



education review // reseñas educativas

editors: gene v glass gustavo e. fischman melissa cast-brede

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

July 10, 2012

ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>

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Lockwood, Alan L. (2009). *The Case for Character Education: A Developmental Approach*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Pp. xvi + 102

ISBN 0807749230

Reviewed by Séamus Mulryan
Cabrini College

In *The Case for Character Education: A Developmental Approach*, professor Alan L. Lockwood sets out to demonstrate the value of developmental psychology for curricular theory regarding character education. To do so, Lockwood structures his argument by first defending character education itself. He defines character education, acknowledges the prominent criticisms of character education, and offers a defense against those criticisms. Then he develops the beginnings of a developmental approach to character education.

Lockwood does not set out to overhaul character education or to construct a new form of educating values, morals, or character. Instead, his challenge is to modify currently

Citation: Mulryan, Séamus. (2012 July 10) Review of *The Case for Character Education* by Alan L. Lockwood. *Education Review*, 15. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1174.pdf>

This review was accepted under the previous Editor for English, Gene V Glass.

existing theories in character education by adding developmental perspectives to them, because current character education advocates in his view "do not offer any systematic explication of the developmental differences between young children and adolescents" (p. 43). To be even more specific, he addresses (a) only the explicit curricula of character education, not hidden ones (p. x), and (b) the contemporary form of character education that aims to inculcate young people with non-relativistic values believed to directly bring about good behavior (p. 12). Lockwood aims to "bring a developmental perspective to the theory and practice of contemporary character education . . . in the hope that developmentalism can inform a worthwhile view of character education, strengthen its theory, and enhance its practice" (p. 32). He hopes to do this by showing "how knowledge from the field of developmental psychology may aid in the formation of more effective character education programs" (p. 46). In the task of modifying this form of character education, he succeeds, and a modification of this sort can have an extensive impact on the practice of character education in schools by demanding of such curricula the same thing educators demand of other curricula: that it is developmentally appropriate.

Nonetheless, I believe there is a defense that would have made his case even stronger. It was unclear why, if Lockwood was seeking to modify an already existent form of character education with developmental theory, he laid out the criticisms and defenses of character education yet paid little to no attention to those of developmental psychology (for example, see Burman, 2008; Matusov, DePalma, & Drye, 2007; Mulryan, 2008; Lourenço & Machado, 1996). Instead of saying that he will uncritically accept character education, he says that he does so of developmental psychology (p. 46), even though the latter is what he is asking character educators to consider integrating into the former. Lockwood says throughout the work that he is not making any theoretical claims on the validity of developmental psychology but merely showing how the generally accepted theories in that field can help make character education more effective and meaningful.

He tries to preempt, in part, concerns regarding developmental psychology by saying that his aim is not to

have developmental psychology use education for its own ends insofar as a “character education should serve to promote some preferred version of healthy psychological development” (p. 45). Rather, he says his aim is to make character education curriculum design developmentally appropriate. Were I to fathom a guess as to why critiques of developmental psychology were passed over, it would be because Lockwood claims that “debating the true nature of human beings . . . is only marginally relevant to the enterprise of contemporary character education” (p. 38), and he says this in response to the critique of character education that it implied specific views of human nature. In other words, Lockwood believes that unless an educational agenda is *entailed* by a view of human nature, then it is not relevant for his discussion.

What Lockwood seems to miss in this position is that stage theories in developmental psychology are grounded in assumptions about the nature of human beings, specifically that they develop linearly and through stages; and so debates about human nature are very much relevant to his work, especially if he is trying to frame character education through the employment of theories in developmental psychology. He might say that such assumptions are only implied, but implied assumptions imported into an educational discourse become assumptions that entail an education agenda. As discourse analysis and philosophies from Gadamer to Foucault have shown us, concepts themselves have the power to shape a discourse--and in so doing to shape our very being. To wit, by using concepts that are entangled in a discourse specific to a particular version of a healthy psychological path of development, the employed concepts shape the discourse in character education into conformity with the normativity of developmental psychology and its assumptions about human nature. Lockwood wants to avoid the problem of developmental psychology using character education for its ends, but in only addressing a more explicit form of power in the discourse, he ignores a more insidious and perhaps dangerous form of power that concepts in developmental psychology can have, through his own work, in the discourse on character education.

The point of all of this, though, is not to say that Lockwood would be better off if he did not write a book that employed stage theories of psychological

development. This work does make an important contribution the field of character education. Lockwood's work on developmental character education can, indeed, lead to a substantive revision of contemporary character education, as Lockwood sets out to do. The question is the value such work might or might not have for those who read it. This work is clearly an important book for curriculum designers. Lockwood lays out a cogent defense of character education, he presents the works of Erikson, Kohlberg, and Piaget in a clear and straightforward manner, and the same can be said of his work to bring concepts and theories in developmental psychology to bear on contemporary character education. The question that lingers for an audience of educational theorists, however, is whether this work is one that does more harm than good in passing over the powerful ways in which developmental psychology can influence character education—and humanity—in precisely the ways Lockwood attempts to avoid.

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About the Reviewer

Séamus Mulryan is Assistant Professor of Education at Cabrini College in Radnor, PA. He has published scholarship on the topics of dialogue, ethics, human development, and educational administration.

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Editors

David J. Blacker

blacker@edrev.info

Gustavo Fischman

fischman@edrev.info

Melissa Cast-Brede

cast-brede@edrev.info

Gene V Glass

glass@edrev.info
