality and Transformation
- 3) The Valued Programme Components
- 4) Maturity and Self-Development

The themes under each category will now be discussed.

1) THE UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE OF NANCY CAMPBELL COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

NCCI ATMOSPHERE AND ADMINISTRATION

Parents' Views

Parents repeatedly described the school atmosphere as “loving”, “accepting”, “structured”, “safe”, “well-run”, “caring” and a place where there is “fairness.” They mention that “diversity is important,” where students “learn about other cultures and religions.” One parent stated that “everything is light and sunny at NCCI.”

Staff at NCCI are described as “wonderful”, “supportive”, “doing their best”, “patient”, and providing “moral support” where students “learn to love each other.” They see it as an “environment to develop people” who “know their direction”, “know who they are” and where they “gain confidence.” They are “lovely people” who “help others.”

Parents felt the social life at the school was important and saw the programme as “giving life memories” and as a place where students “have fun.” They see it as an environment that is “disciplined” and “develops a sense of community” as well as social skills in relationships. Parents expressed concern at the “bad attitude at the other school” that the student came from and saw the teachers at that school as “not caring.” They described NCCI as a “better environment” with “better students” where there were people who were engaged in being “supportive” and encouraging.

Students' Views and Experience

Over and over again, the students described the school as having a “wonderful atmosphere” that was very different from their past experiences at other schools. Many of them talked about the school being based on spirituality and that there was a strong feeling of commitment to the promotion of “spirituality.” Some of the ideas associated with this different atmosphere included feeling that “we’re all connected together and we feel like a big family,” we are “all together, working together as one.” “Every person is special, the school just makes it obvious.” One statement insisted that “everyone is doing his best to bring something to the school.” The small size of the school was mentioned as an important factor in creating this “new environment.”

Another stated that previously her “public school wasn’t physically threatening, it was morally threatening.” One student claimed that she was happy to be at this school because she

found it very hard at her previous school to not “get all sucked up in a bad environment” and that this present environment was helping her with her goal of “staying strong.”

They claimed that it is an “ideal environment” and an environment that “makes you stronger.” It was stated that if a student was to come into the school with a negative attitude that they would begin to change once they began to “feel this atmosphere.” Students felt that people at NCCI have “a positive attitude”, “a spirit of good will” and that they could feel “the spirit of the school through everything.” They claimed it was not “just going to school,” but that they were “part of a wonderful thing.”

The majority of the students mentioned the importance of how the school had helped them to develop shared goals and how to set goals. The moral capabilities were mentioned several times as the foundation or standard for conduct that contributed to the “clear expectations of nobility” and the “high standard of conduct” in residence.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Almost all of the students talked about the importance of the principle of *unity in diversity*. One student commented that “in terms of opportunities and talents, we are so different” but “in terms of soul, body, spirit we are all equal.” They mentioned the importance of the “unity of mankind” and the “oneness of humanity.” They felt there should be “love and affection towards all people.”

The majority of students commented on the importance of the “many cultures at the school” and the fact that they “all come from everywhere in the world.” They stated they are “a diverse group, all different” and that the “races really mix and become close at the school.” Some felt that “the exposure to other races” was important and that they now were able to see “that racism hurts” by being with multi-racial groups when they were mistreated. The equality of men and women, the opportunity to “learn about different languages,” as well as the importance of “appreciating this diversity,” highlighted the need to learn and “be united.”

ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES AND STAFF SUPPORT

Parents’ Views

Parents appreciated the small classes and the fact the school was small. A number of the parents felt that there were good “academic challenges” and “lots of study time” where the students learned to “perform academically.” They were happy to see that students were to “look at issues from a different perspective.” Parents commented on “lots of individual attention” with “high goals.”

Students’ Views and Experience

The majority of the students interviewed mentioned that they believed the staff were helping “every student to pursue excellence in all aspects of this life.” Many of the students mentioned the consultative approach to learning and that the feedback given to them was most helpful and refreshing. There was a consensus in the comments that implied, as one student related, “they actually want the best for you.” They complained that at their past school they did

not feel that the staff were “trying to make things better.” Students felt that staff were “serving because they would be educating” them. The students believed that “through everything the principles (of the school) are somehow in there.”

Other comments included that “everyone’s a learner, even teachers” and that staff really cared “about you learning.” They mentioned that they were pleased when the administrative staff would take them up on issues as this conveyed to them that they were being cared for and that staff “make you feel like people are listening” to their points of view. They were pleased that staff would “ask students why they do things” as if they were certain that staff were trying to understand them. They claimed that the way in which they “were consequenced is different” in a positive sense.

Other comments by individual students include a concern that the Principal, being half time, was not ideal. There was one mention of teacher favoritism in selecting performers and that people would sometimes become “highly stressed, over-tired, touchy, upset and unwilling to talk” due to the volume of performances. On the positive side, the students felt that the “whole school ... consultations” were of value and that the staff and students were “focused and dedicated.”

CLASSES AND TEACHERS

Students generally felt that there was “excellence in academics” and that the classes were “fun and enjoyable.” The students experienced the staff as “just outstanding”, “wonderful”, “challenging” and “nice people.”

They believed the teachers would “fit in students’ suggestions” and that the teachers were “doing their best.” Most students perceived staff as being “available” to listen and willing to consult with them.

They mentioned that using tables for teaching where the students and teachers sat together was valued. Students mentioned that eating together at lunch and discussing things was important to them. Day students, residential students and teachers all eat together at the same tables.

They were pleased that the courses were advanced level courses and that they were allowed to fast-track into higher level courses if they wished. They stated “classes make you more disciplined” and that they were learning that “material things aren’t important, learning is what’s important.” They claimed that the staff wanted to help their “physical, mental and emotional health.” They enjoyed “discussing ethical questions” and were pleased that staff “help you to plan your time.” They claimed that “... society isn’t like the school, not yet” but they saw the need for transformation of society to be more like NCCI.

RELATIONSHIPS AT NCCI

“Everyone is helping each other” and “they’re caring about each other” “like a family.” “If someone is suffering, it affects everyone” and we work to consciously ensure that there are

“no cliques” and that “people are interacting with each other” in a good way. Another sub-theme mentioned was that at the school, you are not in competition with other students, but you are in “competition with yourself” to improve. There was a mention of the students not having “exclusive relationships” which means relationships with another person that are intense and alienate others. Students saw themselves and the staff as “thoughtful, welcoming, (and) open.” In their past schools, they related that people would “act violently” and there was “lots of discrimination” and “racism in the school.” One related that the students in their past school “didn’t really love each other” and that there was “lots of hypocrisy” in their past school. They saw NCCI as a place where people were “showing kindness”, “showing love” and were willing to “stand up for others.” One student mentioned that students at the school want to “learn from everyone” and that they wanted “to learn about you” and “about each other.” Another sub-theme included their feeling that students were doing “their best to improve themselves.”

2) SPIRITUALITY AND TRANSFORMATION

Parents’ Views

Comments from the parents regarding spirituality and values were very positive. As one parent spoke of her daughter, she wanted “her to be morally and spiritually alive” and felt that NCCI was the place where this was happening. One parent said that “spiritual-wise (NCCI is) different from other schools.” They stated that they valued the “principles” of the school and that the “spiritual values (were the) strongest feature.” Some spoke of the school having a “moral capabilities emphasis” with “service to others” and other important “foundation values.” A number of parents appreciated that the school was inspired by “the Bahá’í Teachings” and had a number of Bahá’í students attending which created a good influence. The parents wanted their youth to have an education with a “global view” and they valued the “youth presenting issues” of social importance which they stated was often a “surprise to most people.” They felt that the school “offered the best of human values” where the students learn about “moral leadership” which the parents believe they “need ... for life.” The parents felt that “society (is) falling apart” and that at the school there was “good peer pressure” and the students would “conform to (the) atmosphere.” They liked the fact that the school had strong “expectations” of the students.

STRIVING FOR QUALITIES

Students’ Views and Experiences

The emphasis NCCI places on “the noble nature of man” was important. One student described being noble as “having the same standards wherever you go.”

Several students stressed that there was a “higher standard of conduct” at NCCI and that they were expected and planned to have significant transformation in their lives. They felt as though they were “aspiring to our higher nature.” They were convinced that “you have to improve yourself and to make an effort.” When things were stressful, they stated they were “expected to react in a calm manner.”

Other aspects of striving for qualities included learning “to appreciate what we have”, “to react in a respectful manner”, “to be loving”, “to strive and struggle”, “to believe you can get

there” and to “stop complaining about what we don’t have.” You have to “focus on the good qualities.”

One student felt that they had “many opportunities to serve the world” and that we should want to “become a servant” and that “our service should be for the common good.” Students commented that they were pleased that NCCI was “based on Bahá’í principles” and that they “got to learn about the Faith.”

DETACHMENT, OPENNESS AND THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Half the students interviewed mentioned that they “get the truth by listening to more than one person” and that they “have to be open-minded.” One student mentioned the importance of “applying truth in our lives,” continuing the “search for truth” and “the independent investigation of the truth” was the responsibility of everyone. She stated that her family members “don’t see that the world can be changed” because they focus on “the bad aspects of today’s society.”

PRAYER

Several students related that the Morning Assembly “promotes spirituality” and that the “act of preparing” the devotions was spiritually beneficial. They commented that having “diverse prayers and inspirational readings” was appreciated.

Other students felt the prayers during the Assembly in the morning as well as the devotions in the residence in the evening were uplifting. They stated that “life isn’t only about material or academics.” Some felt that “prayers in residence promotes spirituality” and that “prayers in workshop” does the same.

3) VALUED COMPONENTS

Parents’ Views

Parents commented that the performance workshop had a “powerful” effect on the students and on the greater community. They saw the “Moral Leadership programme” as the “greatest thing.” They felt the students were “dedicated to workshop” and that it helped to “teach confidence”, “community involvement” and got the students “involved with other people” using “the performing arts” which “promotes change.”

In addition to these valued components, some parents commented on the need for more communication with the school, while others felt they were an “integral part of the school.” The Personal Transformation/World Citizenship course was seen as a “positive thing” that “really helped” and resulted in a “better personality.” The teacher/student Mentorship programme with “one-on-one discussions” was “a factor in students’ growth and personal development.”

WORKSHOP

Students' Views and Experience

It appears that the Workshop is one of the most valued components of the moral leadership programme, based on the feedback from students. The students see the Workshop as “making a difference to the (greater) community” and as a means to make others aware of important social issues in a way that “touches people.” They state that the Workshop “changes the larger community.” More than the majority of students interviewed felt that through the performance Workshop “we are serving.” They also expressed concern for the high level of racism in society and the fact that it has affected children in primary school to the extent that in some schools recess has been cancelled due to violence connected to racial slurs. They felt that Workshop was making a difference in helping to change the understanding of children and youth in the schools where they were performing and that the community was being moved towards establishing racial harmony as a result.

Students expressed their appreciation for “lots of wonderful feedback from the people that we perform to; it was really encouraging.” They stated that “we set an example for the larger community,” “we’re really sharing values.” Students appreciated the fact that they “get to talk to the people” and that they have the opportunity to “act on world issues.” They explained that the encouraging attitude and actions of the “teachers and students make (being on) stage easier.” Other items mentioned included the importance of “prayers in Workshop” which “promote(s) spirituality.” Important themes that were mentioned upon which performances are built included racism, substance abuse, the equality of men and women, and unity in diversity. In the minds of the students: “Workshop really differentiates this school.”

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

The second most significant component of the NCCI experience that the students found to be “quite useful” was the World Citizenship Curriculum course entitled Personal Transformation. In this course students covered the areas of well-being, decision-making and human relations. They learned how to understand more deeply the 19 moral capabilities and they found the opportunity to “break down capabilities (i.e. to define them)” to be helpful. They felt that this course helped them to become “conscious of roles in relationships.” They also had the opportunity of putting the moral capabilities into “our own words,” and this was useful in increasing one’s knowledge of their meanings and complexities. One student concluded by saying, “I want to learn more about moral capabilities, to explore them.”

MORAL CAPABILITIES AND MORAL LEADERSHIP

It was clear that the students understood that they were working on “developing 19 capabilities.” They defined a moral leader as “someone who uses attributes and qualities and skills,” “someone who is able to help someone,” and as someone who is “guiding others.” One student said, “Moral leadership is all about being humble,” and that they felt that the class had “started a little bit late to be really serious about the capabilities.” This last comment was interesting because the teaching of the moral capabilities began the moment the school year started.

Moral capabilities were seen as “an opportunity to learn how to apply the principles in your life.” Students felt that they were given a chance to “reflect” and “assess (their) own strengths and weaknesses.” They believed that moral leadership was “about transforming ourselves,” about helping others “transform themselves” and that it involved “patience” because “a moral leader shouldn’t dominate anyone.” “Moral leadership sets an example,” it involves learning to “organize yourself” and the result is social transformation.

REQUIRED SERVICE HOURS

A number of the students felt that the required fifty “hours of service per year” was “motivating” them to serve. This service involved “doing things for good reasons.”

MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

The students felt that the Mentorship Programme did have the effect of bringing “yourself to account.” This opportunity for “one-on-one discussions” helped them with “problem-solving” and one of them stated that “some mentors want to help kids.” It made them “feel understood.”

ARTS

The students mentioned the value of doing things “through the arts.” They appreciated the use of the arts in the teaching of English. They found the overall use of the arts at NCCI to be a positive experience. One student explained, “Staff love creativity, the sky’s the limit.”

(4) MATURITY AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Parents’ Views

Parents reported seeing significant results in terms of their youth having “more confidence.” How much their student had achieved in terms of “maturing” was the second most important theme. They saw their youth as “more grounded”, “more controlled”, “more reflective”, “more accepted”, “knows how to take life”, “more sociable”, “more organized” and more “confident in presenting” themselves.

Some parents reported a “complete change” with their youth “doing so well” and felt that the school was responsible for either causing the “change or (had) deeply enhanced it.” The range of how much change the parents observed when asked included “75% changed” to “big changes” and finally one parent stated that she’s “not the same girl, (she is) a lady now.” They believed their students looked “at life differently,” that they were “more comfortable with (their) faith,” they were “not self-centered” and they were committed to “making a difference.”

Students’ Views and Experience

A strong majority of the students interviewed reported that they had “definitely changed” or they had made “huge change.” The majority of them felt that they could now “get along better with other people” and that they had been helped “to apply (themselves) around other people.” They reported “more self-confidence,” and that they were willing to “take chances, (and) try new things.” They were “no longer shy” and were not “afraid of making mistakes or being ridiculed.”

They reported, “I can sing on stage” and “can get up on stage with ease.” They stated that they knew what they were “capable of” and that “we all know we have something to improve.” They had also learned “to think before they talk.”

One student who was not a Bahá’í felt “pressured by other kids to become a Baha’i” but that this had made her “stronger in ... (her) religion.” Another student who was not a Bahá’í felt that the students had learned to respect her right to believe in her own religion and did not feel pressured and felt that the environment was inclusive.

Other comments included that they were “having a good time without destroying ourselves.” They stated that they were “improving each day” and “knew that I couldn’t stay the same.” They reported that they had “learned (that) you have to believe that people can be helped.” They had also learned that, “When people are abusive it’s not always about you, it’s their own problems.” Other students reported that they, “can’t be manipulated” and that they had “learned to be independent.” One felt that people needed to “learn how to love yourself and love others.” Students mentioned that they had “learned how to strengthen weaknesses,” had developed “the skill to express (themselves)” and that they had learned “how to cope with stress.” They had “learned a lot about being a leader in a new way.” The experience had given them “courage” and they felt that it was “really going to help ... in the future.” They reported being “less anti-social” and that they had learned “how to apply attributes.” This could be summed up with the statement of one of the students as to how they were feeling: “I am happy.”

Resulting Student Goals and Hopes

The majority of students stated that they had “increased motivation to become better” or a “desire to be better” people. Many felt “compelled to improvement or to transform” and they wanted to “give it all my attention”, “give it all my potential.” They stated it made them “realize how much we have to change ourselves” and that it “makes you want to help people.” One student stated that she “got on fire to learn more” and wanted to “really ... serve our community to make a change.”

CONCLUSION

Both parents and students recounted their experience with NCCI with enthusiasm and praise. They felt that the school had truly helped the students to develop intellectually, spiritually and morally. It would seem that in practice it is necessary to combine moral education with direct teaching, moral dilemma discussions, social role-taking and guided reflection as necessary components to healthy moral development according to experience of students and parents interviewed. Parents of the students at the school were, and are, deeply concerned about spirituality and morality being addressed and incorporated into the learning environment with a universal perspective.

All involved in the NCCI experience were also concerned about ensuring that the academic environment was well-run, disciplined and aimed at achieving academic excellence. The importance of youth making a contribution to the greater community was repeatedly underscored. Parents and youth were deeply concerned about developing good social relationship skills that would benefit everyone. The importance of a global ethic and an approach to the development of moral capabilities that would be dynamic, inclusive and based on unity in diversity was verified as a valued aspect of their NCCI experience.

There is refinement and on-going, creative development required to ensure continued successes and a sound future for the moral programme at Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute. However, all in all, the efforts being made towards developing a programme of moral leadership in a high school setting are sincerely appreciated by both students and parents supporting this endeavour.

Perhaps what is of greatest interest is the challenge this experience presents to the present fear or lack of will to do something in the public system that would address the “antiseptic curriculum” or “negative psychological” environment that children and youth presently experience in most schools. This lack of commitment to any value system in public education, other than a materialistic one, represents a very misread public by its leaders. Somehow we have created a situation where teachers are fearful of administrative repercussions if they convey any “moral” or “spiritual” content in their classes. Indeed, the educational administration employees themselves are fearful and concerned about what can and cannot be said or done. In the 1980's the Supreme Court of Ontario made a ruling that is both misunderstood and misused in the interpretations deduced by many school boards as well as principals, teachers and parents.

The ruling required all public schools that were teaching religion to include all religious readings or to eliminate them altogether but stated that the law could not accept the teaching of only one faith in a country with diverse religions such as Canada is now. This in no way implies that religion or spirituality cannot be taught in schools, but rather that if it is going to be taught, it must be done so with due respect to all religions and belief systems of the world. It in no way implies the secular view being advanced in many schools that religion cannot be taught, although this is presently what many people seem to believe. In other words, in keeping with Canada's Declaration of Rights and Freedoms and indeed faithful to Canada's commitment to the global

ethic that the United Nations outlines in its Charter of Human Rights, religion must be respected and this includes people of faith and of no faith.

When this judgment was handed down by the Supreme Court, it was not long before some principals felt moved to reject the fact that the Lord's Prayer was not sufficient of itself and refused to include other religious writings of other faiths in the opening ceremonies. This, of course, resulted in at least one principal being fired for failing to follow the law. Of course, there can be no doubt that some of Christian background would be disturbed by the fact that writings of all religions could share the devotional time as, according to some, this would result in children and youth being led astray or, worse yet, that they would be subjected to a smorgasboard of religion.

Be that as it may, the issue of what religion to teach or not to teach entirely misses the point of spiritual or moral education. For what is now required of humanity is not a narrow judgmental view of the matter, but rather a redefinition of moral leadership as has been outlined above. The example of NCCI students and parents and their obvious ability to distinguish the difference between their diverse religious beliefs and the importance and usefulness of the moral capabilities framework is worth noting and exploring for application in our public schools. People of diverse religions were able to unite and practice the development of moral capabilities while preserving their right to believe as they wished in the faith or religion of their choice or in no religion or faith. In the NCCI experience, they benefited in unified action and service based on a global ethic but with specific goals and standards that were permeated throughout the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. This moral framework provided a firm springboard for growth and did not compromise anyone's dignity, faith or nobility.

Administrators, educators and parents need not fear the knowledge of the world's religions being given to their children. Nor should they fear coming to agreement or unity through a consultative process on moral standards and methods that will help their children develop capabilities that will ensure a peaceful and secure future. There are many creative ways to work within the law and provide a strong universal standard of moral leadership with due respect and consideration for the diversity of belief within the human family. If we fail to take action on this important matter, then we have only ourselves to be responsible for greed, racism, inequality and prejudice of all kinds. Not only will our societies be rampant with these ills, but these problems will increase in magnitude as we now know that societies that fail to pass on to their children and youth an appropriate set of standards and capabilities, these societies will lack individuals capable of sound moral judgment, capable of addressing the real issues it is challenged with as it emerges into the twenty-first century.

When speaking of the need for political institutions to change, in their book *Creating A New Civilization*, Alvin and Heidi Toffler wrote:

The responsibility for change, therefore, lies with us. We must begin with ourselves, teaching ourselves, not to close our minds prematurely to the novel, the surprising, the seemingly radical. This means fighting off the idea - assassins who rush forward to kill any new suggestion on grounds of impracticality, while defending whatever now exists as practical, no matter how absurd, oppressive, or unworkable it may be.

... If we begin now, we and our children can take part in the exciting reconstitution not merely of our obsolete political structures but of civilization itself.
Like the generation of the revolutionary dead, we have a destiny to create.